A Rhetoric of Silence and Other Selected Writings

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Contents: A rhetoric of silence -- Borges and the invention of the name -- Finland-bound (on the way to Finland) -- The miracle of the roses and Borges' ultrarealism -- Between two languages : Jules Laforgue, a Uruguayan "figure" -- Anaphoric imagination in cinema : an approach to Fellini's Intervista -- Symbols as pass-words between spaces and species -- Narration under discussion : a question of angels, men, nouns, and pronouns -- The paradoxes of paradoxes.

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Introduction

In order to avoid diversions, which would complicate this work and excessively extend its limits, it is necessary to foresee and control the conjectural derivations of a subject which is itself posed antithetically. The very title anticipates a *contradiction* and it must be noted that it should be interpreted as such: a *rhetorics of silence*. Rhetorics, a discipline which has from its beginning been interpreted ambivalently, stands here in both its senses: as the study of the dialectic speculations of the mind and as the art of saying and of eloquence. This very discipline is applied, in this case, to verbal silence, which is a tacit object, also considered in its own sense since it seems restricted to phonetic absence, itself a partial form of sound absence; here verbal silence also refers to the *silence of reading*, the suspension of the voice because words are not articulated, not uttered, but are, nevertheless, present.

These facts are advanced here so as not to attenuate a contradiction posed in the title, which should not surprise the reader as it is inscribed in a popular tradition of long standing. Regularly and frequently an antithetical formula offers one of the most appropriate models for this paratextual kind of writing; they are inscriptions which, without constituting the text itself, serve to introduce it synoptically. Molière's titles, among many others, seem to provide the most characteristic examples of this "principle of contradiction". An unpretentious inventory of his best-known titles ciphers the key of Molière's work in a more or less explicit figure, antithesis, which shows that the recourse-recurrence which his theatre develops are only provisionally contradictory: *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, *Les précieuses ridicules*, *Le malade imaginaire*, *Le médecin malgré lui*, *Le misanthrope*. Someone said that every time Molière uses a word, he hides it with another one.

The contradiction so often formulated in titles of works belonging to such diverse genres, cannot be explained only by the mere observation of the antithetical model, or by the attraction exerted by a particularly striking figure; perhaps the antithetical (dis-)solution of these titles could be understood as an index of an inchoative, previous and cataphoric confusion, inherent in the anticipatory attempts of all elaboration, something akin to Joyce's *chaosmos*, a word which refers to the *unity* (the original polysemy of one which stands both as *unity*, properly singular, and
initiation, the origin), itself the point of departure of all attempts at order, at distinctions, all initial steps towards creation and knowledge.

The aim of the excessive extent of this denominative clarification is to warn the reader against the paradoxical temptation, since it is not fitting here to establish l'étonnant accord which, according to Fontanier (1968: 137), is the culmination of all paradoxes, conciliating the adversity between the terms previously considered opposites. It is worth insisting on the fact that the terms of the titles stand in their own meaning and are meant in order to keep an opposition which should not be solved. Above all, and it should be explicitly stated, silence is not understood as "that silence-which-is-worth-more-than-words" (I acknowledge the triviality of the stereotype and its eventual possible versions).

Chapter 1

The silence intended: some exclusions necessary for its definition

Le langage n'a qu'un contraire qui est le silence.
Brice Parain

1. The foreseen silence

Eloquent silence has been ruled out from the preceding pages: this oxymoron, or its equivalent terms, formulates the eventual reconciliation which could have solved the need to overcome a logical collision. Yet, as argued above, the collision should remain as it stands.

Nevertheless, while ruling out eloquent silence, it is important to reserve for it a preliminary space, especially since contemporary culture so harshly criticises (while being itself guilty of the same sin) every excess of words; the inconsistencies of logorrheic discourse, a noisy emptiness which attempts by all possible means to compete against time, with time, like time. The result is a successive, rigorous, continuous verbalization: programmed bewilderment. Through scarcity and endearment, this civilization of the mass-media has unwittingly endorsed the efficient persuasion and the power, therein, of silence.

Seldom before has there been such widespread use of the word, spoken and written, and at the same time such widespread skepticism concerning its use. This mistrust is one of the characteristic features of contemporary culture and according to Gérard Genette, who studies this phenomenon from a strictly literary point of view, this appreciation of silence can be traced further back. It appears as the most marked trend in modern literary studies. Yet it had already been used by Flaubert, who "drowned the things that needed to be said: enthusiasm, grudges, love, hate, rejection, dreams, memories... But one day, he overcame his silence, for good measure, he gave shape to the project of not saying anything, the rejection of expression which heralds modern literary experience". The modernity which, according to Genette, has its roots in Flaubert, is not exclusively limited to emotional austerity, but rather forms an inherent part of the text itself. It is this sense that interests us; a sobriety which anticipates other forms of
textual abstinence, simple black-and-white as opposed to an obsession with opulence, a *horror pleni* which surpasses the *horror vacui* of other periods. “This return of discourse to its silent reverse, which is for us literature itself. Flaubert has evidently been the first to employ it.”²

2. Against triviality

This tendency towards austerity connects the author of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* directly with the growing dislike for stereotypes in language, with this mania for consecrating the idiomatic and literary practices of earlier times and at the same time, condemning the inevitability of thinking (not thinking) through such stereotypes.

A typical attitude of 20th century writers is the consequential and concomitant recognition that only silence can offer a means of avoiding the automatism of language. “Do you really believe that it is possible to speak by means other than stereotypes?” wondered Alain Robbe-Grillet (1978: 268) in his essay, *La langue est un système*, and this question is a sign of perplexity *vis-à-vis* anyone disagreeing with such trivial truth rather than searching for an answer, which is known beforehand to be negative, because it cannot indeed be otherwise.

On the same occasion and regarding the “perpetual combat” in which Flaubert was engaged against the intolerable tyranny of a language doomed to remain alien, the association of conventional words, Gaillard (1978:283) said: «Ce qu’il nommait béte était cette voix de l’autre en lui, lui comme autre, rendu étranger à lui-même, par cette désappropriation de sa parole. Quelqu’un d’autre parle par ma bouche» [What he called foolishness was that voice of the other in himself, the self as the other, a stranger to himself, through this alienation from his own language. Someone else speaks through my mouth.]

Since this question is still of interest, a brief digression is in order. In his short story *Utopía de un hombre que está cansado*, Borges (1975:129) imagines the following dialogue.

- *- Dueño el hombre de su vida, lo es también de su muerte.*
- *- ¿Se trata de una cita? — le pregunté.*
- *- Seguramente. Ya no nos quedan más que citas. La lengua es un sistema de citas.*

- [*Master of his life, man is also master of his death.*]
- *- Is this a quotation? I asked him.*

- *[Surely. Quotations are all that is left to us. Language is a system of quotations.]*

The theory and its demonstration are both contained in this text; without any typographic or discursive indications, without any credit, Borges (1979:501) has just quoted, implicitly, the Argentinean poet Leopoldo Lugones, who, in the third of his four *Estudios helénicos*, said: “Master of his life, man is also the master of his death.”

It is only thanks to what the reader happens to have read — and what he happens to remember — that he knows that this statement was written by Lugones. Even assuming that any present-day utterance is a transformation of a previous poetic discourse, it is not necessary to resort to textual pragmatics to know that the meaning of the statement changes if it turns out to be what Coseriu (1977a:113–116) calls “repeated discourse”.

The use of language which forces one to say what others have said causes a feeling of abuse. This is so evident that Borges does not even consider it necessary to indicate the source of his phrase, because he embeds it openly in a language which to him is only a system of quotations. If, then, all utterances are but repetitions, how can these repetitions be marked as such? How and why can one recognize utterances that have never been produced? If even the Coheleth knew of nothing but repetitions, how can we today expect novelty instead of oblivion?

Although a quotation is, according to Genette (1982:15) «une pratique littéraire définie» [a definite literary practice], it is a crucial part of a “palimpsestuous” activity, identical to the same which participates, in Genette’s (1982:452) words, in the “Borgesian utopia of a literature in perpetual transfusion (or transtextual perfusion)”. Hence the need to give a more thorough treatment to the theme of repeated discourse, and to distinguish between the two aspects of the same literary and linguistic phenomenon. Textual repetition will be dealt with later on, no longer as one of the preferred targets attacked by silence, the reluctance to speak or the scruples about repetition, but as a specific, essential component part of the mechanism of reading: a literary action which barely manages to maintain its difficult equilibrium, suspended between quotation and reticence, repetition and silence.
3. The silent protest

On ne peut que parler autour du silence et rares sont ceux qui peuvent tenir la gageure de parler du silence dans le silence.

P. Boudot

As a variation on the dislike for stereotypes and the absolute impossibility to avoid them, there is a mistrust towards all types of verbal utterance, a systematic mistrust towards the natural inflation of discourse, a rebellion against the abuse of words, or the sheer ingenuity of believing that they contain the truth. We are lured by the big trap of the mention-mensonge. This mistrust is rightly twofold: it is geared to the uselessness of speaking and at the same time to its counterpart, the risks run by someone who refuses to speak.

This mistrust is particularly strong for a language which unreservedly endorses statements such as: "I lie" (the inevitable paradox attributed at times to Epimenes, more often to Eubulides of Megara), or any of the later variants which continue to renew this formulation. The paradox conveys aphoristically the logical entanglement which contradictory artistic and verbal discourse take as their point of departure. Action or diction is, besides, the false alternative implied in all Faustian questioning: a closed dilemma between doing and saying, manifested in Rimbaud’s archetypal desertion, or in the more optimistic solution given by Sartre (1948:32): «...se taire c’est n’est pas être muet, c’est refuser de parler, donc parler encore.» [...to be silent is not to be mute, it is refusing to speak, and so, to speak still.]

For Sartre (1948:32), silence and words can be equally regarded as action: "The ‘engaged’ writer believes that the word is action". However, a prestigious tradition questions the truth of this phrase. Consequently, if the word can be considered as a somewhat dubious action (leaving aside, for the time being, the problem of performative verbs, addressed by Austin (1962) in his How to do things with words, expressively translated into French as Quand dire c’est faire as well as the whole linguistic-theological dossier on "verbo-creation"), silence becomes even more doubtful.

The refusal to speak, silence as the only pronunciation, these are forms of resistance which border dangerously on abstention, indifference, and disappearance, a laisser de dire which can also be understood as laisser (de) faire. One can only suppose or assume, but never verify, the existence of a heroic gesture which is not verbalized and therefore passes unnoticed, or to be more precise, il ne passe pas, it does not take place. It is true that words do not suffice, yet silence suffices even less. What can be done to overcome the pressure of this conflict?

Confidence in the efficiency of withholding speech, in which Sartre (1948) believes, is acceptable whenever it is possible to recognize in this silence a “zero-syntagm”, composed of “zero-signs”, those signs Saussure (1969:156) spoke of, thus: “A material sign is not necessary in order to express an idea; language may be satisfied with the opposition of something to nothing.” Godel (1953) points out that this same notion was taken up again by Bally, Jakobson and others. Recently, Kowzan (1982) has also noted and applied the value of this structural unity to the analysis of theatrical phenomena.

By the same token, Sartre’s (1948) silence would be significant insofar as it is an absence of pronouncement, of a gesture, of a discourse, but it would only be significant wherever these facts were foreseen; indeed, silence would then present “a highly significant value”, but the possibility of anticipating such a manifestation is the necessary condition for it. If the discourse has not been anticipated, the relational contrast is lost, and silence lacks signification because it does not comply with the necessary duplicity of the system.

However, the problem lies elsewhere. In the best of cases, even as a zero-sign, opposed to an anticipated discourse which does not take place, and because its being anticipated would already have created in the receptor an aesthetic experience — be it theatrical or otherwise — silence remains subject to the interpretations of the receiver to whom its message is addressed. Does the receiver somehow grasp the communicative nature of this silence? How can he interpret something if he remains unaware of the existence of the something to be interpreted? Everyone interprets in accordance with his own “horizon of expectations”, therefore, it is necessary that silence be presented as an event, with a horizon; otherwise the necessary linking will not occur, and no interpretation can take place. There can be no guarantee that an interpretation occurs of a discourse which is not uttered, of an intention which remains unknown, and which may not even exist.

Cervantes’ (1911) narrator has good reasons to favour arms over literature, a choice Don Quixote defends in Chapter XXXVIII of the novel “which deals with the curious speech Don Quixote delivered on the subject of arms and letters”. Surely, Pierre Menard also has reasons to choose precisely this chapter to write his own Quixote.

It is well known that Cervantes, or his narrator (like Quevedo in a later and analogous passage of La hora de todos), judges against letters and in
favour of arms. "Cervantes was an old soldier, his judgement is understandable. But that the Quixote of Pierre Menard — a contemporary of La trahison des clercs and Bertrand Russell — should relapse into such vague sophistries! Madame Bachelier saw them as a sign of admirable subordination of the author to the psychology of the hero... Thus comments Borges' (1974a:444) narrator.

It is of particular interest to examine this inversion. Following Barthes (1980:34), who proposed to focus the investigation of Proust's imagination according to a system of opposites, or "enantiology" (from the Greek enantion: contrary, enantiosis: opposition), or a discourse made of inversions, here, too, we recognize that the origin of all things lies between these opposite terms.

The images of Borges, Quevedo and Cervantes correspond — even more clearly than Proust's — to a specular aesthetics, le monde renversé, an imagined invariance revealed by the mirror, one which questions artistic evidence, as it goes beyond mere artifice or the efficiency of a mere procedure. It determines an aesthetic cosmovision and yet avoids the risks of narcissism, the older danger of falling prey to the seduction of one's own image. (Thyresias had predicted that Narcissus would live if he stopped pursuing his own image.)

This aesthetics also becomes a cognositive tool, a "catoptromancy" which, like other "nancies", practices the art of divination (also a knowledge of sorts). In this case it uses mirrors. In the Borgesian universe, just like in the Spanish Golden Age, one does not see just per speculum in aenigmata; the mirror itself reveals the enigmas.

But the mirror still remains. The truth which appears by reflection appears inverted. In spite of this, the image reveals. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know as also I am known." Saint Paul (1 Co:13:12) speaks these words with the hope of seeing truth "face to face". Likewise, revelation through the image is two-sided. Fascinated by a text, the reader examines it, yet at the same time, the text examines the reader. The reflection, like Cortázar's (1964) axolotl, is a fascinating larva, another death mask, a phantom who identifies himself with anyone who thinks of it.

By reflection the mirror and the lamp start a process, which is, at the same time, identification and estrangement; distance as distinction, ce moi-là, which begins to recognize itself starting from a resemblance that makes it possible, precisely, to appreciate the difference. It is the phenomenon of identification, itself as ambivalent as the word which designates it, since identification rests upon a recognition of both the differences and the similarities.

The key lies in the image: by means of the mirror, it becomes possible to find one's way in le monde renversé, and to discover the truth, the inverted truth, there. Thus paradoxical logic articulates Borges' thought, and unleashes this writer's imagination, generating, abysmal, specular, antithetical figures, the contradictory oxymorons and the opposites, which can be identified because they are symmetrical.

However, the identification of the opposites action/diction emphasizes even more the closure of their original disjunction, which is optional only in appearance because, observed as an equivalence, it offers no other alternatives. There is no way out. Nor is there a way out of the despair of silence.

4. The silence of the others

Like murderous Cordelia, children know that silence can destroy another human being.

Or like Kafka, they remember that several have survived the songs of the Siren, but none their silence.

George Steiner

Voluntary silence, which is doubly suspicious — because it is suspicious of the word, and is at the same time itself an object of suspicion — has its counterpart in the silence of the others, a conspiratorial silence, which the Germans, before the second decade of this century, called with proleptic precision Totschweigentaktik, or, much more recently, what in Spanish has come to be known as ninguno. This is an acknowledgement, albeit a tricky one; someone knows, yet he pretends he does not. The attempt to destroy Freud's first writings, by silencing them, and later the more sustained efforts to destroy those of Karl Krauss' by the same procedure (or to do the same thing with all writings which failed to conform to the views of the establishment of Vienna, then under serious fire). These attempts were tacitly "consented" to, without discussion, just to kill them. In the cases of Freud and Krauss, however, the strategy of silence was unsuccessful.

Silence is often an efficient instrument of obliteration, and one that leaves no traces. The existence of something acknowledges, discretely, implicitly, but the discourse of the other is really meant to be neutralized
5. The representation of silence

Puissance du langage: avec mon langage je puis tout faire, même et surtout rien dire.
Roland Barthes

The following examples, abundant in the literature and art of this century, present different forms of a silence which is either elaborated through discourse or, more frequently, through a silence which appears as its referent. From amongst the most striking examples, it suffices to mention John Cage, the avant-garde musician who is himself singularly representative of the “aesthetics of silence”. His famous concert (or rather, disconcert) entitled 4′33″, consists of overlapping silences: the silence of the composer, the silence of the performer, as well as the silence of the hearer, extending simultaneously, without interruption, for a period of four minutes and thirty-three seconds, as announced in the title.

This work was performed for the first time in 1952 and its non-performance was given by Merce Cunningham, David Tudor and Robert Rauschenberg. Ten years later, in 1962, Cage created a new work entitled 0′00″, on the basis of the same architect. These orchestrated silences can be interpreted as the representation of nothing, of a chaos of sorts, or of an unorganized, or rather pre-organized, world. Something akin to Newton’s white light: a co-fusion of all colours and, at the same time, the natural and indispensable property needed to appreciate them: the light which makes it possible to see them; something akin to the condition on which all perception depends, which makes perception possible and yet is its consequence. If the comparison may be stretched further, the silence which is interpreted in John Cage’s concert represents — as image and realization — through aesthetics, an “an-aesthetics”, that silence which makes it possible to penetrate into the essence of sound, and which will be treated later in these pages, after dealing with the objections of the negative methodological approach of this introduction.

A similar — but in this case recorded — silence is also found in popular types of entertainment, commercial games in the form of gramophone records offered as the option of silence by some discoteques and juke-boxes. These recordings of silence can be listened to in the same way as the other records.

Literature also provides innumerable references to silence but, except for some artistic forms which will be studied later in these pages, it is just one more reference, the barely contradictory verbal form of a silence which is mentioned. The silence which is named, described, narrated, has its own place in discourse: it denotes, so to speak, its own discrete object.

For example, the Uruguayan writer Felisberto Hernández (1983), has frequently described different kinds of silence in his stories. In El acomodador, a character who works as an usher in a cinema and who dispenses with the use of a torch to lead the spectators to their seats because his eyes “possess their own light”, describes thus the strange protocol at the beginning of the dinners to which he was charitably invited:

Primero se entraba a un hall casi tan grande como el de un teatro; y después se pasaba al lujoso silencio del comedor. Pertenecía a un hombre que ofrecería aquellas cenias hasta el fin de sus días. Era una promesa hecha por haberse salvado su hija de las aguas del río. Los comensales eran extranjeros abrumados de recuerdos. Cada uno tenía derecho a llevar a un amigo dos veces por semana; y el dueño de casa comía en esa mesa una vez por mes. Llegaba como un director de orquesta después que los músicos estaban prontos. Pero lo único que él dirigía era el silencio. A las ocho, la gran portada blanca del fondo abría una hoja y aparecía el vacío en penumbra de una habitación contigua; y de esta oscuridad salía el frío negro de una figura alta con la cabeza inclinada hacia la derecha. Venía levantando una mano para indicarnos que no debíamos pararnos; todas las caras se dirigían hacia él; pero no los ojos: ellos pertenecían a los pensamientos que en aquel momento habitaban las cabezas. El director hacía un saludo al sentarse, todos dirigían las cabezas hacia los platos y pulsaban sus instrumentos. Entonces cada profesor de silencio tocaba para sí. Al principio se oía pitoteur los cubiertos; pero a los pocos instantes aquel ruido volaba y quedaba olvidado (1983, 2:59). [My italics]

[First one entered a hall almost as large as that of a theatre; and from there one proceeded to the luxurious silence of the dining room. It belonged to a man who would host those dinners until the end of his days. It was a promise he had made after his daughter had been saved from drowning in a river. The guests were foreigners, overwhelmed with memories. Each one had the right to bring (along) a friend twice a week; and the host would eat at that table once a month. He arrived as does the conductor of an orchestra]
after the musicians have already taken their seats. But the only thing he conducted was silence. At eight o'clock, one of the doors of the great white portal at the back opened, showing the dark emptiness of the next room. From the dark would appear a tall figure in a black tailcoat, with his head tilted towards the right. As he approached he raised his hand so as to indicate to us that we should not stand up; all faces were turned towards him, but not the eyes; they belonged to the thoughts which in that moment dwelled in those heads. The conductor would greet his guests as he sat down, and everyone directed their attention to the plates and strummed their instruments. Thus each professor of silence played for himself. At first one could hear the clatter of cutlery, but after a few moments that noise would fly away and it was forgotten.

The plastic correspondences of this literary version anticipate — _avant la musique_ — the concerts of John Cage, they multiply absent forms similar in nature to those silences. They include the black square of Kazimir Malevitch, the monochromatic or white-on-white exhibits of Yves Klein, the black canvasses of Frank Stella, or the more recent _Untitled_ by the American Robert Ryman, where access to an immaterial sensitivity makes the visual correspondence with silence more clear and evident; the white canvas, blank, is not explained by the mystical horror of Mallarmé, but rather as a postponed exasperation, the pure expectation which amounts to a proposition or a provocation. The observer is faced with a suspended aesthetic experience: “It can be dull and blank. It can brim with sensations and ideas. It can be you”, said Smith (1980:18).

6. The present silence

Given the circumstances under which this study is written (Montevideo, Uruguay: 1981–82), it is necessary to make clear from the start that no attempt has been made to examine the variants imposed compulsively, without right to appeal, by history, nor the obligatory silence or the resulting aesthetic or semiotic alibis provoked by certain forms of official censorship. This means that the elusions and allusions through which discourse is able to forego prohibition or punishment are not considered here.

We do consider — we must consider — the unimpeachable truism with which Wittgenstein (1969:151) tautologically concludes his _Tractatus logico-philosophicus_: “Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen” [What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence], but here no attempt will be made to reduce the epistemological aspects of this sentence to politics or police, which determine it but which it overcomes. But this silence exists. It is present.

7. The final silence

Even more caution must be exercised regarding another limitation (the last proviso in this initial instance of definitions): the brotherly complicity which has induced us to remain silent, following the moral predicament of the Bible. “And if one should sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity” (Lev 5:1) Abel remains silent. Ever since, up to the lapidary negation of Adorno (1984:433): “No poetry after Auschwitz”, there have been numerous silences which must be exposed and defined.

Even when presented in a short — all too short — form, these silences still exceed any preliminary consideration of the subject. They cannot be examined here, because they fall outside the scope of this study, but this does not mean that they are absent. On the contrary, they form our frame of reference, in which is also inscribed Verlaine’s (1925, I:296) conclusion «Et tout le reste est littérature», which he devised as a necessary hyper- textual transformation of the more famous: “The rest is silence”, thus renewing the dialectic game between saying and not saying, whose resonance and echoes have by no means been exhausted.

The apophantic procedure does not seek to exhaust all negations. For the time being the silence appears elusively, only by elimination or contrast. It is a known fact that there exist numerous variations of silence to which this particular silence is opposed. Every affirmation is, above all, a long series of negations. However, for the sake of brevity, the already excessive preliminary remarks must suffice, and remain a silent margin of this work.
Chapter 2

Rhetoric: state of the art

L’oeuvre littéraire tend bien à se constituer en un moment de reticence et d’ambiguïté, mais cet objet silencieux elle le fabrique, pour ainsi dire, avec des mots, et ce travail d’annulation est un procès typiquement sémantique, passible comme tel, d’une analyse du même ordre:

la littérature est une rhétorique du silence.

Gérard Genette

Point of departure of this study on the silence of reading will be Genette’s (1966:242) rhetoric — his “rhetoric of silence” — viewed as the semiological process, operative in the literary work, of silence and ambiguity. The concept of rhetoric advanced here will, however, be updated so as to take into account the developments of this discipline in the past few decades; in other words, a study of the dialectic speculations conceived by the mind and represented in discourse, rather than the techniques and practices of *ars oratoria*, as understood by Quintilian (1989).

Some years ago, Bremond (1976) stated as a prologue of sorts to a publication dedicated to *Recherches rhétoriques*, that: «S’occuper de rhétorique ne peut déjà plus passer en France ni pour un anachronisme, ni pour un défi d’avant-garde... Nous apprenons que la rhétorique n’est pas un ornament du discours mais une dimension essentielle à tout acte de signification» [The study of rhetoric in France is neither an anachronism nor an avantgarde intellectual challenge... We are aware that rhetoric is not an ornament of discourse but rather an essential dimension of every act of signification.]

In order to highlight some particular aspects of this essential dimension, we shall apply rhetoric to the study of various mechanisms of reading as a productive literary activity, in the same sense as Michel Charles does (1977:62) when he says: «C’est pourquoi cette rhétorique ne peut se constituer qu’à partir de la poétique. Elle n’est pas d’un autre ordre que la poétique. Dans tous les cas, il n’est pas de poétique sans rhétorique — et l’inverse est vrai.» [This rhetoric can only be established through poetics. It is not unlike poetics. Poetics cannot exist without rhetoric, and the reverse is also true.]

The inversion of this point of view is Copernican only in appearance, because in the same way as traditional rhetoric describes and prescribes the principles of writing from the author’s point of view, the idea here is to apply the same principles to the reader’s point of view. Thus there is no inversion, but rather for the sake of the (provisional) argument, both will be given equal status, insofar as author and reader are linked by the same work: «...la rhétorique n’a jamais été l’éloquence, mais une théorie du discours» [...] rhetoric has never been eloquence, but rather a theory of discourse], Charles (1977:62) has also pointed out.

The following proviso must be made here. The role of the critic will only be dealt with in a subsidiary manner, although admittedly in Genette’s (1969:16) words «...aucun inconvenient à admettre que la critique telle que nous la concevons serait, partialement du moins, quelque chose comme une nouvelle rhétorique» [there is nothing against admitting that criticism, as we conceive it, would be, at least partially, something like a new rhetoric].

This (provisional) exclusion of critical reading applies exclusively (except in the case of a professional reader, who makes a living by reading and whose status is therefore rather atypical) to the fact that the type of reader in question is one who writes, a reader-writer, who states unrestrainedly, with Barthes’ (1981b:180): «d’écrit - ou je réécris - le texte que je lis mieux et plus loin que son auteur ne l’a fait.» [I write — or re-write — the text I read, better than and more profoundly than the author did.] This is possible — and the question is quite complex — because the reader’s function is an ambiguous entity, both intermediate and intermediary, and this intermediation continues to be the object of much debate, controversy, and resentment (the misunderstanding underlying the common-place which reduces to “frustration” the fruitful relationship of the critic towards literature). One can observe various types of ambiguity, yet on the whole they may be explained by the need to maintain a difficult balance on both sides of the fence, of someone who reads and writes at the same time, who fulfills simultaneously two rival roles which are as competitive as they are neighbouring, but which are, above all, both solitary and solidary, both independent from and complementary of each other.

Contrary to this overlapping of the roles of author-reader which characterizes our rhetorical objective, the dual relationship between critic and literature converges into one single function, of activity and product, of reception and production. “...the critic cannot substitute the reader in anything”, Barthes (1966:76) remarked some years ago, referring
precisely to the critic as a reader “who encounters in his way a suspicious mediator: writing”.

Critical reading-writing consists in a relationship akin to the one which occurs in consecutive intertextuality, as defined translinguistically by Kristeva (1969: 16) in her famous collection of essays, Séméiotiké. In the reading-writing process, the author, the critic, develops a preceding text, an alien text from which it is derived and which it — hermeneutically — transforms it: «...toute texte se construit comme un mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d’un autre texte» [...every text is built as a mosaic of quotations; every text is absorption and transformation of another text].

The intertextual origin of critical writing is more conspicuous and exposes its dependency more clearly than in the case of other literary texts. It has, however, some specific characteristics which, hopefully, justify that it be considered as one of Genette's (1982: 10) variants of this paradigm, which has been much used in recent literary theory. Here the characteristics which determine the different modalities of textual transformation are described thus: «Le troisième type de transcendance textuelle, que je nomme métatextualité, est la relation, on dit plus couramment de «commentaire», que unit un texte à un autre texte dont il parle sans nécessairement le citer... C'est par excellence, la relation critique». [The third type of textual transcendence, which I have called metatextuality is the relationship, more commonly called “commentary”, which links one text to another text and about which it speaks without necessarily quoting it... This is the critical relationship par excellence.]

If critical reading-writing is omitted from these considerations on the rhetoric of silence, this neglect is largely due to metatextuality: the hermeneutic work is similar to the kind of metalinguistic discourse which takes place in verbal communication. It makes explicit those elements of the (linguistic) code which were necessarily implied in it and which make it an instrument of social communication through words. It is known that communication is possible thanks to the existence of a(n) (implicit) code shared by both the speaker and the listener.

Jakobson (1963) commented upon the different metalinguistic functions, acknowledging its assimilation to the referential function and placing both at opposite poles of his famous diagram. Clearly, the metalinguistic function also implies the referential function, although in a special manner, conditioned by the nature of the referent.

In fact, the metalinguistic function «trespasses» circumstantially on the silent principle of the code, going beyond the implicit presence which is its nature. This, however, is its normal function. Critical discourse is a metatextual elaboration in which explicit references are made to elements which are implicit in the literary text, although it may also refer explicitly to elements which are already explicit in the primary text. Its metatextuality is a complex affair, because it involves at least a double referent: it uses quotations and paraphrases to refer to what the text says, it says things the text does not say, and, following the literary theory which it applies and the force of the argument, it puts forth considerations relating to the system of the work — which is not the same thing — to the system to which the work refers. By this process the critic underscores the conjectural date of an underlying reading, performed by himself, a textual model used by the critic in order to judge and make a decision; because this is his role. His is no longer the mere silent role-of-the-reader. Barthes (1966: 76) ends the above mentioned quotation thus: «Ainsi tourne la parole autour du livre: lire, écrire, d’un désir à l’autre va toute la littérature.» [Thus words revolve around the book: reading, writing: all literature moves from one desire on to the next.]

It is not merely a question of describing consecutive stages in a mechanical process, nor of two successive instances of literary diachrony (reading, then writing): this approach enables one to observe the phenomenon as something in which these consecutive stages — understood as a casual connection rather than as a continuity — are, by the same token, the two aspects in every generative process, every literary creation process in which temporality becomes suspended, spatialized in another dimension, perhaps a non-dimension, a place without place or time, inside the work.

As presented in Les mots, lire et écrire (1961), reading and writing, form the consecutive episodes of a biographical itinerary, the literary history of the author (Sartre's, in this case), or the periods in any literary biography, but, at the same time, they constitute the two opposing poles which together originate the work. They are the two axles which intersect, generate the literary work.

Literary transtextuality works through a mechanism of imitation and transformation: it preserves the presence (positive or negative) of a model, which may be respected or rejected, but which is there. Now metatextuality, when understood from the viewpoint of the critic is — according to Genette’s (1969) categorization — based on a different action. Transtextual commentary derives from a prior text, its model, but during the transtextual course of critical reading and writing a kind of décalage occurs, whereby the consecutivity is transposed to a different level: the metatext becomes an explanation of the previous text, a conceptual
explanation, the indispensable Auslegung through which Schleiermacher (1987) acknowledges the specific skill displayed in what is, if inconspicuously, a hermeneutic activity.

What may be explicitly observed in metatextuality is one aspect of a natural, foreseeable (if reversible) slide, from the aesthetic to the theoretical, from the image to the idea, from the specular to the speculative, from reflection to reflection, a pre-visible and reversible slide which is the fate of all theories; because (in Greek) theoria meant both contemplation and knowledge; a semantic ambiguity which was to have far-reaching consequences.

Interpretation (precisely this word) also comprises polysemically the same two transtextual tendencies: interpretation is both realization and analysis. On the one hand there is recreation by an interpreter, an intermediary (Jean Louis Barrault interprets, Glenn Gould interprets) because without interpretation the work does not exist as such, it must remain pure virtuality. Because it is an artistic interpretation, the term designates the aesthetic aspect of signification.

On the other hand, interpretation is understanding, a receptive and analytical procedure which makes the work (or the text), its voice or its truth, intelligible. The translation of the Pythian oracles, are both aesthetic (or esthétique, to underscore Paul Valéry’s (1971) distinction) and explicative, intellectual. In Greek, hérméneia was already understood in this way, and Western thought, in spite of the rigorous requirements of science and its language (as well as art and its discourse), has inherited this same semantic ambiguity, this etymological fusion which affects the different expressions of speech and thought. It is both an identification and a duality, which the sensitive speaker can hardly escape, but through which he symbolically experiences (or rather, suffers), the indivisible unit of logos.

Chapter 3

Praise of reading

From the point of view of reading, rhetoric addresses the problematic nature of the literary appeal, the dialectic speculation imagined by the reader when confronted with this Barthean “literature of suspended meaning: an art which elicits answers, but without itself giving any answers”. This position is also shared by Charles (1977:110), who in turn defines rhetoric as an inquiry: «Ni un ensemble de préceptes (ou de recettes), ni un catalogue de curiosités, mais un système de questions possibles.» [Neither a set of precepts (or recipes), nor a catalogue of curiosities, but rather a system of possible questions.]

The image is further complicated because the inquiry of rhetoric occurs, in essence, within the intimate space, l’espace à nulle dimension through which Bachelard (1943:17) recalls Joe Bousquet, and which is the same as the space of reading, a multiplied and utopian space, a probable impossibility which continues to be the subject and object of contemporary studies, critical or otherwise, le délire de lire.

Without analyzing the act of literary communication in terms of balance and compensation, it may nonetheless be stated that the reader has recently taken central stage in literary studies and theories as well as in important narrative events. Illustration? consequence? co-incidence?: Il nome della rosa by Eco (1980) — a reader becomes the victim of what he reads, progressively destroying himself by reading —, Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore by Calvino (1979) — a reader who is also the protagonist, a foreseen and foreseeable reader who becomes a character in the novel. At the same time, the figure of the author is de-emphasized, the position of the narrator questioned as a sign of the growing doubts about the deus absconditus, le dieu caché and his omnipotence.

This idea, which had earlier been critically formulated by Joyce (1916) in his Portrait of the artist as a young man, is symptomatic of this century’s aesthetic conception. Literary products of Nietzsche’s negation of eternity in: Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore, by Pirandello (1959), the destruc-
The growing emphasis on the reader, together with the disappearing author which was introduced by the formalist and structuralist scholars, and the deemphasis on the narrator, together with the cognotive division and disintegration of the latter's image as a consequence of the "death" of God, must be viewed as different variations on one theme which will be dealt with in detail when studying the phenomenon of fragmentation within the context of the rhetoric of reading.

The neohistoricist principles formulated by writers and followers of these theories, are not new; yet theirs is another attempt to systematize an approach which results not only from valid philosophical ideas, but also from a natural epistemological evolution, thereby demonstrating the pendular movement adopted alternately by consecutive doctrines, the play of tensions ever present in the acquisition and renewal of knowledge, the separation and withdrawal from preceding work-centred models. Such historicism implies another historic shift. Each stage of thought contradicts willingly the previous stage, drawing even closer to the one prior to that one, so that the image of cultural movements describes an image closer to Antigone than to Oedipus: Antigone does not destroy her father — who is at the same time her grandfather — nor does she destroy what he stands for. On the contrary, Antigone adopts Oedipus and, without abandoning him, piously continues her own struggle.

Recent theories seek to recover, once again, the critical relations established between society and literature, based on interactive processes which take work/reader as poles of reciprocal attraction. Thus, the impact of history on the reader is twofold: on the one hand it is the reader who introduces history, and on the other he also becomes the object of history.

According to the *Rezeptionsästhetik* theories, literary history and artistic history, in general, have for too long been only the history of authors and works. This theory states that no other theory before has paid sufficient attention to the reception of the work in verbal or non-verbal art, to the importance of the historical conditions in which the reading or any other form of artistic reception takes place. Consequently, this interest is specially directed towards the reader or observer of the work of art. This is an acknowledgement that even though the phenomenon of reception could never be ignored, the appreciation of the reader had taken place only through random observation, wherein the reader appeared as a minor term in the circuit of aesthetic communication. Thus the reader, or observer, has been consistently under-estimated and relegated to a sort of "third-state", always "the third who is not company"; "the counter-hero exists" said Barthes (1973a: 10), attempting to restore him.

It is in fact superfluous to point out that this is not the first time that the addressee of a work is taken into account. Think of the well-known Aristotelian catharsis, or the Augustinian mercy and the similar or derived notions which came later: synphronisms, *Ineinandersetzung*, *Einfühlung*, *Nachfühling*, empathy, sympathy, all forms of identification (fascination, absorption, hypnosis, seduction), as well as the various forms of "pleasure of the text" which have been adopted by current theory. Brecht's (1953) *Verfremdungseffekt* could also be included in this series, as an opposed, though similar, conception.

The above are some of the theoretical instances which have taken aesthetic response into due account. Also, mention should be made of the much-discussed functions of the receiver in Eco's (1962) *La opera aperta*, in which general rules are extrapolated from specific aesthetic forms but formulated in universal terms. Eco's openness refers to the lucid, ludic, recreational, competitive and real performance of a receiver who creates effectively taking as his point of departure a work formally intended to be considered as such.

Also product of a similar aesthetics are those openings understood as interpretive virtuality, interpretations conditioned by different "readings", the difference being specified by individual moods or biographical stages: "My whole life changes the book I am reading" said Borges at a conference on the Cabbala (Montevideo, December 14, 1981) thereby synthesizing the intimate connection between literature and (personal) history. Borges emphasizes that the text is necessarily subject to being embedded in the *anecdotal* clippings which are of the reader's *unpublished* liking, as well as in the *reason-ration* bias inherent in all theory.

Foreseeing similar risks and benefits, Barthes (1981b: 133–134, 147), interviewed by Stephen Heath, said:

> ...ce que j'ai essayé d'amorcer dans *S/Z* c'est une identification des notions d'écriture et de lecture: les «écraser» l'une dans l'autre. Je ne suis pas le seul, c'est un thème qui circule dans toute l'avant-garde actuelle. Encore une fois, la problème n'est pas de passer de l'écriture à la lecture, ou de la littérature à la lecture, ou de l'auteur au lecteur: le problème est un
problemé, comme on l'a dit de changement d'objet, de changement de niveau de perception: l'écriture et la lecture doivent se concevoir, se travailler, se définir, se redéfinir toutes les deux ensembles.

[...what I have tried to introduce into S/Z is an identification of the notions of writing and reading: I wanted to “crush” them, one against the other. I am not the only one to want this, it is a topic which is current among the avant-garde today. Once again, the problem is not going from writing to reading, or from literature to reading, or from author to reader; the problem, as has already been said, is a problem of a change of object, of a change in the level of perception: writing and reading need to be conceived, worked on, defined and re-defined together.]

The quasi-onomasiologic richness with which the reader’s participation in the process of aesthetic communication has been invested in the preceding list does not, despite its extension, exhaust the inventory: it only comprises some of the barely different (as far as the addressee is concerned) conjectural forms of access — by means of the aesthetic experience — to an *anteriority* or *interiority*, which is really an *alterity*. They are different denominations which allude to the *specific silence* with which the public receives a work, but which should not be confused with passivity or inertia. Rather than a re-action it is a *co-action* insofar as it is a shared participation: compulsion rather than collaboration, a forced (in)action: it manifests itself as the silence necessary for the condition of reader, spectator or listener. The slightest interruption of this silence provokes different degrees of violence, ranging from disapproval as a form of social sanction to the loss of the receiver’s status as such, for any acknowledgement, beyond the conventional gestures of reception, transgresses the receiver’s status and places it at risk.

The strict rules of behaviour can be noticed most clearly in the scenic arts, where the phenomenon of silence is exteriorized, where theory is acted out. The spectator must remain silent: no talking, no moving, no coughing. The public must remain unanimously silent.

It is in order here to mention the “happening”, a unsuccessful scenic adventure. It still stands, if only as an anecdotal experience, through which different forms of exterior participation of the spectator could be provoked, even when it showed (more or less clearly) that this participation could only be contemplative, internal, a spectator/expectative participation — the attentive expectation of the traditional audience. On few occasions is such an imposition forced on the spectator — or on any human being: the coercion of silence is as violent as it is voluntary.

Although the theories of aesthetic reception have not been dealt with in these terms, it is worth mentioning the numerous studies testifying to an overwhelming growth of mass-communication, which, due to the derivation of technological serial reproduction, has acquired in the last few decades a deafening perfection, multiplying the singularity of the human voice.

In this “age of technological reproduction”, as Benjamin (1971:171–210) called it, in which the “aura” of creative art is at risk, and the valuable uniqueness which characterizes it (the unperishable “insularity”, as Croce [1938] called the inherent worth of a work of art) is sacrificed, the receiver vanishes, hidden by the crowd he is part of, and enclosed, more than ever before, in his silence. Paradoxically, or as a compensatory reaction, theorists are giving more attention than ever before to the observation of the observer.


Each one of them, in accordance with its own theoretical doctrine, outlines various “theoretical rescues” of this ambivalent presence, the presence-absence of an elusive and evasive figure, upon whom depends, nevertheless, the existence and survival of every literary work.

In this civilization of masses and media, the reader, like the work of art, has lost, if not his “aura” — for he never had one — his individual features.

One may consider the extravagantly eccentric ambitions of someone like Ludwig II of Bavaria to be the scandalous, anticipatory symptoms of singularity (humanity) threatened with death. In the private quarters of his own fairy-tale castles he had performed, only for himself, the whole Kitsch and grandeur of Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a *mise-en-scène, entre-mise* in reality: *Opera versus History*.

His mania for exclusiveness, squandering and nonsense haunted him as much as his apprehensive rejection of government affairs and feats of modernity: a solitary king, unable to fight, yet who struggles desperately...
against the forces of mechanization and pollution resulting from the industrial and technological revolution.

The universe of the mass-media and the ensuing disappearance of the individual in the crowd coincides strikingly with the annihilation in concentration camps, which occurred at the same point in history. The history of the twentieth century provides its own version of the Opera as a totalitarian, rather than a total work. Not fortuitously, Volker Schlöndorff simultaneously has Beethoven’s portrait replaced by Hitler’s, and places a radio on top of the piano: these substitutions and superpositions occur in the same scene of the film Die Blechtrommel. These changes are not undone and the older values are thereby silenced and destroyed. Hitler’s shouts on the radio shut up the piano; the individuality of a genius disappears, and is displaced by the advancing uniforms.

From amongst the different objects of investigation which have been the successive concern of the doctrines which analyse the literary phenomenon—the author, the work, the reader—the latter is undoubtedly the most difficult to study, because of his anonymous nature, because he is, literally, unappealable. This discrete role of confère muet et pauvre is underscored because it is in sharp contrast with resounding name and fame, which are the author’s own.

It is inconceivable that the biographical approach, which can reach such exceptionally interesting levels as in Painter’s (1967) exhaustive reconstructions of Proust, might be applied to the reader. The date, the relevance of the details, the thorough investigation of the past, are recovered by biographical and historical research by means of—not always equally pondered—information (“Did Pushkin smoke?”), or by means of a less interesting museification through which “collectors of relics” turn the house of a writer, his furniture, books, pens, his deeds, into fetishes, polished by municipal pampering and by friend’s societies; those devotees and admirers who confuse literary “atopia” with geographical precision and end up embarking on touristic-hagiographic pilgrimages, which endanger the imagination through excessive homage. But one needs not go this far.

Against the anonymity of the reader stands the hypernomia of the writer. Thousands of readers, with names yet anonymous, ascribe to only one name: the name of the author, or his pseudonym.

This question is conflictive. How can the reader be studied? Wolfgang Iser, for instance, constantly refers to the reader in his work. But, which reader? Which is his archetype? His typology? Which is his entelechy? What are his achievements? his aims? How can he fulfill his goals? How can he draw them from the privacy of his reading? How can this privacy be checked? Who reads? How does he read? How does one avoid versions or assumptions? In fact, when dealing with the reader the problematic nature of literature becomes more acute and a whole system of possible questions takes form. How is it possible to tell the reader from the author—or from the modest or extremely presumptuous (twofold) image of the theoretician who observes his own self?

In the final analysis, how does one reach the reader? Reading imposes a certain distance with certain mystical overtones, and this literary withdrawal brings abstinence and pleasure, at the same time deprivation and joy: a kind of asceticism by which the reader abandons his habitual environment, attempting to suspend all his sensations except the visual ones, which themselves are considerably diminished: he barely sees the black and white of the printed page; his visual field is reduced to a mere alphabetical landscape.

These remarks are, first and foremost, true for writers. They, more than others, share this common, yet somewhat strange, condition. This withdrawal is so typical that it could have been conceived as a myth: the myth of the blind writer: be it Homer or Borges on either end of time (Orpheus—with his shifting deontology—would not be too far-fetched either).

Even when, in the case of authors, it is necessary to resort to nomenclapping, there is no doubt about another myth: that of the reader as an almost blind man: his eyes half-closed, unable to see his surroundings except a few square centimeters, un drôle de voyeur who peeps through the book, the keyhole through which he discovers intimacies—his own and somebody else’s—unconcerned with what is taking place around and outside himself.

There are but few witnesses who tell the story of the confrontation, and even opposition, between the author and the empirical readers, and between him and the real readers (both unforeseen by the text, not invoked by it, not even the ideal readers). Borges (1970:224–225), paradoxically, takes delight in humbly acknowledging the numerical disproportion between the writer’s individuality and the necessary plurality of the readership.

Y yo recuerdo la sorpresa que tuve, la incredulidad con la cual recibí la noticia de que un libro mío titulado paradójicamente Historia de la eternidad había vendido creo que treinta y siete ejemplares en un año. Yo tenía ganas de buscar a esas treinta y siete personas, agradecerles, pedirles disculpas por lo malo que era el libro... uno puede más o menos imaginarse treinta y siete personas. No es demasiado todavía.
[And I recall my surprise, the incredulity with which I learned that one of my books, ambitiously and paradoxically entitled The history of eternity had sold, I believe, thirty-seven copies in one year. I felt like searching for those thirty-seven persons, thanking them and apologising because the book was so bad... one can more or less imagine thirty-seven people. It is still not too much.]

In the best of probable cases, even reaching that rare and not very representative reader who is nevertheless enough to surprise and delight Borges, it would still be impossible to overcome the inaccessibility of reading in its strict sense. To get to know him, one must inevitably resort, once more, to the procedures of verbal intermediation, and consequently, subject oneself to the intercession-interception of the words, and consent the uses of discourse about which Schiller (18—) complained: “Alas, when the soul speaks, it is no longer the soul which is speaking.”

It is difficult to avoid the trap: feeling, dreaming, reading — and other human conditions, either appear verbalized, represented, or they do not appear at all, with no other alternative given. Once they have been mentioned, only discourse remains valid. Their own entity does not count; necessarily subjected to the verbal dossier, truth becomes only one version. As if it were not possible for poetry, for the humanities, for the sciences, to forego the dubious usefulness of the verbal instrument.

Chapter 4
Silence and its double: a history of literature or a history of reading?

As the question mark shows, there is uncertainty, there is a dilemma. The question contains a choice, proposes an alternative as well as an equivalence. What is meant by “history of literature”? Is it legitimate to assimilate the history of reading to the history of literature? Is it possible to distinguish between both?

Thus we raise again one of the problems which still engages the attention of literary scholars. Genette has already underscored the notion of “history of literature” in order to deal with the great diversity of concepts which have been presented — and continue to be so — through these studies. Genette (1972:14) rejects the didactic adequacy of textbooks, consisting in a “series of monographs laid out in chronological order” as well as literary history conceived as “a history of circumstances, of the social conditions and repercussions of the literary event”. Nor does he include the history of literature understood as the study of “literary works regarded as historical documents” reflecting or expressing the particular ideology and sensitivity of a period, “because this type of history will remain necessarily outside literature itself”.

To remedy the shortcomings of the historical approach, Genette favours a kind of history which undertakes the study of literary forms, rather than of particular works. It must be acknowledged that literary history was too long at the mercy of critical judgement, judged by a methodology which had no pretence of being historical. A critical relationship is not established by the objective of making a rigorous diachronic analysis, as required in the study of history, but it must unavoidably be subject to the inclinations — not to mention the whims — of interpretation, because even the optimal interpretation must remain an ambivalent and refutable attribution, the result of a dialectic relationship between interpretation (the meaning given by the reader) and a heuristic reading (the grasping of textual meaning).
The problem is further complicated when the active homonymy of the word history is taken into account. “History” is everything that belongs to the past as well as the study of that past. (The name of this discipline lacks a form of “logy” to be complete.) There is a semantic ambivalence here between the object and its study, both of which remain confused in a single equivalence, thereby increasing the ambiguity formulated in the title: A history of literature or a history of reading?

If literature is understood as the body of literary works preserved as a canon, the synonymy of both terms will become apparent, for the literary text is preserved and lasts so long as it remains an object of reading. This is the strange philological turn discussed by Bachelard quoted by Barthes in an interview (1974).

Although our subject has been presented as an apparent option, it really shows an equivalence. The possibility of a choice between the two terms is therefore absorbed by this equivalence: “We either win or win” went a protest song, and this slogan was meant to rule out the eventualty or possibility of any other alternative.

The history of literature cannot be differentiated from the history of reading, nor can the past be differentiated from the study of the past, or the work from the reading of the work. These terms form an equation, one that, because both terms are equal, settles the issue.

Therefore it is not too bold to state that the history of literature is the work of the readers and not of the authors. We have advanced above a warning that the attention paid to the critic in these pages would only be subsidiary. Now we are faced with the need to include him, because, as Lejeune (1976:336) recalls, «Valéry disait déjà que c’était non l’auteur mais le lecteur, dont la formation et les fluctuations constituaient le vrai sujet de l’histoire littéraire. Cette lecture ne peut naturellement s’observer qu’indirectement, dans le discours critique, avec les attentes qu’il manifeste, les classements qu’il utilise et les jugements de valeur qu’il émet.» [Valéry has already said that it was not the author but the reader, his intellectual and cultural background, which constitute the true subject of literary history. This reading, naturally, can only be observed indirectly, in the critical discourse, with all the prospects, classifications and value judgements it contains].

Both reader and critic have problems withdrawing from the particular biases of their personal reference/preference.

The material impossibility of covering the whole explains — first and foremost — the severe limitations inherent to critical reading. The presence of the reader and his ideas, the reader and his view of the world, his interests, are accepted in the study of contemporary phenomena but the reader also influences, without exception, even the stricter dialectic surveys of history, where the implications attenuated by distance could presumably solve the difference. However, even a diachronic perspective, less subject to a priori and circumstantial pressures, still remains the compound of past biases.

The wish for objectivity, when it exists, is no more than that, something aspired; the temptation is as valid as the attempt is useless, even though the historian tries to omit personal observations (reflecting his own time, for example). This is in itself very difficult, but it is even more difficult to avoid the observations, above all the implicit ones, reflecting other times. Then the historical-critical obstacle becomes unsurmountable.

With regard to the impossibility of overcoming partiality in literary criticism, criticism has been considered a form of autobiography. It is true that criticism reveals aspects of the work — thereby fulfilling its specific function — but it is an even greater truth that it reveals aspects of the critic himself, his personality, his life.

Since literary history necessarily depends on the observations of others, it does not guard against partiality; on the contrary, it cannot help being partial in this sense, except when considering (but it would not be too sensible to do so) that the judgement of others can be less partial than one’s own. This argument is not irrefutable. Despite philological precision, and mainly when it be understood that “art is the history of seeing”, in Wölfflin’s (1968) optimistic “vision”, what one is able to see is always passed on to history. This very fragmentariness may well be what makes art valid.

1. Definitions: the risk of the limits

It is no longer striking that in later years criticism — domestic and foreign — strongly objects to the exclusion (or welcomes the inclusion) of female artists in art exhibitions, knowing that the very existence of those works depends on their admission (or lack of it), rather than on the quality of the work of art; whether these works will be seen at all will often depend entirely on whether or not they are exhibited. This is why “exhibition” is not the riskiest business; the works that are not exhibited face a much higher risk.

The problem becomes acute in the case of contemporary art, when the object of criticism is whether or not it is art, when art is not considered an
autonomous notion but a dependent one: “Art was that which was considered as such by a given society”, said Mauss (1950), and this formula surpasses the simplification of tautological solutions, because besides showing that any attempt to define it is vain, it also shows that art is resistant to being schematized and classified beyond a purely historical, circumstantial and extrinsic critical evaluation. “Jazz music is any type of music which is played by jazz musicians” defines in its turn the 1974 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (10–120a) (and even though surrealist games are still played, it is better not to attribute humouristic or sarcastic intentions to such indisputable encyclopaedic authorities). For Culler (1981) a literary text is any text which is read as a literary text.

These variations do not conceal the fact that one notion has recently become increasingly recurrent: the scope of a concept is precarious, if unsuccessfully defined by a tautological sort of reasoning, which does not violate the principle of no contradiction. The generalized disapproval of this definition is better attributed to the fact that in all such formulae, reception and interpretation are used as the criteria according to which something is considered as art. Neither the author nor his products define the aesthetic condition as does reception. This transference of responsibilities is remarkable. The specific character of literature does not reflect the author, nor is it a property which distinguishes the literary work from other works or other writings; the literaturanost, the hackneyed literariness, is rooted here in the circumstances of the reading process, in the conviction-convention of the reader.

Genette (1966: 130) says in L’utopie littéraire:

C’est que pour Borges comme pour Valéry, l’auteur d’une œuvre ne détient et n’exerce sur elle aucun privilège, elle appartient dès sa naissance (et peut-être avant) au domaine public et ne vit que de ses relations innombrables avec les autres œuvres dans l’espace sans limites de la lecture. Chaque livre renait à chaque lecture, et l’histoire littéraire est au moins autant l’histoire des faits ou des raisons de lire que celle des manières d’écrire ou des œuvres d’écrire: Une littérature diffère d’une autre moins par le texte que par la façon dont elle est lue: s’il m’était donné de lire n’importe quelle page d’aujourd’hui — celle-ci, para exemple — comme on la lira en l’an 2000, je connaîtrais la littérature de l’an 2000.

[For Borges as much as for Valéry, the author of a work neither has nor exercises any privilege over it, because, as it belongs from its birth (and perhaps even before) to the public domain, and it only lives through its numberless relations with other works in the borderless space of reading ... Each book is reborn in each reading, and literary history is at least as much the history of the ways of and the reasons for reading as it is the history of the ways or the aims of writing: A literature differs from another less in the text than in the way it is read, if I could read any page written today (such as these pages), as it will be read in the year 2000, I would know the literature of the year 2000.]

Here Genette evokes Borges. Borges makes numerous remarks of this type. He expands the basis of the definition of reception to include the definition of literary genres. When he examines the specific characteristics of detective stories, he transfers the responsibility of defining this genre to the reader: “Literary genres depend, perhaps, less on texts than on the way they are read”, Borges (1980a: 72) said in a talk which he gave about the detective story. Consequently, he is convinced that the work is rescued from the limits imposed on it by its material and formal nature by being read, and therefore the work is determined by the attitude of the reader. Borges (1980a: 73) considers the possibility of making someone believe that Don Quixote is a detective novel.

Entonces, ¿qué lee?

En un lugar de la Mancha... desde luego supone que aquello no sucedió en la Mancha. Luego: ... de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme... ¿por qué no quiso acordarse Cervantes? Porque sin duda Cervantes era el asesino, el culpable. Luego... no hace mucho tiempo ... posiblemente lo que sucedió no será tan aterrador como el futuro.

[What does he read, then?

In a place in la Mancha... no doubt this means that it did not occur in la Mancha, and then... whose name I prefer not to remember... Why does Cervantes not wish to remember? Because undoubtedly he himself is guilty, the murderer... and then... not long ago... probably what occurred will not be as frightening as the future.]

According to these suppositions, definitions arise from the receiver, who is free to put them forth because he has a decision-making capacity — which is what criticism etymologically means — akin to the principle and practices of the so-called ready-made aesthetics and other avant-garde products of this century. The reader has a work which he may define, and by the same token the artist may take any object and use it, to find an application for it, checking on the triviality of its foreseeable purpose, or to invent a sense for it. Even so, the whole affair is ambiguous: on the one hand it is an attempt to diminish the excessive importance of the work, assimilating it to the utilitarian condition of any other artifact; on the other
hand, this antiartistic exercise enhances even a ridiculous object by aesthetizing it.

Marcel Duchamp's provocative objects, the soup tins, tomato juice tins and the soap boxes of Andy Warhol, are all polyvalent objects: they are works on exhibition in the museum as well as low-profile consumer products on the shelves of the supermarket.

These objects become consecrated through their "reception": they have been admitted to the museum and this acknowledgement means a displacement which amounts to a placement: a prominent, relevant and privileged place, the space of the artistic monument. A statue, an icon, a picture: this is what they are, regardless of where they are; the ready-made, in order to exist at all, needs a museum. The object is the same everywhere, but thanks to this displacement, it is transformed. This is another instance of Malraux's (1951:63) "transport", the essential requirement of creation and of the subsequent activation of the work-spectator relationship generated by this same "transportation". Once transported, the object is seen in a different way; by this visual metamorphosis, the object has changed: "The Greeks worshipped the statue of Aphrodite" and this worship prevented them from viewing it artistically. In a museum, the religious tribute does no longer take place, and nothing but beauty is revealed.

From household consumer items to objects of con-temp-lation, from sacred object to objet d'art, from the muse to the museum: nothing can resist the magic of that strange place, a place of estrangement, a non-place, a non-place-without-time, the negation of space, or rather that "atopical" place that defines the essence of the work.

Transportation, metamorphosis, estrangement — the famous straenoenie Todorov (1965) found in the root of the poetics of Schkolowski or in the Verfremdung of Brecht (1953) — transformation, decontextualization, they reach, through philology, in the metaphor (and its long history starting with the Aristotelian conception), the very heart of the artistic phenomenon.

The receptor's participation is indispensable, not just as an agent of registration (the inevitable bias of the historian) but for a fundamental reason: the work of art cannot exist without the aesthetic experience. It has been said many times and in many ways; «pas de lecture, pas d'écriture, pas d'expression» [no reading, no writing, no expression]: Levinas' (1975:70) consecutive denial, through which he added to Blanchot's apprehension foreseeing the decadence of literature once people in Europe would get tired of the games of exegesis.

The work itself does not exist as an artistic entity because its existence depends on an act of interpretation which takes place only if the reader enters the literary communication circuit. "Who can tell the dancer from the dance" is a quote from Yeats (1979:242–245), much cited in later years to insist upon the importance of conceiving or describing a dance without taking into account the person who dances.

In this case the work is indiscernible from its interpretation, but Charles (1977:9) also points out the impossibility of isolating the entity "book" and the entity "reader". It could be assumed that the verification of reader participation is more difficult if communication has to be established starting from works of the past.

However, even though the work is a product of the past, it only takes place in the present. The only possible approach comes from the perspective of the present, and in this way, the sense which is made of it depends necessarily on the different possible "expectation horizons" as Jauss (1978:14) has christened one of the basic principles of his Rezeptionsaesthetik, where he uses the notion of "triple horizon of lived experience" previously formulated by Husserl (1978:14).

Thus, the work does not exist unless it exists in each present moment. As Picasso said, "if a work cannot live always in the present, it cannot be considered to be art", but its survival through ever-actualized time also gives it an uncertain relation to history.

The work of art is withdrawn from the circumstances which belong to its historical setting and at the same time it is contracted by circumstances which belong to other historical instances. Its historicity is singularly arguable, because on the one hand it seems to cut out history and on the other, it seems to pay excessive attention to it.

Works are themselves renewed because tensions are constantly created between the present of the reception and the past of the text, between its own horizon and alien ones. This is what Jauss (1978:16) — quoting Gadamer — called "fusion of horizons" (Horizontverschmelzung).

One may wonder whether the work lasts because of its value or its value comes from the fact that it lasts. To remain, it is enough for the work to be there, because the recipient takes care of the rest. No new problems are posed. He asks questions and gives long answers, weighing pros and cons, answers involving ever-new aspects of the theory of the work, which become especially apparent (since Plato and Aristotle proposed this famous opposition and its later contextual variant) every time History and Poetry are antagonistically compared and every time these forms of knowledge/creation are studied. The contradictory force of the binomy has
not yet been interrupted, even though the symptoms of a crisis can be noticed.

Throughout the last few centuries, doctrines stressing the one of these terms or the other have succeeded each other. Prominent amongst them are the extreme historicist attempts of the nineteenth century, whose main feature was the disproportionate attention accorded to the personal history of the author; the "natural literary history" conceived by Sainte-Beuve and his study of biographical (biological and social) minutiae does not differ too much from the investigation of Hyppolite Taine of the writer's past and present, his collective, family, social, racial and national history.

This historical explosion was bound to lead to omission. The work disappeared in the array of civil inquiries, documents, chronicles and gossip. The poetic word faded away, obliterated by history. Half-way between the past and the present, his collective, family, social, racial and national history.

Exaggeration and saturation, the theoretical questions which followed, suspended history — Saussure's shared and generalized "diachronic prejudice" — and in different places of Europe and America, there appeared, almost simultaneously, the work-centered schools (formalism, structuralism, "Practical" and "New Criticism") which gave exclusive priority to the second term of the binomy: the work, its shape, the observation of its code, its constitutive elements, the rules, the intrinsic properties of writing, the system, suspended reference, history in the margin. The rest is recent history.

On more than one occasion, Croce (1950:77) stated that poetry is a historical fact with qualities of its own, different from other historical events, and "if, like the others, poetry stems from existing reality, its creative excellence consists in the intuitive conjunction and fusion of the particular with the universal, the individual with the cosmos and, (as Goethe once said about art in general) its starting point is what is 'characteristic' but its outcome is 'beauty'" (1950:77).

Thus Croce (1950) solves the primary divergence between historic and aesthetic interpretation, without neutralizing them, without burdening them with "historicism", which entails a pejorative note (the kind of historical interpretation which leaves aside the aesthetic event, and is thus defective), nor with its "aesthetisizing" counterpart (to use a designation that is also stigmatized) which designates the tendency toward omitting all information which is "external" to the work. The latter procedure is aimed at avoiding the dangers of historicist excess (the abuses of incidental interpretation) as well as the exaggerations and omissions inherent to the aesthetisizing approach.

The history of literature tends to turn circumstantial a fact which aimed precisely, with a certain degree of success, at avoiding circumstances and their fleetness. Thus, to historicize the work of art is to go against du désir de durer; to find in its postponed communication a kind of eternity, a way to escape from the present, to actualize the past, with its reserve of future, its final goal. Perhaps the reader of Kant (1952) may use for this operation Kant's famous formula Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck, and interpret this statement as the acknowledgement of the specific aesthetic property as one kind of "aimless aim", The (inevitable) play on words stands in all its senses.

The way is blocked: there is no other possibility but to delegate attributions to others, to their reference systems and their decisions, to the arbitrariness of other codes, the conventions which attenuate what Schneider (1980) called "le scandale du lien personnel" [the scandal of personal links]. One can do nothing but keep one's faith in (and the faith of) those "fervorous critics" of whom Eliot (1986) spoke in The use of poetry and the use of criticism, and trust their archeological investigations to remedy the omissions.

As Zumthor (1972) says apropos modern readings of medieval texts;

Qu'est-ce que en effet qu'une lecture vraie, sinon un travail où se trouvent à la fois impliqués le lecteur et la culture à laquelle il participe? Travail correspondant à celui qui produit le texte où furent impliqués l'auteur et son propre univers. A l'égard d'un texte médiéval, la correspondance ne se produit plus spontanément. La perception même de la forme devient équivoque. Les métaphores s'obscurcissent, le comparat s'écarte du comparé. Le lecteur reste engagé dans son temps; le texte par un effet tenant à l'accumulation des durées intermédiaires, apparaît comme hors du temps, c'est qui est une situation contradictoire.

[What is, in effect, a true reading but a job where the reader and the culture in which he participates are together? A job which corresponds to that of the text producer and in which the author and his own universe has been involved. With regard to medieval texts, this correspondence no longer occurs spontaneously. The perception of form becomes equivocal. Metaphors become obscure, what is compared is no longer connected to the comparison. The reader remains committed to his own time: the text, through an effect of accumulated time in between, appears to be outside time, in a contradictory situation.]
2. Terms in force

L'habitude de ne lire de siècles passés que les ouvrages qui ont mérité de survivre, nous laisse mal connaître, le plus souvent, par quoi les autres ont péri.

André Gide

Virtue is certainly recognized through vice, and permanence through caducity. However, we cannot always feel the same certainty: with regard to the works of the past, this relation of contrast and recognition is either guessed or lost.

The test of time does not deserve all that trust; perhaps ancient works have been excessively respected just because of their remote origin, often confounding in the same qualification posterity, fame, glory, with posterity, what comes afterwards or what is later. Concerning antiquity, the risk of confusion is almost inevitable: from the document to the monument, all that is needed is a philological slip. Frequently the relic, what remains, is appreciated only because it has remained.

It is significant that after each scourge which Satan inflicted on Job’s house, each time he would learn of it through a messenger, just one, who would inform Job about the damage and the devastation; he is always the only survivor and says “I alone could escape to tell thee”. He is saved just to be able to speak. The biblical narrator always rescues a witness — who suffers but gives testimony — because the only way in which the sacrifice would not have been in vain is to make it known, to tell it. But, what if at other times it did not happen like this? What if the only witness could not survive either?

Is history not always the truth of the victors? Did Benjamin (1971:280) not fear the victory of the enemy? “If the enemy is victorious, not even the dead will be safe. And that enemy has not ceased to be victorious.” Are the victors, perhaps, the more righteous? Can the principle of the survival of the fittest be applied to literature? It frequently happens that the criteria applied by the historian are conditioned by the duration and the permanence of the work (such is the case of Croce, for instance), but this duration of the work is perhaps only due to the fact that it was included in the history of literature.

More recently, however, Jankelévitich (1980:53) wrote that artistic survival is not fortuitous a matter, because the work exists as a permanent challenge to time: “Tout inconnu n’est pas nécessairement un mystérieux incognito: toute oeuvre inconnue n’est pas obligatoirement un chef-d’oeuvre méconnue... L’histoire confirme, en moyenne, les grandes évidences du consentement universel.” [Not everything unknown is necessarily a mysterious incognito; not every unknown work is necessarily an unknown masterpiece... History confirms, on average, the great evidence of universal consent.]

Despite all this trust, a suspicion is recurrently insinuated: if Max Brod had carried out Kafka’s instructions...

It seems legitimate to wonder whether the work is registered in history because it constitutes a work of art or if it is a work of art because it is registered in history. The excessive trust in “the verdict of time” prevents us from realizing that “this verdict is nothing more than the verdict of other critics and readers, even that of other professors”.

The risks of selection are inevitably present in every human action; it is a well-known fact that man is obliged to choose, this is his strange freedom.

The compulsions of choice become even more imperative when it comes to reporting a fact, to representing an event or a thing. In language — as analysed by Jakobson — there is no other possibility than to proceed through operations of selection and combination; selecting and combining, saying (when selecting) and saying (when combining); “C’est tout ce que tu sais faire” as Laverdure, the parrot in Queneau’s (1959) novel used to repeat.

Borges (1975:10) ironizes on the way the narrator becomes partial, takes sides in the unescapable reference-preference of his symbolic condition, a partiality which is the most obvious, or the less subtle — because it is inevitable — of aesthetic partialities and one which is recurrently questioned in his literature (it constitutes now one, now another, now many of the subjects which shapes his vision); “La página era extraña. No era una descripción de la batalla, era la batalla”. [The account was strange. It was not the description of a battle, it was the battle itself], he says in El espejo y la máscara [The mirror and the mask].

Neither does the history of literature manage to escape this constant process of choice from an inventory that does not aspire to be exhaustive, because it is the product of discrimination, albeit in an adjusted version. It is not a question of arbitrary abuse: even with the best of intentions and solid background information, it is not possible to do otherwise. Therefore every historian acts — and not always unwillingly — as a kind of censor.

Once more Wittgenstein’s (1969:114–115) aphorism can be applied, and with particular validity: “The limits of my language are the limits of my world”.
Because it is different from other objects or natural or historical events, the aesthetic object or event is **historicizable**, but only starting from a particular vantage point, a personal judgement, or an *a priori*. According to Picon (1953:30): "In order to exist, the stars do not need the human gaze nor cosmography. But works of art only exist because there exists a spirit that receives them and orders them, a conscience and a history of art."

This kind of solipsism that threatens the work of art is not, however, alien to other historical events. It has already been noted that it raises one of the most serious problems which play a role in historical revision. It is another of the alarms that stimulate Borges' imagination and one that is dramatized in the theme of *Tema del traídor y del héroe*, another of his vertiginous reversible dichotomies. Starting from the perturbing perspective of the circular ruins, relationships are inverted, images stratified, data altered, facts identified: history is the history of the historian. The historian, colleague and accomplice of the narrator, offers his own version, a different truth. Author and character of his own history, he discovers that *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare's (1937) tragedy, is the model of the political crime he is investigating, and, sheltered by such a prestigious hypothesis — and his *raison d'être* — he decides to limit (that is, to define) the truth: "After dogged brooding, he decides not to mention the discovery"; he understands that if a fact does not become history, *il ne passe pas*, it does not take place at all.

Jarrety (1982:71) says in his essay «Valéry: L’histoire, écriture d’une fiction» that history is not written on the basis of any one reality but rather on the representations which successive generations have formed from that reality.

No doubt the scholar (who does research, reads and writes) takes a different attitude towards historic events; however, necessarily filtered by verbal change and unsurmountable processes of symbolization, works and events are to a great extent assimilated into the representative nature of reference. Xenophon wrote in the third person, even though his story was about himself; Caesar does not hesitate to follow this model in *The Gallic Wars*. "History, that is to say, that margin of darkness that allowed humanity to tell Gallic War stories to itself", said Jean-Marie Domenach (1976:85). Why would history not suspend the laws of discourse, its own verbosity?

Therefore *history*, which is linked to *writing* from its beginning, remains literally subjected to that "original sin", to the vicissitudes of its verbal, imaginary being, less suspicious but more dangerous. The assimilation of these traditionally antagonistic terms does not resolve the differences between history and poetry; on the contrary, it further increases their complexity; if there exists something like the history of poetry — which is not certain — a poetics of history becomes also conceivable.

Due to the interference of words, literary truth is radically opposed to historical truth; therefore, truth becomes only attainable in the silence of reading. For Coleridge (1971), fiction depended on "the willing suspension of disbelief"; with the same argument one can make historical truth depend on the historical truth of the reader and his willingness to believe in the confidence which the text gives him.

This is why Lucien of Samosata's confession is so ingenious: he says that he is more honest than other storytellers, because he begins his *True story* with the cautionary remark that: "I shall tell only one truth: namely, that I lie. So I believe I shall escape the reproach of my readers, by admitting myself that I do not tell the truth." (I intend to research in the interesting variations within narrative literature, of an inchoative discourse and, possibly without knowing it, of the famous paradox ofEbuleides in another paper. Even though it is placed at the other extreme, I cannot pass over Balzac's (1937) equally dubitative: «Ah! Sachez-le: ce drame n'est ni une fiction, ni un roman. All is true... » [Oh, learn this, this drama is neither fiction nor novel. All is true...] in *Le Père Goriot*.) The purpose of the preceding remarks was to point out the conflicting relations between assimilated terms (literature, reading) or differentiated (history, poetry) in the verbal process with the aim of introducing a first aspect of the silence of reception, which constitutes its specific object. A historical event exists as such only when it is reported. Its truth depends on writing, on the words that guarantee it: a non-verbalized event does not suffice: there is no truth without version, as has already been said. The literary event, however, starts by words and, since it does not seek a certification beyond writing, it is just that: words, discourse. To exist it needs reading, the silence of reading.
Chapter 5

Lector e-lector

On dit que notre langage découpe arbitrairement
des objets dans la réalité mouvante.
On le dit comme si nous étions coupables.
Brice Parain

In the aforementioned conference about the Cabbala, Borges seems convinced that one only recalls the essential features of a reading. Of long novels (novels cannot avoid an abundance of fillers), the reader only recalls memorable situations or phrases; of poems, only a few verses. This is no reductionism; on the contrary, each reader finds thus way his own reading; the same reader, another reading, each time. For this reason Borges disregards the pretended novelties of some works, because for him writing is far less important than reading, which is the fundamental operation. He admitted that the poet had to write fourteen verses because that was the pattern of the sonnet: he could not do less, he was obliged by a pre-established form. On the other hand, he believes it would be exaggerated to think that an obligation should be essential: all fourteen verses of the sonnet cannot be essential. A measure is just a conventional constraint. It is the reader’s prerogative to find among all those verses the ones he needs, the one or maybe the few which matter (to him).

The acknowledgement of partiality as a condition and necessity of art is no recent literary invention. Writers have always felt the burden of an incomplete writing, which remains a partial representation. Borges accepts it and shares it: one part for the author, the other part for the reader. His story Musée is the best example of the uselessness of the claim to accuracy (cartographic accuracy in this case), the minute details of which destroy, by their very perfection, the representation. The same limitation appears once and again: the unrepresented disappears. A choice must be made, and time (chronological or meteorological time) takes care of the rest.

The bibliographical biases facing the reader are various.

Between Benjamin and McLuhan it was undoubtedly Malraux (1951) who dealt first and foremost with the consequences of the reproduction of works of art through mental and material images, collected in an “imaginary museum”, which could be a memory or a photograph. In like manner it is possible to acknowledge the existence of an “imaginary library”, inside the reader’s mind, at which place — another non-place — it may be possible to find and relate the books which came to the reader’s knowledge (first input), those he could browse or read (second input), the different ways of reading applied by the reader to these books — from the orthodox application of the four readings of Dante to the three types of reading specified by Barthes, who distinguishes between different texts or the same text in different moments — (third input); this is what remains of all these records.

In order to accomplish his reading, a reader depends on the options supplied by the general history of literature; yet each reader, in turn, assimilates this history to his personal history. Since it remains, the work manages to avoid the historical contingencies from which it departs and with which it parts, but the autonomy of its “heterocosmos” does not exclude the fact that the reader always tries to connect it to both his and its history. He dispenses with history, even though on the other hand historization is, at least, twofold. The reader finds himself at the crossroads of many circumstances, random or foreseeable, and yet he must draw the course of his reading as a function of these problematic variables, according to their tendencies and interests.

Author and reader share these constraints. Valéry (1971:9) justified the maritime name of Rhumbs, the title of the first parts of his Tel Quel II;

Comme l’aiguille du compas demeure assez constante, tandis que la route varie, ainsi peut-on regarder les caprices ou bien les applications successives de notre pensée, les variations de notre attention, les incidents de la vie mentale, les divertissements de notre mémoire, la diversité de nos désirs, de nos émotions et de nos impulsions — comme des écarts définis par contraste avec je ne sais quelle constance dans l’intention profonde et l’oppose à chacun de ses instants: Les remarques et les jugements qui composent ce livre me furent autant d’écarts d’une certaine direction privilégiée de mon esprit: d’où Rhumbs.

[Like the compass needle, it remains quite constant, while the route varies, so we can look at the whims or the successive applications of our thought, the variations in our attention, the incidents of mental life, the diversions of our memory, the diversity of our desires, of our emotions and of our impulsions — like deviations defined by contrast with I do not know what constancy in our deep intentions and puts each one in its instants: the remarks and judgements which make this book were the deviations of certain privileged direction of my spirit: hence Rhumbs.]
From each end of the work, author and reader proceed with a remarkable affinity. The procedures approach each other, the results are not at all different, the responsibilities are shared. Hence it may be relevant to revive a fading etymology and recognize that every “lector” is an “e-lector”, insofar as he reads; he is also a “se-lector” because he chooses by himself and for himself. Therefore, reading is an action which defines the human condition: man cannot fail to choose. Between the obligation and the choice — duty and talent — his tragedy is acted out. This contradictory combination of freedom and coercion is the key to the reader, as well as the key to the text.

Thought is based on a mechanism of selections; what is known is acknowledged and unknown at the same time. The dialectic relation between both actions yields knowledge. In order to know, to think, it is necessary to separate, to cut, to abstract; one part is taken, another is omitted. The logical and mental transit divests each particular experience of its complex sensible composition; thought fixes and forgets. In Proust’s words (1954: 718): “Comme un géomètre qui, dépeuillant les choses de leurs qualités sensibles, ne voit que leur substratum linéaire, ce que racontaient les gens m’échappaï” [Like a geometrician, who, devoiling things from their sensorial qualities, only sees their lineal substratum, what people told me, escaped me] a character who knew how to look “reprénant vie que quand se manifestait quelque essence générale, commune à plusieurs choses” (1954: 718) [coming back to life when some general essence, common to many things, became apparent].

On the other hand, Ireneo Funes, the memoriaus, Borges’ hyperaesthetic character, sees everything, remembers everything. This is why he cannot tolerate even the meagre reality of the countryside, monotonous and depleted, and to find relief he stays in the dark, in a corner of his hut, lying on his bed: Ireneo, a simple, proud “gaullo”, like so many others, had fallen off his horse and ever since “había perdido el conocimiento” [he had lost consciousness].

Borges (1974a:488) cunningly makes an ambivalent reference about the consequences of the accident that had crippled Funes, that had left Funes “suffering” from a constant memory and an extraordinary perception, so perfect that it prevented him from knowing:

Diecinueve años había vivido como quien sueña: miraba sin ver, oía sin oír, se olvidaba de todo, de casi todo. Al caer perdió el conocimiento; cuando lo recobró, el presente era casi intolerable de tan rico y tan nítido, y también las memorias más antiguas y más triviales. Poco después averiguó que estaba tullido. El hecho apenas le interesó. Razonó (sintió) que la inmovilidad era un precio mínimo. Ahora su percepción y su memoria eran infalibles.

[For nineteen years, he said he had lived as someone in a dream: he looked without seeing, listened without hearing, he forgot everything — almost everything. On falling from the horse, he lost consciousness; when he came to, the present was almost intolerable, it was too rich and bright; the same was true of the most distant and trivial memories. Later, he realized that he was crippled. The fact scarcely interested him. He reasoned (he felt) that immobility was a small price to pay. And now his perception and his memory were infallible.]

Funes hears, sees and feels everything; the meticulous totality of his infallible perception is what prevents him from understanding or wanting to understand. Thus, all he asks from the narrator is to lend him Pliny’s Historia naturalis and a Latin dictionary “para la buena inteligencia del texto original” [for the proper understanding of the original text]. This is enough for him because in the vast taxonomic enumeration of scientific description, Pliny encompasses all knowledge of nature; in like manner, all words are indiscriminately listed in the dictionary, because the alphabetic criterion is the least intellectual, and the least critical and partial, of criteria.

A writer, a reader, do not suffer from this fantastic perception of Ireneo’s and they can satisfy, through the work, their own preferences and their own options. However, they are unable to make deliberate decisions: like Ireneo, they cannot do anything else. According to Jauss (1978:198), “la tradición literaria, vue du point de vue de la théorie de la réception, ne saurait être un objet de recherche que sous condition de reconnaître la partialité du point de vue et le choix continu comme condition de toute communication littéraire.” [literary tradition, from the point of view of the theory of reception, could not be an object of investigation unless it recognized the bias of its point of view and the continuous choice which is a condition of all literary communication.]
1. The ups and downs of reading

... une mesure de la Sonate me frappa, mesure que je connaissais bien pourtant, mais parfois l’attention éclaire différemment des choses connues pourtant depuis longtemps et nous remarquions ce que nous n’y avions jamais vu. Marcel Proust

We have noted above that a reception never comprises the total extension of the text; each reading requires a personal and selective anthological operation, based on personal choice. The text is not uniform, it entails differences which guide, in part, the sense of discrimination of the reader; but these tendencies remain neither determinative nor definitive, they can vary as soon as the text becomes subject to “actualization” through reading.

The lights and shadows that highlight or darken the different passages in the reading process are as circumstantial as they are constritive. The highlighting will be different, but it will invariably take place. Thus what could be called a pathological reading will never be recorded.

A pathological, total reading, without circumstantial selection and partial views, does not exist. However, it is necessary to note the importance of the phenomenon of recitation, the repetition of the text adjusted to the principle of literality according to Valéry’s aphorism: «La dignité du vers: un seul mot qui manque empêche tout» [The dignity of the verse: just one missing word, and everything changes].

With regard to poetry, this is a truism. Coleridge (1971: 23) also said that “it would hardly be more difficult to take a stone with bare hands out of the pyramids than to alter one word, or the position of one word, in Milton or Shakespeare (at least in their most important works) without making the author say something else or something worse than what he said”.

Like the absolute texts of the cabbalists, theatrical speeches, professional readings, recited poetry, prayers, are both something more and something less than reading. They are forms that have to do with performance, festivity and ritual, with the renewal of a sacred space and time where man feels a “contemporary of the Gods”, rather than with the modest discretion of reading, the choices and segmentations which take place privately.

There is a notable affinity between the observance of literariness and what, on the whole, could be called magical words, a less lexical than liturgical phenomenon. Knowing the meaning of the word “abracadabra” is not necessary, because it does not really have a meaning. It is enough to write or to utter the word, as it is, without introducing changes, and to wait for its magical appeal; from the sacred utterance of the Sanskrit om which Panini orthodoxy describes and prescribes, to the famous “open sesame” faithfully spelled out by Ali Baba outside the cave. The password settles the question of meaning, and is invoked as an absurd safe-conduct, a key of nonsense.

For centuries, prayers in foreign or dead languages (Sanskrit, Latin, ancient Hebrew), rather than signifying, represented and consolidated mystery and faith. What matters is not to understand the mystery but to share it; it is resistant to understanding. “The true prayer at last, the one that asks for nothing” said Beckett (1956:107). In the same way as Austin’s (1975) performative verbs, the validity of magical words depends on their perfect realization, on conditions of “felicity” in which they are uttered, on their embedment in a ritual and the inflexibility of its totalitarian non-literality.

Despite his infatuation, Ion, Plato’s gifted rhapsode, says that it is not thanks to his talent nor to the techniques he has learnt, but to the “divine force” that the muse transmits to him that he has become the best interpreter of Homer. He argues that, unwittingly, by rhapsodic repetition, by the same token he receives and transmits this force. Just as he is chosen by the muse, Ion chooses the fragments that please him the most, anticipating the interests and needs of his listeners. A chain of dynamic choices ensures the good fortune of his performance.

When Sartre (1964:34) remembers in Les mots when Anne-Marie used to read to him aloud with «son air d’aveugle extra-lucide» [her air of extra-lucid blind woman], he relives the impression conjured by recitative fidelity, of de-emphasis of the interpreter:

«Anne-Marie me fit asseoir en face d’elle, sur ma petite chaise; elle se pencha, baissa les paupières, s’endormit. De ce visage de statue sortit une voix de plâtre. Je perdis la tête: qui racontait? qui? et a qui? Ma mère s’était absente: pas une sourire, pas un signe de connivence, j’étais en exil. Et puis je ne reconnaissais pas son langage. Où prenait-elle cette assurance? Au bout d’un instant j’avais compris: c’était le livre qui parlait».

[Anne Marie had me sit in front of her, on my little chair; she bent, lowered her eyelids, she fell asleep. From this statue-like face a plaster voice came out. I lost my head. Who was telling? What? To whom? My mother was absent: no smiles, no sign of connivance, I was in exile. Besides, I did not recognize her language. Where did she take this self-assurance from? In an instant, I understood: it was the book who talked.]
However, when Proust (1966, 1:43) evokes in *A la recherche du temps perdu* a similar scene between parent and child, the impressions described by the narrator are quite different: the infidelities of his mother’s reading, caused both by his mother’s censorship of the text — skipping erotic passages — and by the gaps caused by his own lack of attention as she read the story to him, made him enjoy, in a contradictory way, the sentences he heard, which brimmed with his mother’s approval. This made the discontinuous reading an exemplary instance of the reader as one who visibly makes choices — a balance between two roles which endeared her in the eyes of the listener — instead of suppressing her:

Elle retrouvait pour les attaquer dans le ton qu’il faut, l’accent cordial qui leur préexiste et les dicta, mais que les mots n’indiquent pas; grâce à lui elle amortissait un passage toute crue dans les temps des verbes, donnait à l’imparfait et au passé défini la douceur qu’il y a dans la bonté, la mélan­colie qu’il y a dans la tendresse, dirigeait la phrase qui finissait vers celle qui allait commencer, tantôt pressant, tantôt relâchant la marche des syllabes pour les faire entrer, quoique leurs quantités fussent différentes, dans un rythme uniforme, elle insufflait à cette prose si commune une sorte de vie sentimentale et continue (1966, 1:43).

[She found, to attack them, the necessary tone, the pleasant accent which pre-exists them, and dictates them, but which words do not indicate: thanks to it, she toned down all the roughness in verb tenses, she gave the imperfect and the definite past the sweetness of goodness, the melancholy of tenderness, she directed the one phrase towards the next, sometimes hurrying, sometimes slowing the march of the syllables to make them fit even when their quantities were different, in a uniform rhythm, she insufflated this ordinary prose a sort of continuous and sentimental life.]

But also this discontinuous reading, by an intermediary, is a very atypical procedure. Here, without refuting previous models, it is not redundant to note a common phenomenon, no longer striking: the reader who reads aloud, when reading for others, does not read for himself. This is not a truism; a reading is not necessarily silent: when Saint Augustine, in other circumstances, saw, without hearing it, the silent reading of Ambrose of Milan (Borges has provided this account), he was astonished by Ambrose’s silence. Because someone who reads aloud is little or nothing of a se-lector, he practices a pantheological reading, which is a recitation, an incantation — the term also has the meaning of charme attributed to it by Todorov (1978a:255) in *Le discours de la magie*, when he uses it to distinguish between “prayer” and “incantation”.

Despite the symmetrical schematization of the sign — the ideal symmetry conceived by Saussure, which is based on an accepted semantic distinction — in each case there is one predominant aspect. On being read aloud, the signifier takes the greatest share, the increase of the signifier goes at the expense of the signified. If the reader-speaker is interrupted and asked how much he has grasped of what he has just read, he is puzzled by this question, he is the first to be surprised at not having understood, or even paid attention to, his own reading, which may be well intoned, perfectly modulated, and pronounced in a loud, musical voice. He is a ventriloquist, the puppet who lends his voice to a speaker who does not himself think.

True reading is different from any other form of recitation. In *Le plaisir du texte* Barthes (1973a:21) noted one of the fundamental principles the theories which deal with reading should keep researching: the choices, the hierarchization of the text as a sort of *tmesis*, that linguistic disjunction which makes us read the whole text with uneven intensity and uneven interest: «C’est le rythme même de ce qu’on lit et de ce qu’on ne lit pas qui fait le plaisir des grands récits: a-t-on jamais lu Proust, Balzac, *War and Peace*, mot à mot? (Bonheur de Proust: d’une lecture à l’autre, on ne saute jamais les mêmes passages.)» [It is the very rhythm of what one reads, or what one does not read, what gives us the pleasure of the great tales: have perhaps Proust, Balzac, *War and Peace*, been read word by word? (Proust’s dream: from one reading to the next, the same passages are never skipped.)]

The text is a piece of compact writing decomposed by the reader; the ups and downs of his attention are controlled by his interests, desires, knowledge and ignorance, which take apart the original text où tout se tient and forms a new whole with parts that have, bit by bit, been recreated by him. This is how the reader actualizes the text, renders it present and, by the same token, more real, removing it from the state of virtuality in which it otherwise remains.

Each reading realizes and revises the system.

Thus the reader repeats, in any reading, the poetic experience which Queneau (1961) so ingeniously proposes in his *Mille milliards de poèmes*, and in which he humoristically evaluates the multiple (di)versions of reading. Queneau’s poetic account shows that this has well-defined rules.

On the other hand, the precise instructions which Cortázar (1969:7) gives to the reader of *Rayuela* in the “Board of directions” at the beginning of his novel, sound somewhat useless and even forced. He tells the reader that “he is invited to select one of two possibilities”, which he proposes in
detail, indicating even page numbers, in order to govern the possible readings of the novel. This choice and order put forth by the author himself are the natural prerogatives of the reader, and thus it should not be necessary to invite him to exercise them and, even less so, curtail his freedom by giving him exact instructions. The “paratextual” limitations can only come from an abusive author who tries to bring his own influence to bear upon what Genette (1982: 9) refers to as «un des lieux privilégiés de la dimension pragmatique de l’œuvre» [one of the privileged places of the pragmatic dimension of the work].

Though himself an author, and as an author, Borges contributes to clarify this “question of prerogatives”. His Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote is perhaps one of the best statements in defense of the reader, although it surely is not the first or the last argument probationary of a prolonged «Cervantes question», if such a thing exists (something akin to the Homeric question). The importance of this problem and the quality of the statement are hopefully worth the inconveniences of a digression.

2. The relevance of some antecedents:

Pierre Menard, reader of the Quixote

The first dis-authorization was proposed by Cervantes himself, when he placed upon Cide Hamete Benengeli the responsibility of drafting the manuscripts which tell the adventures and misadventures of Don Quixote.

Another authorship problem is posed soon afterwards: this is the problem Bloch (1974: 97) comments upon when he recalls that the scant time difference between the publishing dates of Don Quijote in Spain and of the remarkable translation of this famous novel which appeared in England, drew so much attention (because of the proximity of these publications, of their excellence) that people did not doubt to attribute the writing of Don Quijote to Francis Bacon (to whom the comedies and tragedies of Shakespeare had already been attributed). The problem of late adoption (1792) of the Gregorian calendar by the British — a question of different churches — and mainly the proud supposition that the first Spanish “version” was nothing but the translation of an obscure officer called Cervantes plus the singular prestige of Francis Bacon helped to lend credibility to this transposition of “authorized” translation.

Later, Unamuno (1961), in Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho contributed to increase and update our puzzlement by attributing — Pirandellically — to Don Quixote himself the creation of the novel which bears his name.

Once again the created creator: the character, his own author. Rather than being a parodic situation, this substitution poses a whole set of aesthetic — or rather theological — problems, which could give rise to a long discussion elsewhere; now and just to enunciate it: God begets man so that man can beget and believe in him. To beget and to believe, in Spanish crear and creer, are two actions which, beyond their semantic differences, are poetically similar: what is coincidental in them is not the sound but the meaning. A variant on Dante’s (1974: 621) quote: “Virgine madre figlia del tuo figlio” [Virgin mother, daughter of your son], presumably a hypotext of Apollinaire’s more enigmatic mothers, who are like «les colichiques» (Goethe’s Urpflanz, perhaps), filles les leurs filles. (Much longer ago, two sculptures called Iliad and Odyssey claimed for themselves the glory of having created Homer, and they still do so, standing at the entrance of the Agora in Athens.) Authorship (the name of the author) and authority (his renown, his glory) are shifted from the creator to the creation. On a different level, Heidegger (1973: 37), trying to define the essence of the work, enlarges the list of reciprocities: “The artist is the origin of the work, the work is the origin of the artist”; the theological filiation has not yet ended.

Suffice it to mention that it is not difficult to find various types of authors for Don Quijote: a Moor, an Englishman, an obscure Spanish officer, a narrator, a character — the list does end here — thus, it comes as no surprise that, for the time being, the author of Don Quijote be one of its readers, in this case, Pierre Menard: Pierre Menard, by paradox.

Once more, Borges solves, by inversion, by paradox, this problem of prerogatives, so topical, always blurred, with a significant occurrence. This time a scholar, friend and admirer of Pierre Menard’s, is the narrator, who in an essay tries to correct some catalogue mistakes caused by necrological haste and posthumous memorials dedicated to the writer from Nimes: the alarming omission of Don Quijote, his masterpiece.

This story by Borges may be included in an ever-growing category: “reading-fiction”, or “criticism-fiction”, which contributes to extend the list of other classes of fictions equally unexpected.

Borges’ catapromancy has already been mentioned here. In this story the inversion means reverse and contrariness, but it is mainly an investment: established between the poles author/reader; it reveals two of the essential functions of the literary event, and it is also in this opposition that literature is played; a truth mise-en-jeu.

As Barthes (1973a: 21) wrote in Le plaisir du texte: «L’avidité même de la connaissance nous entraîne pour survoler ou à enjamber certains
passages... La trémèse... oppose ce qui est utile à la connaissance du secret et ce qui lui est inutile; c'est une faille issue d'un simple principe de fonctionnalité; ... l'auteur ne peut le prévoir: il ne peut vouloir écrire ce qu'on ne lira pas. [The very craving for knowledge makes us reread or skip certain passages ... inexec ... opposes what is useful for the knowledge of the secret and what is useless for this knowledge; it is an open fissure of a simple principle of functionality; ... the author cannot foresee it: he cannot wish to write what will not be read.]

Every reader shares with the author the condition of censor. Thus Pierre Menard (1974a:448) also practices the inevitable bias of writing; in his wish to rewrite Don Quixote, he chooses chapter IX, a fragment from chapter XXII and chapter XXXVIII. Through aesthetic communication, reading and writing are identified: «Mi recuerdo general del Quijote, simplificado por el olvido y la indiferencia, puede muy bien equivaler a la imprecisa imagen anterior de un libro no escrito. Postulada esa imagen (que nadie en buena ley me puede negar) es indiscutible que mi problema es har- to más difícil que el de Cervantes.» [My general recollection of the Quixote, simplified by oblivion and indifference, could well be like the blurred previous image of a book which has not yet been written. Having postulated this image (who nobody could in all fairness deny me), it becomes evident that my problem is quite a bit more difficult than Cervantes'.]

This identification author-reader constitutes one of the most solid generative axles of Borges’ aesthetics,7 and invalidates, in this case, the lucid reflections of Blanchot (1969:109-126) or, more recently, those of Steiner (1975:70–73), both of whom have contributed, through their studies, to the enhancement of the readings of readings.

Both coincide, remarkably but mistakenly, in seeing Menard as a transl- ator, the ideal translator. They shift, through overinterpretation, the opposition reader/author, which we are interested in examining. “In a translation”, says Blanchot (1969:109–112), “we have the same work in a double language”. And surely this duality does take place. But with the work of Menard just the opposite happens: the work is duplicated, but the language remains exactly the same, the Spanish of Cervantes does not appear modified in any detail. The narrator states: “The texts of Cervantes and of Pierre Menard are verbally identical”. If the aspiration of every translation is to achieve equivalence, this must take place as a synonymic, onomasiologic operation (if the term onomasiologic can be applied in linguistics as the operation which takes place between two languages). This would provide an identical content (we are not dealing with meanings) through different expressions.

Menard proceeds from the opposite side, of onomastic homonony (but also in an extensive sense, because it does not deal with signifieds but with semantic content). The poet proceeds from the signs themselves in order to gain access to new meanings, his own meanings.

Like every reading, Menard’s puts into practice a sort of pragmatic homonomy: one text lends itself to as many interpretations as readings. Indeed, the translator dubs a text, but insofar as it is dubbing, it is something else, another text: it does not coincide with the original, nor does it substitute it; it does not erase the original text but it disfigures it, it transfigures the text, at best.

Translation is indeed a twofold work, but not because it repeats the work twice (it does not duplicate it); it is twofold insofar as it does not distinguish between writing and reading, and both appear simplified in a single discourse which conceals the strong rivalry between two literary functions which are symmetrical as much by similarity as by opposition.

Beyond historical alternatives it is possible to conflate writer and reader in one entity performing two opposite textual functions. Assimi- liated to the writing which incorporates it into the text, the translator’s reading does not keep the silence which is its natural condition, and thus becomes explicit. Making the implicit explicit is one of the greatest risks of translation.

The overinterpretation of two so prestigious critics can be justified. Once again the avant-texte (the notion that Genette [1982:447] likes to borrow from Noel [1972]), in this case Don Quijote de la Mancha, is not wholly innocent of a certain interpretive tendency to divert or mislead reading and successive hypertexts.

The narrator of Don Quijote introduces himself in Cervantes’ novel as an external entity which is underscored by the very Borgesian game of cordon.8

In a paper which I presented at the Colloquium on Semiotics of the Performing Arts (University of Brussels, April 25–28, 1981), I applied the term cordones to those mediative procedures which delimit the dialectic states of autonomy and interdependence between the universe of art as an artificial and, above all, virtual universe, and the universe of expectations belonging to the spectator and his expectations — the historical situation in which this particular communication takes place.

The word cordon, in Spanish, refers to a situation which is both common and contradictory: it unites and separates at the same time. This term is used to refer to an object which unites two different things (although it also designates the union and intimate dependency between two beings: ser and
nacer (‘to be’ and ‘to be born’). At the same time it is a sign of separation, a clear-cut excision (as in a sanitary or police cordon), necessary or arbitrarily imposed. The cordon defines how fiction is produced and received into reality. Like the ‘narrative metalepses’ which Genette (1972:243–245) speaks of, which designate the transgressions of extra-diegetic narrative in the diegetic universe or, inversely, of diegetic characters in the metadiegetic universe, cordones also are frontières mouvantes, marking the boundaries shared by two rival universes. (Like two neighbouring riverbanks, close and competitive at the same time and in the same place.)

Like limitations entailing extension rather than restriction, the cordones appear interwoven, uniting-opposing reality and fiction, like Tiepolo’s buffoon, placed half-way between the fresco and the wall of Jacquemart-André Museum in Paris,9 which breaks the marble frame so as to embrace both of them. Similar to those grammatical elements (shifters, embrayeurs, indication marks) which articulate and overlap two distinct experiences in the same communicative space, the cordones tie ambivalent knots which define and confuse the given and the created situation.

The narrator is situated on the margins of the narration. In chapter IX (precisely a chapter chosen by Menard to create his own Quixote, a detail which must be added to the existing works of criticism), following the scene of Don Quixote’s combat with the gallant Bizzayan, the story is interrupted at its best, and the narrator expresses disappointment at the impediment which prevents him from learning the outcome of the fight. He complains sorrowfully that the author has not provided more information as to where he may find what is missing from his narration. Above all, he laments the injustice that such feats are not recorded for lack of a learned person willing to describe them.

As Cervantes says, were it not for “heaven, chance and fortune” as well as the hard work and diligence of the narrator in search of the end of the story, he would never have learned that a young man had offered, for a small price, a batch of manuscripts in Arabic characters to a silk-trader. Such is the interest of the narrator that he is tempted to make a higher offer in order to be able to continue the story.

One is dealing here, unquestionably, with a very modern narrator: he distinguishes his own rights from the author’s and although he stays away from diegesis, he is still perilously close to its limits; almost outside the narration, he ignores the continuation of events like a reader who has reached the same point in the novel, yet who possesses the experience or attributes which enable him to intervene in its development.

The narrator is aware that he is nulliscient, an outsider; he is little more than a fortuitous spokesman for the adventures he tells. Cervantes’ narrative fracture is remarkable, because through it fiction escapes, the cords intertwine, reality is introduced, and all of this is achieved by means of a poetic joke. But, the exteriority of the narrator becomes even more evident when, not knowing Arabic, he resorts to the assistance of a literate Moor, who is learned enough to translate the text and thus enabling the narrator to continue his account.

Borges no doubt speculates with the limitations and ignorance of Cervantes’ narrator, and the actions of an implied translator. He counts on “the great memory” of literature, transtextuality or the “textual transcendence of the text”, as Genette (1982:7) calls it; this is his way of controlling the specific literary functions of Pierre Menard, and in this way the game of hide and seek in which Cervantes’ narrator indulges (as do the author and the readers) may have been so transtextualized between the story and its readers, that it has induced Blanchot (1969:109–112) and Steiner (1975:67–71) to transform Pierre Menard’s work into a translation. The slippery phenomenon of displaced authorship, which is the essence of this work and of the narrative event in general (first from Cervantes to Cide Hamete, then from the narrator to the translator), all these complex relations between literary identities, belong to the received “repertory”, the “encyclopaedia”, and are hermeneutically confirmed with each new occurrence.

On the other hand, Menard had already done some translations. But precisely those works formed part of his “visible work”, the less important work, the work which can easily be revised; precisely what Borges’ (1974a:446) narrator is to rectify, to do Menard justice by remembering not that visible work but “la otra: la subterránea, la inerminablemente heroica, la impar” [the other, subterranean, the infinitely heroic, the unequalled work]. He was referring to Menard’s Don Quixote.

Menard’s exceptional fidelity to the text must not be confused with the pains a translator takes; neither should it be considered plagiarism. The narrator is quite explicit: “There is no need to add that he never faced a mere mechanical transcription of the original; his aim was not to copy it” (1974a:446). He adds to this that “a literal version of the literal version that Quevedo made of the Introduction to the devout life of Saint Francis of Sales, which Mme Henri Bachelier attributes to Menard, should be a misheard joke of our friend” (1974a:446), even for someone like Menard, who was a fanatic observer of textual fidelity. A literal version of a literal version is a literary redundancy, which is excluded because it is tautological, useless and above all humoristic.
In the story there is no lack of details about Menard's work. Borges mentions that he does not devote his time to those recurrent adaptations of classical works which trivialize with circumstantial versions the permanent values of art, going beyond specific, historical occurrences. Pierre Menard despises those works. The *Don Quixote* of different origins and different times have, because of their useless and ephemeral features, at the same time multiplied and diminished, the timeless validity of the mythical character.

Genette (1982:447) is heading in the right direction when he says: “It is well-known that Pierre Menard’s *Don Quixote* is not a copy but rather a minimal transformation or maximal imitation of Cervantes, achieved by the canonization of pastiche: the perfect competence is achieved through absolute identification (to be Miguel de Cervantes). However, the weakness of this realization lies in the fact that it is ‘imaginary’ and, as Borges himself says, impossible. Minimal pastiche, on the other hand, fills our libraries and bookshelves. Borges, desirous of ‘filling the calmest of books with adventure’ suggested that the *Imitation of Christ* should be attributed to Céline or to Joyce”.

No transcription, no translation, no plagiarism, no adaptations. If Menard is awarded an obituary as the writer of *Don Quixote*, that occurs because once more Borges simply must confuse and confute reader and author. This confusion has already been explained by the more general principle of his aesthetics of “circular ruins”, of *mise en abîme*, and is illustrated once and again in his works by the already mentioned mechanics of inversions-inclusions, which attenuates the highly controversial reality/fiction dichotomy.

The specific reader/author inversion is explicitly and repeatedly legitimised and underpinned by Borges. According to Borges, every writer writes something which already exists, despite appearances to the contrary. This does not imply that the value of recent works — his own included — is thereby diminished, nor are older works considered more valuable, just because they are older. Instead there comes a questioning of all types of production and the appreciation, above all, of that receiving/writing, which is literature.

The reader is an author insofar as he exercises this active appropriation of which Jauss (1978:63) spoke, referring to the reception of works in which each renewal of the “horizons of expectations” renews and modifies their value and their sense. Yet, the writer as well as the critic:

qui juge une publication nouvelle, l’écrivain qui conçoit son œuvre en fonction du model — positif ou négatif — d’une œuvre antérieure, l'historien de la littérature qui réplace une œuvre dans le temps et la tradition dont elle est issue et l’interprète historiquement: tous sont aussi et d’abord des lecteurs, avant d’établir avec la littérature un rapport de réflexivité qui devient à son tour productif (1978:44).

[who judges a new publication, the writer who conceives his work according to the — positive or negative — model of a previous work, the literary historian who replaces a work in the time and the tradition from which it came and interprets it historically: all of them are, first and foremost, readers, before establishing with literature a relation of reflexivity which, in its turn, turns to be productive.]

Despite the modernity of this question we should not ignore its similarity to the enthusiastic expressions of Ion in the above-quoted dialogue. Also for Plato — and this argument may serve to attenuate Plato’s harmed reputation due to his qualification of artistic activity (as imitation in the third degree, as the expulsion of the poets from the *Republic*) — the creative fury, the divine force, reach the interpreter and, through him, the audience, with the same intensity as a magnetic force pulls the links of a chain.

Besides illustrating the origins and effects of rhapsodic creation, the comparison strikes us as modern: poetic enthusiasm, which comes from the artist, who in his turn obtains it from the muse, has to reach the audience, who obtains it, with equal intensity, from the rhapsode.

In this manner the intervention of the receptor gives way to the work. When Iser (1978b:107-134) in “Grasping a text” states that an aesthetic object has no existence of its own and that successful communication must ultimately depend on the reader’s creative activity, he confirms the intervention of the receiver who enables the work to enter “in the continuous movement of literary experience, where the horizon is constantly changing, where the passage from passive reception to active reception, from simple reading to critical comprehension, from the accepted aesthetic norm to its replacement by new productions is permanently taking place”, as Jauss (1978:63) also remarked in the same years.

Thus, in practice, the productive intervention — active or receptive — operates in a rather imperfect manner: it is the continuous movement of the literary experience. An imperfection that is an indicator of literature’s health; to multiply is not a fault, a flaw, but its fate, its destiny.

A work is actualized but does not change. On the one hand, Menard carries out his literary task so perfectly, he reads *Don Quixote* so actively, that his historical interpretation — as could not be otherwise — (despite the philological concerns which are recorded in his visible work), steers
clear of any archeological reconstruction: his interpretation differs clearly from how a contemporary of Cervantes would have read him.

But, on the other hand, his *Don Quixote* transtextualises his hypotext, based on such a perfect, literal reading that the hypertext can no longer be distinguished from the original:

...la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir. Redactada en el siglo diecisiete, redactada por el “ingenio lego” Cervantes, esa enumeración es un mero elogio retórico de la historia (1974a:449).

[...truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of actions, witness of the past, example and lesson of the present, warning of the future. Written in the seventeenth century, written by the “ingenious layman” Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical praise of history.]

Menard, however, writes:

...la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir.

La historia, madre de la verdad; la idea es asombrosa. Menard, contemporáneo de William James, no define la historia como una indagación de la realidad sino como su origen. La verdad histórica, para él, no es lo que sucedió: es lo que juzgamos que sucedió. Las cláusulas finales — ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir — son descaradamente pragmáticas. También es vivido el contraste de los estilos (Borges 1974a:44).

[Truth, whose mother is history, who is the rival of time, depository of actions, witness of the past, example and lesson of the present, and warning of the future.

History, mother of truth: the idea is astounding. Menard, a contemporary of William James', does not define history as an investigation of reality, but as its origin. Historical truth, for him, is not what has taken place; it is what we think has taken place. The final clauses — example and lesson to the present and warning to the future — are shamelessly pragmatic. Equally vivid is the contrast in styles.]

The narrator (and the reader) of Borges continues to contrast both texts, a single text, but attributed to two different times; the comparison becomes “useless” because it is impossible to establish an opposition between identical entities and, mainly, because that comparison-opposition which is the intellectual exercise par excellence is also useless, like “all intellectual exercise”, as the narrator — himself quite pessimistic — admits in that very passage.

Borges said in Montevideo, during the above-mentioned conference, albeit in a private conversation, that Pierre Menard could not have been anything else but French, and I think that the reference to nationality (any reference to nationality, which he so notoriously opposed) is explained in this case by his probable knowledge of some French authors to whom he perhaps wanted to refer through this character, but, as usual, he does so according to his own regime of inversions; the same literary situation, but reversed.

As mentioned in the first place in the catalogue of his visible works, it is worth emphasizing that Pierre Menard published the same sonnet twice (“with variations”) in the magazine *La Conque*. I suppose Borges well knew that this journal belonged to Pierre Louys, the author of the controversial book *Les chansons de Bilitis*. This work, which is an apocryphal collection of Pierre Louys' “translations” into French, based on Sapphic poems written in the sixth century by the Greek poetess named in the title and which, in its time, managed to confuse the most expert critics; this translation, which lacks a text as its starting point, is a literary practice quite similar to what Menard did, and Pierre Louys does exactly the opposite: he presents his own work as someone else's.

A similar example, but obviously more related to Pierre Menard by an onomastic identity, is proposed by Rodríguez Monegal (1978), who recalls Louis-Nicolas Ménard, another French scholar who, attracted by classical studies, could not resist the temptation of writing his own *Prometheus chained*. He produced such perfectly Aeschylean writing that contemporary specialized critics did not hesitate to recognize it as a translation of a work of the famed Greek playwright. In Rodríguez Monegal’s (1978:123) biography of Borges, published in the United States, he presents Borges as the most viable model for Pierre Menard: “Louis Ménard's literary habits (the rewriting of lost or non-existent works, the anachronistic reading of literature) anticipate those of his namesake Pierre Menard (without an accent on the ‘e”), the strange French symbolist poet invented by Borges in 1939 to mock the conventions of literary criticism.”

Borges was probably interested in these French writers, playing with their names, in order to make the author of his text more real, by the similarity which keeps the renounced originality of his deeds — already registered by literary history — with the literary utopia of which Menard is an admirable protagonist.

The diversions and the imaginative richness of his achievement are not blurred by the existence of a strange phenomenon (normalized by
historical frequency), which can be included in the same category as the apocryphal writings Genette (1982:94) refers to as forgery:

L’état mimétique le plus simple, ou le plus pur, ou le plus neutre, est sans doute celui de la forgerie. On peut le définir comme celui d’un texte aussi ressemblant que possible à ceux du corpus imité, sans rien qui attire, d’une manière ou d’une autre, l’attention sur l’opération mimétique elle-même ou sur le texte mimétique, dont la ressemblance doit être aussi transparente que possible, sans aucunement se signaler elle-même comme ressemblance, c’est-à-dire comme imitation. La situation pragmatique exemplaire est évidemment celle qui de l’apocryphe sérieux…

[The simplest, or the purest, or the most neuter, mimetic state, is no doubt that of forgery. It can be defined as the state of a text as similar as possible to the corpus it imitates, without anything drawing, one way or the other, the attention to the mimetic operation itself or to the mimetic text, whose similarity must be as transparent as possible, without pointing at itself as similarity, that is to say, as imitation. Here, the exemplary pragmatic situation is evidently that of serious apocryphal.]

Concealed or forged, the varieties of imitation are invariably extravagant. However, given some precedents of proper imitations posing as someone else’s originals, Pierre Menard’s precedents and those of his epigones are far less extravagant than the narrative situation seems to illustrate.

However, as happens with other real and strange events, not even the frequency of their occurrence gives credit to their credibility: it is of little importance to literary history whether these events have ever actually happened or not. It has been said many times, from Aristotle to the present day, that the verified historic occurrence of an event is no sufficient indication of verisimilitude, but only of truth. In the recognition of this difference lies one of the properties which distinguishes real from fictional phenomena: “Truth is stranger than fiction”. It has been said since ancient times, and this truth is as paradoxical as it is universal. “Nothing is strange in Prague; anything can happen”. The familiarity of daily routine can still, despite its frequency, be quite incredible.

Chapter 6

Problems of “repeated discourse”

The lawyer, in any case, would only answer with silence or a set phrase, and K… would never know.

Franz Kafka

Pierre Menard’s undertaking was from the outset impossible, as the narrator himself says. In fact, it was impossible because it was a perfect imitation and, like all things perfect, this imitation is not likely to fail to exist or at the very least, even if it did, it would not be noticed.

It is interesting to observe this particular type of incompatibility between perfection and imitation, within the context of a more general phenomenon which linguists have typified as “repeated discourse”, a form of discourse which can be included under the overall topic of “citation” — see Coseriu (1977a:113) — and which has already been examined above, in relation to recitative needs and the distinctive features of reading aloud.

If a repetition is perfect, it is no longer noticeable and therefore it ceases to exist as a repetition. Through quotation and imitation, duality disappears; once realized, it is annulled.

For example, one of the most disturbing invocations (evocations) which can be heard: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” is also a quotation, yet this fact remains unnoticed. When listening to it one thinks only of Jesus’ words, as if no repetition were involved. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that Jesus, under the most moving and intimate circumstances, should evoke the very words of tribulation with which David complains about his affliction (Psalm 22, verse 1).

As soon as I become aware of the reference to the Old Testament, something changes. As long as I am unaware of it, both David and the repetition vanish. But it is not just them who disappear.

Another example: in various dialogues of Alphaville, a film by Jean-Luc Godard, several quotations of this type — even some from Borges — are contextualized and amount to more or less the following: “— What are you scared of? — The silence of infinite spaces terrifies me”.

Here again, whoever does not recall the Pensées will not notice the quotation from Pascal (1973). The film features a strange character who is nothing but the voice of an electric brain speaking on a different planet.
This voice utters only repetitions of phrases, some well known, others less so. However, this is only apparent to someone who already knows them. It is not a question of evidence, nor of indicated references, but rather a matter of a source of knowledge to which one may resort. Neither the electric brain nor any other character or speaker explain that these utterances are really repeated fragments from other discourses or discourses of others. The aesthetic effect of this electronic voice and its phrases, which (re)sound like echoes of our own most erudite culture, parodied by mechanical monotony, is particularly frightening, yet it is necessary to know in order to feel. Even if one wishes to ridicule this knowledge — which is not the case here — one has to master it.

If the quoted text is not known beforehand and the speaker does not explicitly indicate it (through intonation, context explanation or quotation marks), it can hardly be recognized as a quoted text. When the imitation is perfect or is not somehow marked as an imitation, it dissolves. It is a commonplace to say that the perfect crime does not exist, yet it applies to the situation discussed here, although not in the usual sense. If I have knowledge of a crime — no matter how perfectly committed — that is already sufficient to announce is to denounce. This makes the perfect crime inconceivable, for either it is perfect or it is a crime: the contradiction in the dual syntagm has an impossible combined referent, because each term cancels out the other: the semantic tension between crime and perfection suppresses the referent. The mere mention of the object makes it disappear, to know it is to destroy it. Some theories or doctrines pay heed to the poetic, divine procedure of verbocreation, of which Genesis is the typical example. Yet it seems no less in order to use its opposite — verbodestruction. It is already quite some time since linguistics discarded as naive the belief that the object is represented by the sign; the sign suspends it, but without substituting it. Each time it is mentioned, the same vicious circle seems to repeat itself, the same circle which, beyond the sophistries of solipsism, yet without excluding it, is renewed in Biblical and Western myths, threatening all forms of knowledge as well as turning knowledge itself into a threat.

The association is unavoidable: knowledge and sin share the same origin, the Edenic Fall, the burden of felix culpa, fruit(ion) and punishment, etymologically denied or supported by the Hebrew archetype ladad: ‘to lie down’ and ‘to know’ are forever associated; joy and knowledge, pleasure and suffering must remain connected in one of the oldest and most forceful ideological antitheses: Adam and the Fall, Oedipus and the inexorability of the oracles (or their interpretations), Prometheus and his punishment, the (re)cognition of Orpheus implies Eurydice’s sacrifice, Jesus on the cross, the list is endless. From the oldest myths to the interrogations conducted by police torturers of today, knowledge and suffering will always be united.

Writing and reading, repetition and originality, discovery and invention: in spite of the manifest contradiction between their terms, the opposition is no longer certain.

The numerous and thorough studies of repetition (the number of which have increased in recent years), tend to minimize the differences and to neutralize the opposites; and also to find an explanation and to admit — like Heraclitus — that in this reconciliation lies all knowledge and the beginning of everything. In Genette’s (1982:453) words:

... l’hypertextualité pour elle ce mérite spécifique de relancer constamment les œuvres anciennes dans un nouveau circuit de sens. La mémoire, dit-on, est « révolutionnaire » à condition sans doute qu’on la féconde, et qu’elle ne se contente pas de commémorer. « La littérature est inépuisable pour la raison suffisante qu’un seul livre l’est » (Borges). Ce livre il ne faut pas seulement le relire, mais le récrire, fut-ce comme Menard, littéralement. Ainsi s’accomplit l’utopie borgesienne d’une littérature en transfusion perpétuelle (ou perfusion transtextuelle), constantement présente à elle-même dans sa totalité et comme totalité, dont tous les auteurs ne font qu’un, et dont tous les livres sont un vaste Livre, un seul Livre infini.

[... hypertextuality specifically credits itself with constantly presenting old works in a new meaningful light. It is said that memory is “revolutionary”; it is, provided that it is made to bear fruit and is not satisfied with mere commemoration. “Literature is inexhaustible for the simple reason that a single book is also inexhaustible” (Borges). It is not enough to re-read this book; it is necessary to re-write it, even literally, as Menard did. Thus Borges’ Utopia of a literature in perpetual transfusion (or transtextual perfusion) will come true, a literature constantly presenting itself to itself in its totality and as a totality, in which all authors are at one, and all books considered as one vast Book, the one, infinite Book.]
1. Other *Palimpsests*. The repetitive (dis)solution

Tout le phénomène de l’allitération ... n’est qu’une insignifiante partie d’un phénomène plus général ou plutôt absolument total ...

Ferdinand de Saussure

One cannot ignore the fact that in recent years linguistics, semiotics, literary theory, and other humanistic sciences — reflecting, perhaps, developments in other areas of study — have often dealt with two phenomena, repetition and coherence, which are usually considered independent from each other, although they are unquestionably more closely linked than one would at first assume.

Studies on repeated discourse, quotation, iteration, coherence, isotopy, anaphora, redundancy, fragmentation, omission, hiatus, the “trous” in works and theory, Samuel Levin’s “couplings”, Jakobson’s above-mentioned poetic function, parody, copy, literary intertextuality in its numerous variants, are just some of the relevant and recurrent topics treated within the framework of the above-mentioned disciplines. If their enumeration is tiresome — though by no means exhaustive —, it nevertheless represents a well-defined trend in the topical, programmatic and bibliographic concerns of contemporary studies.

Undoubtedly, both phenomena are underscored because they have a common denominator in the development of text linguistics, translinguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics or the many other names with which the different text theories have been presented in the last decades.

The preference towards a text as the largest discursive unit beyond the sentence and, above all, the attention given by the initiators of these theories to artistic discourse and its environment, have freed linguistic studies from the systematic enclosure which was a consequence of linguistic theory since the proposals of Saussure and the subsequent evolution of structural linguistics. Without reservation, rather on the contrary — tout contre —, structural, linguistic scholars found that the principles which forbade syntagmatic explorations beyond sentence level are excessively restrictive. This has also enabled them to go beyond the fundamental principles of later generativism.

Structural linguistics is secularized. It incorporates the theoretical tendencies of its own time, and without being scornful of previous advances, it admits that the interpretation of a text depends not only on general semantic properties, but also on the conditions under which discourse is produced and takes place. Linguistics focuses its attention on the study of the circumstances of discourse, the situation and its impact on the text, thereby including all contextual and transtextual associations.

In addition, however, from the vantage point of the reader as the agent who makes choices (see above), as well as continuing the previous discussions on recitation, there are two major topics here: repetition and fragmentation. These general topics are meant to include the above-mentioned (only partially mentioned) variant names.

Through the procedure of quotation, there is a multiple *vocation*: it invokes (appeals), it convokes (summons), it evokes (reminds) and it revokes (suspends ornulls), all at the same time.

An interminable list of jokes, publicity slogans and, what is of especial interest to us here, all kinds of titles (literary, scientific, press headlines, etc.) provide ample evidence of this triple function of repetitive vocation, the quotation which becomes a set-expression, a proverb, a maxim. This is because the quotation shows a curious tendency towards repetition: it is repeated over and over again.

Repetition goes beyond the trodden path of imitation, of what has already been said by others: it is rather a matter of satisfying the need to recite. By quoting, the speaker becomes aware that he is at a crossroads, halfway between his personal self and tradition, between the individual and culture. He repeats the quotation literally with the same faithfulness as when he utters magical or religious invocations.

Each time the words of others are quoted, one can observe a two-fold, almost contradictory movement. On the one hand, there is inertia, because the words of the other person offer a ready-made solution to one’s own problem of personal expression, and on the other hand, there is an implication of reverence, a gesture of respect, a certain feeling of awe, which is also a convention, through which one’s own thought adapts itself to that of someone else, to the other, as Emmanuel Levinas or Maurice Blanchot would say.

The semantic evolution of the Lat. *respectus* — itself derived from *respicere*, ‘to look backwards’ — illustrates that, on the one hand, the idea of ‘consideration’, ‘appreciation’, ‘reverence’, as in Fr. and Eng. respect, Sp. respeto; and on the other, Fr. répit (Eng. respite, Sp. respiro, the latter probably with a different etymology), mean ‘a time of rest’, ‘relaxation’; and the illustration works ideally twice, because it includes the Fr. répit, which in medieval French meant ‘proverb’, ‘sentence’, in other words, a repeated phrase.
Repetition brings about a synthesis which retrieves the semantic nucleus of the Latin word, a meaning-seeking movement towards the past, a retrospective tension through which to gain force and precision, and at the same time, the effort is relieved and the tension alleviated. In searching for an image to illustrate this idea of tension/distension inherent in repetition, regression and progression, there springs to mind el arco y la lira [the bow and the lyre]: “the harmony stretched backwards” in Heraclitus’ words, which re-emerges as the title of an essay in a book by Paz (1956), an essay on language and poetry, and the relationships between them.

In this usage of repetition there also an appeal to authority. This is one reason why one frequently finds epigraphs at the beginning of books, in which quotations are given from consecrated texts, thereby lending the weight of their authority to the “new” texts.

An ambiguous gesture is made here, one which shows reverence to the “primary” source, while at the same time recontextualizing it, stretching its prestige to one’s own work, thus providing a kind of protection, safeguard and respect. The literary application of a cita, a word that in Spanish means both ‘quotation’ and ‘rendez-vous’ demonstrates the social usage of the term. Not only does the quote repeat a part of a previous discourse, but it also signifies an encounter, if not a complete agreement, between two persons.

The first indication of any “transsexual allusion” is usually found in the title of a book. Numerous titles of both well- and little-known works transcribe the title, or selected fragments, of a previous text. In this way a thematic precedent which is relevant to the literary situation is established anaphorically, which is about to begin. However, the impression is given as though it had already begun before: it starts as a continuation. Steinbeck (1992) gave the title East of Eden to one of his novels, and the mention of Genesis advances the misfortunes inflicted on two brothers by a curse which still weighs on their descendants. This sort of beginning does not propose a new procedure. Bereshit is the Hebrew word for ‘beginning’ and it is the first word in Genesis. A well-known interpretation states that the first word starts by betha instead of aleph in order to show that every beginning is a continuation, that something had already started before this beginning.

Repeated use is also made of verses, known or presumed to be known, to evoke a tradition, a particular universe, or to give a pretextsual cause to events, which are thus not seen in isolation, but linked together in an almost natural continuum.

Pater (1980:21) wrote: “In order to develop a repetition which is part of an infinite chain of assimilation... it is necessary for Pascal in his Pensées to echo the sentences of Montaigne, and then for Sainte-Beuve to echo again Pascal”, and for Pater to echo again Sainte-Beuve, and to echo again Pater, and so on.


In addition, we may mention two Uruguayan writers: Onetti (1975): Para una tumba sin nombre (Debussy-Pie-Pie Louys) and Benedetti (1987): El recurso del suprerno patriarca, which employs a kind of “telescopic”, or “portmanteau” title which combines the titles of three well-known novels, all published in recent years in Latin America, each of which deals with different dictatorships in the Americas, or rather, they are pertained to one and the same dictatorship: El recurso del método (by Carpentier [1975]), Yo, el supremo (by Roa Bastos [1975]) and El otoño del patriarca (by García Márquez [1975]).

We may perhaps mention one last case in point: Remembrance of things past is the title of the English translation of A la recherche du temps perdu, but the English title offers Proust through a quotation transcribed from Shakespeare’s Sonnet XXX. A steady stream of pre-texts is made visible and invisible in the same mention.

In The shining, a fairly recent film by Stanley Kubrick, an overly caricaturesque situation is depicted, which exemplifies this repetitive tendency of language, which is not exclusively a literary mania. Here, Jack Nicholson plays the part of a writer who retires to an enormous hotel in the mountains, totally deserted, to find in this isolation the optimal conditions of silence and solitude indispensable for the writing of his novel.

He spends days on end terrorizing his family, resorting even to violence to obtain the peace and quiet necessary to concentrate on his work. On reading the manuscript, his wife discovers, to her horror, that in his mad isolation, he has managed to write on a bunch of pages only a mechanical repetition of one expression (which I don’t recall at this time), with hardly any difference between one transcription and the next, apart from some innovations playing on an irregular spatial distribution which does not even attempt to represent graphically the variations on the same phenomenon. These diagrammatic games do not seem to pretend to
create verbal iconic illusions (as in concrete poetry) but to indulge a writer's taste for tricks and threats, haunted by misplaced repetition techniques.

The episode vents its cruelty in various directions against the abuses of the writer, any writer, showing his weak sides and his effort to still pursue writing, if only by means of a repetitive procedure. Instead of the horror of an empty page, comes the horror of writing always the same text, nothing but a cliché. Balzac (1935:48–208), himself as ironic as Kubrick, though rather less violent than him, had foreseen yet another twist to this (or at least a similar) literary mechanism, in which reading and repetition keep their inextricable binds: «D’Arthez, stupéfait et incapable de soupconner que Diane D’Uxelles répétait le soir ce qu’elle avait lu le matin, comme font beaucoup d’écrivains.» [D’Arthez, stupefied and incapable of suspecting that Diane d’Uxelles would repeat at night what she had read in the morning, as many writers do.]

The language of journalism has written in its own fashion, an actual denominative grammar through which the titles of newspaper and magazine articles (that is, the headlines over the articles, not those which summarize them, the latter corresponding to another type of grammar) adopt or adapt the titles of well-known texts. The reason underlying this phenomenon has already been repeatedly mentioned: by pointing to a known referent the (well) known is highlighted in order to stress the difference. A title, or headline thus worded fulfills both a cultural and a proselytizing function, because it takes up and activates the traditional in order to introduce something new.

It is a well-known fact that this dialectics of repetition puts the entire complex phenomenon of culture at stake. In this game, however, language plays the highest stakes.

2. Tradition and rupture: a “leitmotiv”

To the protection of a recognized authority we can add the intention, deliberate or not, to embed one’s discourse in a mythical series. Eliot (1969:15–25) comments that Ulysses is Joyce’s (1968) own manipulation of the myth, and establishes a parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity: there is a continuity of the older creations, yet on the other hand the myth serves to highlight the unrepeatable, the novelty, which can only be regarded as such by comparison with what is already known.

According to Iser (1978a:200), another theorist of the School of Konstanz: “The revelation of the irreducible differences is what constitutes the real function of the mythical patterns through which we are to look upon the modern world”.

The importance of repetition is decisive in the conception of the myth. There is a famous text by Eliade (1963:49), in which a religious man is depicted as someone who lives in another time, attaining “the mythical illo tempore”. In the repetition of festivals (because every celebration is repetition), he recognizes the return to the time of origin. “He ‘leaves’ the profane duration of time in order to encounter an ‘immobile Time’, ‘eternity’. The eternal return saves human existence from death and nothingness, and this eternal return is the repetition of exemplary gestures”.

Dates, gestures, words, and celebrations are repeated: the repetition and recitation of the same forms create the illusion of a “primordial event”, of former times which are retrieved or, even better, of a time which has not gone by, close to the essence of things, to a sort of eternity, which is achieved through the “abolition of the pathetic aspect of time” as Barthes (1982:182–183) said referring to the repetitions which pop art engages in.

The festival, the theatre, rituals, games, all have essential points in common. It is not possible to examine all of them here, but we agree with Gadamer (1976:31) who in Vérité et méthode states with regard to games, that all such manifestations show a tendency towards repetition.

Theatre is precisely the “institution” — as Deleuze (1969:333) says — where repetition takes shape and meaning. It is the place — space and room — which is specifically meant for repetition, yet its own existence is centered on repetition (in Fr. répétitions), ‘rehearsals’ in which the double play of repetition and creation which take place in any theatrical event, is dramatized.

From antiquity to our days, repetition is closely linked to literary discourse. In Proust (1966:871), for example, the repetition of events has occupied a prominent place: indeed, through the repetition of experience, it is possible to approach a kind of timelessness, or suppression of time, which would be a kind of eternity where past and present are blurred. Grant me the sheer pleasure of copying the quotation; it reads as follows: «Jusqu’à faire empirer le passé sur le présent, à me faire hésiter à savoir dans lequel des deux je me trouvais; …par une de ces identités entre le présent et le passé, il pouvait se trouver dans le seul milieu où il put vivre, jouir de l’essence des choses, c’est-à-dire en dehors du temps». [Until the
past slips on the present, until they make me doubt whether I know in
which of the two I was; ... by one of those identities between the present
and the past, he could find himself in the only environment where he could
live, enjoy the essence of things, that is to say, outside time.]

According to Genette (1972: 146), various types of frequency rela-
tionships appear in narrative texts. It is possible to (re)count several times
an event which repeats itself several times: “to (re)count \( n \) times what has
occurred \( n \) times \( (nR/nH) \)” according to the formula estab-
ilished in Figures III. Or it is possible also to “count \( n \) times what has occurred just
once \( (nR/1H) \)”; the repetitive account becomes a “ritual account” similar
to the curious phenomenon which so intrigued Kierkegaard since it
questions causality and the flow of time.

Time, originality, tradition, myth, language. Without repetition there is
no culture. All cultural expressions imply a temporal synthesis: the trans-
gression of the past — a time which goes beyond its limits — by expres-
sing itself. These expressions reveal the strange occurrence of time,
retrieved when it does not occur. As Domenach (1976: 76) says “it
achieves the dream of recuperated time; rather than recuperated time,
suppressed time”.

3. Technique as repetition

Je me rendais compte de tout ce qu’a
de réel l’oeuvre de Wagner, en revoyant ces thèmes
insistants et fugaces qui visitent
un acte, ne s’éloignant que pour revenir.
Marcel Proust

In language, there are only repetitions. Even within the framework of
synchrony, what Coseriu (1977a) calls “techniques of discourse” and
which comprise “the freely available elements and procedures of a
language” the lexemes, categoremes, morphemes, are all imposed by the
system and combined and modified according to rules, also imposed by the
system.

Structuring through discursive techniques presupposes learnt, applied
(and forgotten) knowledge. The speaker does not invent. At most, his
invention consists in discovering (if the etymology of the first word
inventire is borne in mind, both words refer to the same finding) something
already present in the system. The speaker acquires and uses his knowing,
his competence, a pre-existing knowledge which he has learnt from his
environment, from those around him. Every technique is inevitably some-
thing reproduced, “is a procedure and it stands insofar as it is efficient,
insofar as it is susceptible to repeated application” in Paz’ (1956:17)
words.

On this efficiency depends the application of the instrument, the
difference which opposes the tool to the work. This difference had already
been pointed out by Heidegger (1964), and it also stands in Paz’s
(1956:17) formula: “The gun replaces the bow. The Aeneid does not
substitute the Odyssey.” In La méthode de Sainte-Beuve, Proust (1966)
also said: “Each individual starts anew by himself, the literary or artistic
enterprise, and the words of his predecessors do not constitute, as is the
case with science, an acquired truth from which he can benefit. Today, a
writer of genius must do everything. He has not come any further than
Homer.”

Technique is an implied, implicit, and almost secret repetition, and
thus, as it happens with instruments, it can pass unnoticed. Its common
denominator, the meeting-point where all the speakers sharing a code meet
lies in the system; and it does not manifest itself as such, but by references
which may be different but which do not change the archetype of the
system’s construction, procedures and materials.

Voloshinov-Bakhtine, quoted in Todorov (1981:70), goes further when
he states that “there is nothing individual in what is expressed by the in-
dividual” and he continues later with an opposition which underlies
modern linguistics. “Every utterance has two aspects: what comes from
language and is repeatable on the one hand, and what stems from the
context of the enunciation, and is unique, on the other”.

For Coseriu (1977a), linguistic traditions imply not only discursive
techniques, but also a “repeated discourse”, that is, “a language already
spoken”, “fragments of a ready-made discourse which can be used anew,
at the different levels on which concrete speech is structured.”
4. The aesthetics of imitation

The difference between repeated discourse and discursive techniques is
based first of all on the fact that the former is felt as such by the speaker-
listener. It has been pointed out above that at times a repeated expression
can be found in utterances which are formulated according to techniques
of discourse. If such a repetition is noticed, this would be due to the
hazards of knowledge and not to the deliberate intention of quoting
fragments from previously enunciated discourse (various examples of this
have already been given in previous pages).

If, however, the intention is neither voluntary nor explicitly repetitive,
repetition is frowned upon. The repetitions which occur within sponta-
aneous and even prepared discourse, are badly considered. When the
repetition occurs within the same text, it is met with unconcealed anger,
because there one expects constant variation and novelty.

In the above-mentioned interview, Barthes (1981b:134) remarks the
generalization of such an attitude; a passive criticism of repetitions, a
rejection of the expression which, by its viscosity, stops the "flow" of
discourse, an accretion which must be eliminated.

Besides, it is a glaring paradox that our endoaxial civilization, which is
built upon stereotypes and repetitions, should loudly declare itself allergic
to any text which seems to repeat itself, which seems to contain repetitions.
We have a recent example in Grotat's book Eden, Eden, Eden which has
hypocritically been pronounced unreadable by the vast majority of critics,
on the grounds that it seems to repeat itself.

It is odd that the individual should only be opposed to this frequent phe-
nomenon in literature — repetition — when it is evident. However, repeti-
tion in poetic discourse is approved of, even expected and defended as

The aesthetics of imitation

4. The aesthetics of imitation

Si l'art contemporain a pour point de départ des idées
selon lesquelles l'originalité, l'innimitabilité
de ce qui est proprement individuel appartiennent
aux valeurs de l'œuvre d'art, l'esthétique médiévale
considérant tout ce qui est individuel
comme coupable, comme manifestation d'orgueil et
exigeait la fidelité aux types traditionnels
"inspirés de Dieu". La répétition habile des conditions
complexes du rituel artistique et non pas l'invention
personnelle, voilà ce qui était exigé de l'artiste.
Jurij M. Lotman

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**Problems of "repeated discourse"**
As a symptomatic instance of this perhaps somewhat rather surprising anti-iterative attitude, let me give an example which is oriented towards professional readers, or "connoisseurs": Proust (1966:186–187), in a remarkable passage of La prisonnière repeats eight times within the short span of two pages the same expression "petit pan de mur jaune". In this passage, Proust's narrator is describing a small part of a yellow wall which Bergotte, the writer, shortly before his death, realizes is from Vermeer's View of Delft and which during the exhibition had drawn the attention of the critics. Bergotte’s discovery on his deathbed is so important that although he had never seen the Vermeer painting before, he comes to realize that in this small portion of yellow wall is contained the full meaning of artistic creation.

I must point out that in the Spanish edition, the translator, perhaps in an attempt to "correct" this particularity in the Recherche, used five different synonyms instead of preserving the original repetition. In the English translation there are only three synonyms, yet here as well the repetition has in some way been corrected. The German translation, on the other hand, maintains seven times "diese kleine gelbe Mauerecke" and only once is it substituted by "Mauerstück".

Another example may be found in Hernández's (1983:67) short story Por los tiempos de Clemente Colling where towards the end the word mystery is repeated fifteen times. These repetitions should not be corrected, yet one's attention is drawn to this phenomenon so strongly, that it seems necessary to attempt to reveal the mystery, the mysterious repetition; but without changing the word, of course. I may perhaps quote here Pascal’s (1973:[278–48]320) recommendation "if a discourse contains repeated words, and any attempt to correct them leads to the conclusion that they are so adequate that without them the discourse would be spoilt, it is necessary to leave them untouched". Pascal refers here to translations made by professional translators, experts on language or at least on two languages; even them censure repetition in a case like Proust’s, where it could only have been intended by the author. It must be underscored that if the text in question had been a poetic text, these translators would have respected the repetitions because they would convey precisely what is expected of this genre. The expectations change in the case of prose where repetitions, even intentional ones, are regarded as flaws. This is because in other cases, non-Proustean and non-literary, they are, in fact, flaws. Instead of adding poetic charm — the peculiar effect of carmen — iteration in prose becomes a series of dead weights, rigid supports, stop gaps emphasising the "inertia of discourse" and which, according to Barthes (1978:283), "fill up the gaps in thoughts, because one is easily carried away by other people's words and thoughts", and although repetitions are not always other people's, they are equally heavy, beyond our direct control.

As far as the unnecessary repetition of conventional expressions — their abuse — is concerned, they reflect a kind of Sancho Panza-like mentality: this is to say, they are a constant acting-out of common sense, on non-critical folk-wisdom as opposed to the unrestrained excesses of Don Quixote's outward-bound initiative, which is aimed precisely at rejecting everyday routine through senseless adventures. Similar to Wellerisms, the inerrimable proverbs of Sancho show an even flatter realism than his counterpart's, Sam Weller (a character from The posthumous papers of the Pickwick Club by Dickens [1907]), and yet, in the same way, they serve to temper the eccentricities of his master by means of common-sense pronouncements which are no doubt sensible, but which are above all consensual.

Repeated discourse expresses an established truth, the well-named maxims, normative and/or prescriptive verbal expressions which work because they are accepted: accepted by the majority and used because they somehow work. They are "universal operators" — it is Herschberg-Pierrot's (1980:341) expression — which, abstracted from the actual discourse, are preset, fixed and gnostic. Their truth exceeds the circumstances and contingencies of the correct utterance. They express a truth which, if not absolute, is undoubtedly "accredited" and thus general and even totalitarian. They are maxims because they represent the truth for the majority, a truth which is inherited, and therefore comfortable, evident because it is recurrent. Valid before, now, later, in an eternal present moment, an "actual" Augustinian time which is always current, which is the definition of time, and is defined by it.

Any change in the text of a maxim is neutralized by the persistence and rigidity of the stereotype, and can only be anecdotal. It can only live as long as the "original" text which it seeks to challenge does not speak up, thereby killing the variation.

For example, in 1559 Pieter Bruegel exhibited his Die niedereänder Sprichwörter, a topic which had a strong plastic popularity dating back at least a century. In his painting, Bruegel depicts the well-known topic of proverbs, showing a crowd of absurd figures illustrating the most repeated proverbs by visibly and openly criticizing them. Years later the painting was presented with a different title, which was clearly conducive to a different interpretation. Instead of the title proposed by Bruegel, which is
a mere verbal commentary and somehow redundant with regard to the subject matter of the painting: The proverbs of the Netherlands, the Bruegel now appeared first under the title Le monde renversé, and later as De Blauwe Huyck [The blue jacket], the latter an expression related to disappointment and folly.

The change of title brings a change of object: instead of criticizing the proverbs and their doubtful truth, it becomes, by a mere change of name, just another representation, another version of the monde renversé, a topic. The difference would be trivial were it not that a displacement has taken place. The absurdity of the proverbs, the grotesque aspect of human customs and attitudes which are perpetuated through them, and which the painter originally sought to parody, is no longer directly clear. It has become a plastic image which refers only to the world, its vanities and follies, leaving the ravings of its sensibility untouched.

Today, maxims and proverbs are, from a sociolinguistic point of view, antiques, “grandparents’ language”. From the same viewpoint, it is also easy to observe that they are still frequently used by peasants and in geographically-removed areas where there is still a strong inclination towards regional tradition and conservative customs. Instead of refuting these sayings and their “maximal truths”, the generation preceding that of today’s adults, who still heard them, stopped using them. The present generation simply ignores them.

Proverbs can only be refuted by silence or by reformulating traditional proverbs. This means that instead of changing the proverbs by introducing semantically close and related terms, there is a marked tendency to introduce antonyms in such a way that the breakaway from tradition becomes more efficient. This procedure generally affects the meaning, and is aimed at producing nonsense, the latter being doubly privative — a slip of the tongue and which fails to make sense. If the new meaning is intended, the break is justified. Morphology and syntax are preserved, the model stays in place, it is only questioned. For the change to be justified it must be noticeable and noticed, and this is best done by contrasting the model and the changed discourse: the previous discourse is always there. It keeps its previous form so that its affirmation may remain suspended, repeated and pending.

The semantic contrast between the two expressions is more important than the content of the new proposal. The purpose of the change is not to produce a second utterance, but to show that the primary utterance is not used. What occurs here is similar to Bachelard’s (1943:285) literary image, which he regarded as explosive because: “it causes set phrases to suddenly explode, it breaks up proverbs which have been passed down from generation to generation, it makes us hear the nouns after their explosion, once the Gehenna which attached them to their roots has been broken”. If the change is an attempt to be funny, it becomes a mental exercise in which the words are saved from the bluntness of a cliché. Such changes can provoke outbursts of humour akin to the ambiguity and syntactic rifts of poetry. Akin to poetic condensation, humourous condensation is not alien to clichés, nor to the aptly subverted stereotypes. Without breaking idiomatic habits, it keeps them at a distance, thereby conviving at rightly understanding their full meaning. Every change requires an imaginative speaker, capable of knowing and of ignoring. It is in this game of knowledge/ignorance that poetry transpires. The speaker both repeats and modifies; he quotes from tradition, from the work of others, but he adapts it to his own discursive needs and bypasses the resistance to pure conservation.

5. Lexicalization of phrases

Set phrases, proverbs quoted or verses recited tend to hypostatise, through coupling and displacement of category, more easily than non-repeated discourse. Thus they are perceived as blocks, inseparable groups of words, and authors unconcerned with academic norms — particularly those wilfully disregarding them — will frequently omit the typographic gaps separating the constitutive elements. Unity is strengthened by repetition — with its implied criticism — and not through ignorance (incompetence) or the blindness to the original discourse and its commutation(s).

Coseriu (1977a: 114) remarks that “the elements of fixed expressions cannot be structured because they are not ‘commutable’... surely no one expects to analyse in French (as facts of French) Latin or English phrases. But even in those cases where the elements of ‘repeated discourse’ seem to be perfectly identifiable with the elements of the ‘discourse techniques’, structural grammar and lexicology cannot deal with them because of their non-commutability”.

There is a common French saying: «elle parle français comme une vache espagnole» [she speaks French like a Spanish cow]. This expression can be perfectly adapted to the requirements of a different origin and different attributes, and should a speaker feel it necessary, he will not hesitate to say «je parle français comme un vache uruguayenne» [I speak French like a Uruguayan cow]. And, if the Latin adage goes “dura lex sed
lex", there also exists "la loi de la pesanteur est dure mais c’est la loi" [the law of gravity is hard, but it is the law]. Here, the multiple poetic modification has shaped a true "Venus callipyge". The Latin sentence has been translated not only to adapt it to a French context that escapes the rigidity of the legislative code for which it was formulated, but also to imply the inexorable constancy of the laws of Physics — although the allusion to Physics lacks rigour.

The "impossibility" Coseriu spoke of needs to be analysed according to several parameters: quotations in foreign languages generally presuppose a certain knowledge of these languages on the part of the user, so that he may analyse the expression, however minimally.

In the case where a speaker does not know the language in question, he may use the foreign expression as if it belonged to his own language, using the whole string of words, adapting it to his phonologic or morphologic patterns, that is, idiomatizing the expression (this is what happens with loan words or expressions which are no longer felt as such, e.g. Latin syllabus, English plural: syllabuses).

A lack of sufficient knowledge can cause a set phrase to be distorted, not due to idiomatic adaptation but rather to an incorrect interpretation. Yet in such a case, it is not exclusively a problem of repeated discourse: any utterance or quotation from a foreign language will equally suffer if the speaker is unable to understand it. Faced with a neologism, he will also be unable to follow, neither phonetically, nor grammatically, nor semantically, how it is structured. All misconstructions (such as the frequently-used — in Spanish America — baby-sister, often heard today in Spanish instead of baby-sitter) show the problem of being less than half-proficient in another language.

It must be underscored that the issue raised by Coseriu does not concern the nature of repeated discourse itself, nor the impossibility of making set phrases; neither is it a consequence of the fact that repeated discourse cannot be changed or analysed. Coseriu refers to the lack of knowledge of the speaker, his interest in merely repeating, and nothing else.

Besides, when Coseriu (1977a: 114) rules out the possibility of analysing "in French (as facts of French) Latin or English phrases", it is clear that these phrases are not analysed because they are locations in foreign languages and are felt as such (which may not even be repeated discourse); in fact, if they are not analysed, it is because they only make sense within their own grammar.

In short, repeated discourse does not exist as a structural linguistic object because there is no formal element which distinguishes it or contrasts it from what it is not, apart from the evocative or ironic intention of the speaker. In the same way, everything in a language may be repeated discourse, although we may not be aware of it. In conclusion, there is nothing formal that distinguishes repeated discourse, except the attitude and/or intention of the speaker-listener, whether he wishes to consider it repeated discourse or not.

It has been stated above that repetition is the most important cultural phenomenon, but it must be added that this importance stems from the fact, albeit contradictory, that true repetition does not exist. Phrases may be repeated, and texts may be repeated, but there is always something that changes even if only the fact that it concerns a repetition. Once more, Pierre Menard, author of Don Quixote, is evidence of this.

6. Repetition as reflections: the possible encounter between Echo and Narcissus

Repeated discourse has itself as its primary referent. Every repetition supposes a dual recognition, the simultaneous appreciation of two expressions between which a relation of identity may be seen: the present expression is understood in relation to a previous one which forms part of the same discourse or another discourse into which it becomes contextualized. This primary intra-or extra-textual reference restricts the reference to the limits of the discourse; or rather it displaces its meaning since it temporarily separates it from its linguistic reference in reality. In doing so, it becomes self-referential. Yet in spite of this displacement, the second reference is not suppressed, though postponed, its meaning is not lost.

Consequently, from the perspective of repetition, it is possible to combine two myths into one action. By this token, Echo and Narcissus would still eventually have, belatedly, their forbidden tryst. By being repeated, the same expression is heard twice, it signifies itself just like the voices of Echo and the image of Narcissus, both returning on themselves.

The Nymph, doubly sentenced "to the quasi-silence of repetition" — in Mackward's (1978: 315) words — would thus be acquitted from a punishment which was aimed at both of them. Through a cita — in Spanish: a 'quotation', but also a 'rendez-vous' — they both meet: Echo repeats herself and Narcissus reflects himself; in fragments or as a whole they double the one's or the other's image in reading, a partial repetition like an echo, silent as the reflection of a text.
Every repetition implies first of all a retroversion; discourse progresses but in reverse direction. Thus repetition is part of an anaphoric mechanism: when repetition is found within discourse itself, it follows the traditional rhetorical figure of "anaphora", an ascension, a leap backwards. This movement in words is found in the French expression reculer pour mieux sauter, and is also illustrated by other etymological meaning of the term dis-course itself, which means running about, but always firmly grounded in the text.

The regression-progression of anaphora gives coherence to discourse in the same way as deixis — in oral discourse — corrects enunciation and utterance (énoncé) by different indexical devices. The anaphora ties the knots of the text in much the same way as the deictic verbal elements locate the discourse in space and time.

Yet in addition to this syntactic and pragmatic function, the anaphora is, even in prose, a poetic device. It is more frequently used in complex, written language than in oral discourse, thus showing one of the features of the poetic function: the projection of similarities through which discourse does not progress: it stops as though searching for its own image, reflected on itself.

Repetition is the poetic device par excellence. The figures found in poetry (alliterations, rhymes, repetition of words, phrases, verses, stanzas, etc.); aimed at arresting time (this happens, for instance, in myths and ceremonies, where time is suspended, reducing everything to its essence). This is, of course, not new; but what deserves attention here is that all writing involves a process of "spatialization" in which speech is "transcendified" into writing. This transcodification is not simply the transcription of vocal to written sign, but rather from time into space, which creates a confusion of dimensions which is a distinctive feature of the text, the one that marks its différence. Through reliance on the written sign, through literary truquement, time takes place. In the literary text, the temporal character of the utterances — their auditor character — underlies the sequential text-procedure. At the same time, however, the visual image is thereby silenced.

The anaphora gives coherence and at the same time closure to the text through an introversion that disregards the reference to extratextual reality, engendering an (en)chainement of words, an ambivalent gesture: on the one hand, it closes the discourse, whilst on the other, it opens it slightly. The special effects on this figure will be dealt with later on.

The above-mentioned properties are not exclusive of rhetorical anaphora. The function of linguistic anaphora, as conceived by Bühler (1967:137–201), is also to give coherence and spatialization. Thus, in addition to retroversion, repeated discourse also shows introversion; that is, a return which is both turning back and turning over. This is the case of self-reference, the self-mention that is the first reference of repeated discourse.

While the anaphora shares with deixis functions of indication, the verbal gesture which accompanies the real gesture, it also shares, like any other expression of language, the field of representation, signal and sign (sign and symbol, in Suzan Langer's [1957] terminology) indicating in this manner a portion of the discourse while at the same time signifying it.

When repetition occurs in someone else's discourse, in collective discourse, the indication is not suspended. It no longer addresses the anterior-interior nature of the text, but it fulfills an anaphoric function, because it repeats what has been said by others. Yet, above all, it indicates a unity which transcends the text as part of the underlying system implied by it. Repetition creates an intermediary form, ambiguous and similar to other cases of the metalinguistic function; it does not completely ignore the reference to the extralinguistic reality, but continues to make reference to the underlying system and other linguistic entities. This may be one reason why set phrases and quotations share the same typographic and orthographic sign with the quotation marks in written language, which distinguish the metalinguistic citation from that which corresponds to the primary language.

It is also noteworthy that set phrases constitute, for the most part, figurative expressions. However, unlike many other figurative expressions which can only be interpreted within the limits of discourse itself, the figurative meaning of set phrases are context-independent: they are at the same time sign and context, they operate simultaneously on two levels.

The fact that repeated discourse should show a marked proclivity towards the figurative is hardly surprising: it not only repeats itself because it is figurative, but it is figurative because it repeats itself.

Figurative expressions bring about an imaginative break in the continuity of discourse, conditioned by the rules of logic, which is always less flexible than rhetoric and poetics. Insofar as these expressions are adapted to the original situation, in spite of the break — by means of the imaginative leap — they can also separate themselves from it and, through these displacements and slips of the figure, adapt themselves to new situations. Easily decontextualized, they can also be just as easily recon-textualized.
The same fissure (the literary image Bachelard [1943] describes as explosion and breach) which allows the set phrase to break away from the text, enables it to enter another. The set phrase is repeated as a fragment of a discourse, as a fragmentary discourse, but thanks to its figurability (the possibilities of an imaginative use outside a given context) its re-integration is always foreseeable.

Chapter 7

The (di)vision of man and the crisis of coherence

Yo no sabia cómo caminaba yo. 
Felisberto Hernández

Set phrases, quotations, maxims and sayings in general are fragments of discourse, decontextualized and recontextualized with the flexibility inherent to words; “easy pieces” that may freely leave or enter texts; they are articulated in the same way as any other of the basic units of the system, except that, being built on solidarity, they keep firmly together as a block. Assimilated to the rest of the compounded units, they become part of a new discourse without any particular marks of repeated formulae; nevertheless, the speaker-listener who has uttered or heard them in previous texts, notices particular characteristics in them, which he has no difficulty in separating from their context, and in which he discovers certain features which are absent from other parts of the discourse, absorbed by the totality of the new text. They are like ready-made objects of discourse which highlight the skillful ease with which they may be displaced and put to new uses; this is their lot, their fortune and their fate.

Doubrovsky (1981: 348) remarked that «L’arrêt du sens prend la forme d’un arrêt» [The style of the fragment — (of repetition) — tends invariably towards the maxim], referring to Benveniste’s concept of histoire; he continues saying that: “Nobody speaks here, the events seem to tell themselves. In a maxim, truth speaks for itself; it is enunciated by itself. Like proverbs, writing (which is fragmentary, repetitive and aphoristic) defines and decrees: the arrest of meaning takes the form of an arrest.”

Fragments of discourse, fragments of literature, chosen at one time and then placed and repeated in a new context with tendencies and interests of their own; the reader segments the text into portions which free themselves from the text and start to lead a life of their own, in a different situation.

The most important aspects of the issue under investigation here are these: delimitation, fragmentation, the autonomy of the fragments, their borderlines, repetition as recreation, and the totalitarian tendency of repetition (the repeated part is taken as a whole). This relatively detailed survey of repeated discourse was composed after the chapter “Lector e-lector”. A more explicit account of this will be given in the following.
1. Fragile vessels

We have already mentioned some of the disciplinary reasons which justify, in part, the attention given to these topics — repetition and coherence — from different theoretical vantage points, although predominantly from that of linguistics and semiotics. The concern with repetition is not only theoretical. If textual linguistics, semiotics of poetry, modern rhetoric and other disciplines have dealt with repetition and its variants, this has happened — among other less extrinsic reasons — because the frequency and importance of the phenomenon have drawn attention to one of the most important procedures in a culture of quick changes.

In museums of modern art, many examples of what Genette calls an "aesthetics of repetition" may be found. The Che Guevaras, Maos, Marilyns and Jacquelines, piles of cans and all such works or products which come from mass consumption and industrial production are, in turn, recuperated by the mass (re)production with which Andy Warhol demonstrates the violence of the seductive power of redundant objects, the acceptance forced by multiplication and uniformity of an imagery and a limited ideology which introduce their scarce models resorting to the ubiquitous imposition of electronic or technological repetition. On the other hand — or perhaps not — in this country, Warhol's work has been adopted and developed by advertising: repetition goes around in vicious circles, in which images are recycled. In the context of the few images used by the media, "Less is more" becomes a tautological "Less is less", a paradoxical interpretation of the implicit understatement coined in Mies Van der Rohe's motto.

Multiplied and displaced, Warhol's series — also the (appreciated) object of technological reproduction — do not defend mechanical repetition, but they at least caution against its risks and biases. The exemplary instances given here are fairly representative of a modern aesthetics that, as always happens, is closely connected with the doctrines studying them. The question of whether or not there exists any relation of influence or contamination (or both) between arts and sciences, or if there are coincidences — not in the sense of a common casualty (chance) or causality, insofar as they are a consequence of the same cause, has been the object of other analyses.

The conclusion is always the same; in this era of constant changes, of inventions and discoveries, the phenomenon of repetition and its changes arouses a great deal of interest. Eventual or eventful contradictions are not excluded.

Concerning literature and language, this interest can be explained by a similar reason: the saturation of this figure of speech, or for this same reason: by its criticism; there is a growing negative feeling towards the phenomenon itself, an overtly defensive and hostile attitude against traditional wisdom, an attack against the imperturbability and indifference with which social truths are imposed in order to convince or, on the contrary, a willing acceptance of the growing inertia of repetition.

Nevertheless, the phenomenon may also be observed from another point of view (which does not exclude the previous one), which takes into consideration fragmentation and its results, the sense of malaise provoked by the pieces of wreckage, the leftovers which are salvaged from repetitive (dis)solution. According to Geckeler (1976: 224), repetitions are not structures corresponding to Saussure's langue, but rather fragments of parole, of speech transcribed as fragments of the past "yet which are always valid for the present".

Textual fragments are pieces taken from other texts. Although reconstruction is useless, man attempts, through poetry, to create something new out of the resulting havoc of (broken) pieces.

The problem is the same although the observer, faced with fragments, is able to recognize the attributes, the intrinsic properties which turn these parts into entities which may not be wholly independent, but are at least susceptible of becoming them. The observer takes an actively receptive attitude which, by means of selection — reading as choice — and combination, is an application of the aesthetic principle of collage-bricolage, akin to the relation between synchrony and diachrony. Some years ago, in La pensée sauvage, Lévi-Strauss (1964) wrote that bricolage is the essence of mythical thinking, and that the bricoleur forms new structures by updating past events or putting together parts or leftovers from those events.

Once again we see that specialized theoretical study is never totally indifferent to the events that occur in other fields of knowledge and human endeavour, and that although in recent years repetition and coherence have been the object of special attention and study, this is partly due to their connection with similar phenomena in other fields, and mainly to the fact...
that a crisis takes place both in its etymological sense of “change”, or of “critique”, and in the most alarming (now generalized) sense of distress, difficulty or flaw.

In the twentieth century, the restructuring of leftovers, the collage in its different versions, has graduated from the modest realm of simple workmanship, to the full semantic scope of its matrix, the Greek tēchne, with its dual meaning of know-how and the products of such expertise, thereby combining craftsmanlike technique and artistic creation.

Collage was not an isolated phenomenon, characteristic of the partialization of a single aesthetic trend representing cubism. It was the result of various circumstances: history (in the sense of collective history), philosophy (in its different schools and traditions), politics (and its factional fare wars), science and research into indivisible units and fissures (cases of splitting and reproduction), industry and serial production, discontinuity in the mass media, advertising and its assimilation to artistic practices, all were products of fragmentation and repetition, breaking up and restructuring.

The puzzle-like shape, the multiple points of view, the simultaneous display of more than one aspect of the same object, show at the beginning of this century the image of man reflected on the fragments of the broken mirror of cubist representation or narrative decomposition, which incorporates in its own way cubist techniques of multiple points of view and discursive plurivocality. This fragmentation became evident in the exhibition of body parts and scattered features, objects of the violence which split the beginning of this century, and the consecutive consolidation of a perspective of disintegration. Eisenstein invented an aesthetics of cutting/montage, an efficient weapon in the hands of cinema, a technique which was a means to achieving revolutionary principles. By cutting up reality into pieces and putting them back together, according to different space and time relations, it was not difficult to reject and destroy traditional values and connections, and to introduce and establish new ones. The latter were necessarily to be disconnected; a visual shot start(led) an intellectual exercise in which concepts and feelings were mixed and recomposed in different configurations.

When there are six different faces, who can tell which is the true one? Like the loss of the subject in cubist and avant-garde decomposition, the faceless figure is lost, suppressed or destroyed. A similar decomposition prevented Joyce, Kafka, Musil, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet (this enumeration is by no means exhaustive) from writing their novels following a harmonious and sequential integration of different narrative elements; the crisis of one-dimensionality and the (dual) rift of man struggling with his own conscience (another duality: duel/dole, but of rivalry and sorrow), are clearly symptoms not only of narrative but of contemporary literature in general; they are contemporary literature.

“The discourse of the subject was the narration. The subject has burst: it has been disfigured”, said Peyret (1975, 339–340: 858–859) about Musil’s narrative. This comment may be generalized beyond its specific topic, “Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften”; then it stands for a humanity which, after God’s death (or after God abandoned man), suffers from a threatened/threatening freedom, the same feeling of failure and fragility which also harasses the Übermensch. After Zarathustra’s Emersonian notion, Superman re-emerges in the rectangles of a fragmentary comic strip. Man in the twentieth century cannot avoid feeling that the world is disintegrating and, instead of standing firmly in balance (following Nietzsche’s warning) sits back waiting for Godot. But then the Führer takes him by surprise (the anachronism stands) although Hitler was not the only one to misinterpret the German philosopher’s recommendations.

Recently, in an amazing film: Hitler, a film from Germany, Hans Jürgen Syberberg remarked that Hitler was the man of the century and one must consider that the totalitarian theatricality of his public performance was not alien to the greatest (ever) persecution, confinement and expulsion, and therefore not Hitler but “the foreigner”, chained, exiled and executed by him, becomes the true man of the century.

The foreigner, for whom exile is eternal nostalgia for God and his own home and country — as Ille fuit lais — is stripped of his own set of values, disoriented and lost (no motivation, no direction), for whom the absurdity of daily routine serves to attenuate the sense-lessness of death, to make the end more tolerable.

An abrupt or absent syntax, as a sign of suspension of logic, the resistance to the illusion and camouflagle of the narrative flow (Balzac’s parce que substituted by the “however” which negatively articulates Kafka’s narrations according to a different logic — the biblical lajem?), the disjecta membra poetae, the crackling of disarticulation, of the broken bones of a poet and musician, victim and executioner (Orpheus remains the archetype of a double myth uniting Eros and Thanatos, forerunner of the less lively exercises in the cadavre exquis), word plays, puns and cadaverous honours. «À chaque être son Nom (à chaque bien son mal)» [For each being its name (and for each good its evil)], Queneau’s lexical (as)saults and surrealist exercises, reveal through “diversion” or “divertissement”, the macabre vibration between sense and sound,
the threat of the name (nom and non), the negation of existence through words.

Forewarned of the utterly strange nature of external objects and facts, the astronaut, the alien and the unknown, the man, K., Beckett’s slow and anti-heroes, Joyce’s absent-minded characters, all face alone their inner world, their own selves, alien and unknown to them as the outer world and (equally kapt), whose shreds and fragments are not unlike as the discontinuous world of nightmares. Modern man is somebody who always finds himself elsewhere, in a place of anguish from which he tries to return.

Again the quest for meaning coincides with the quest for unity. Knowledge in the sciences, art, religion, love hinges perhaps on this. Presocratic philosophers conceived cosmos — as opposed to chaos — as following the establishment of general order. The disparity of things would be unbearable if they did not possess a certain coherence in their heterogeneity, which, according to Heraclitus (1986:53), can only be understood by means of logos. Order, coherence, comprehension: through logos (even in Fragments) man is capable of discovering “the invisible harmony, more intense than the other, visible one” between things, of grasping them as a whole in which the “opposites” are reconciled: “God cannot be essentially distinguished from logos” remarked Heraclitus, because “for God, the separation between opposites does not exist” remark Kirk and Raven (1978:266), and this proposal has not been questioned by contemporary literature.

Later Greek thought inherited the archaic conception of beauty, to be found in order, in the symmetry of the cosmos, the harmony of “enthusiasm” (from entheos, ‘god-inspired’), in the “divine transport”, the grace of being possessed by a divinity, defined by Abbagnano (1963:414–415) as “the illumination of the spirit by an intelligible light”, which appears as the Neo-platonic, Christian adaptation of this confidence in the splendour of a “Suprême Intelligence”: beauty and knowledge, harmony as logos.

In the Middle Ages there was a tendency towards expression through dispersion (also a form of fragmentation) which repeats thematically, in multiplied yet connected objects, the greater part of its compositions (the invention of stained-glass windows is an antonomasia of this conception).

Nevertheless, medieval fragmentation can only be considered such from a limited viewpoint, threatened by the risks of decomposition in contemplations and the risks of discontinuity in succession, in opposition and at a disadvantage, facing a divine view to which, in the final analysis, the work is both devoutly dedicated and exposed to.

The appreciation of this whole would be made possible from a Renaissance perspective, with regained confidence in human perception, in the possibilities of contemplation and the possibilities of unity of visual perception and thought, all aided by technology but without excluding medieval piety, because man can only be trusted insofar as he is God’s handiwork, and the same guarantee is provided for the elements of reason and passion in man’s works. From then on, until the modern break-up, man persisted in his quest for unity.

Even in the age of Enlightenment, trust in God is so strong that neither God himself nor the sufferings he inflicts on him can persuade the Hassidic master that He does not exist. So deep is faith that he will not blaspheme against God nor deny him even when God himself offers him evidence of his non-existence.

Modern man is ill at ease and feels lost in this diverse-universe. “The beginning is the end” said Krauss, quoting Schiller, but Blanchot (1969:137) — analysing the work of Hermann Broch — provides a more optimistic symmetry: the “hope of reaching the point of the circle”, the revelation of the “vertigo of the infinitude”, the need to turn the end into the beginning and thereby denying it. “My end is my beginning”. If in the end something begins, then not all is lost. A mystical hope is ciphered around the circular unity, the “cipher” of knowledge, figures as “symbol cipher” of quantity and the void, the zero where the series begins and is exhausted. The cipher is also secret knowledge, a convention mysteriously shared by the initiated few, but above all it is the shape of the greatest of all mysteries, the “black hole” as postulate of a foreseeable, presumed, yet unknown, knowledge.
2. Reading the text: literature and fragments

Even when writing, Barthes cannot fail to appear as a reader. More than any spontaneous or explicit confession, the fragmentary nature of his writing bears evidence to his nature of lector se-lector, and describes the discontinuous itinerary of his readings. On more than one occasion Barthes insists that he favours an aesthetics of brevity, a natural inclination to write fragments, “pieces of very discontinuous discourse”. He knows himself to be strongly attracted by haiku, those minute, fascinating Japanese poems of seventeen syllables, and this attraction is understandable because they are the most perfect expression of that same aesthetics of intense compositions, very short, independent, commanding concentrated attention.

Through fragmentary brevity, Barthes practises a form of resistance to the discursive slip of established logic, logic as establishment, the authority of reasoning, the rules of good syntax, not quite flexible, always alien. He practises brevity as an exercise in discontinuity: alteration of the cadence of discourse; interruption of the unity of the phrase (tmesis, anacluthon, apophasis), organized by imitating a conventional coherence, formulated as rules; intolerance towards the school-like conclusions of dissertation.

The preference for fragmentary (de)composition which results from brevity, can perhaps be understood as compensation in view of other obstacles — it is also, in Jakobson’s [1973:111] words «la pénurie qui crée la véritable vertu» [the penury which creates true virtue] — like the impossibility of creating a major work wherein imaginative articulation organizes the parts, repairing logical abuses by means of a different type of coherence, personalized and, above all, unforeseeable and uncompensatable by the rigour of rules and regulations. Borges (1981:11) expressed a similar resignation: “Al cabo de largos años he comprendido que me está vedado ensayar la cadencia mágica … la obra sabiamente gobernada o de largo aliento”. [After many years, I have understood that the exercise of magical cadence, of a work wisely governed or long winded, is forbidden to me.]

Barthes, along with many other writers of this century, does not settle for facile logic, resisting the temptation and the comfort of common models, but despairs of finding other forms, even though he has confidence in the privileges of an imagination equipped to solve the theoretical constraints of creativity.

The predominance in Barthes of theoretical texts, with original findings of “intellectual poetry” half-way between expressive language and critical language, accounts for his tendency towards analysis (the fragments of a whole), the vocation for an exploratory exercise which proceeds by way of decomposition, a form of second instance creation which sums up the examination of the constitutive elements of discourse: Barthes’ imagination isolates and separates, observes and discovers. Somewhere between study and fiction, analysis and poetry, La chambre claire deals with photography. Prior to this, Barthes had shown a rather systematic interest in photography. This work is justified, apart from its general semiotic interest, for reasons of another nature, since there are few realizations of the aesthetics of brevity as valid as this one — it is inseparable from the principle of dissociation: brevity through fragmentation, which is neither synthesis nor sentence — like the disconnected images in the contradictory union of an album; they are personal choices yet mechanically performed, they are paradoxically partial and objective.

Barthes writes fragments-texts imitating the gestures of the selective strategy of the reader who organizes each reading, always a new one, in accordance with circumstantial tendencies, a different direction which orientates singularly, each time a new meaning in the same text.

“Whoever reads my words is inventing them”: and this discovery is the poet’s ultimate joy. The theoretic convergence is quite clear. Segre (1979:35) considers that the main characteristic of a literary text, regarding textual linguistics, is the multiplicity of its possible interpretations. “The literary text is likely to undergo a very high (perhaps infinite) number of segmentations: it may be broken up into different groups of sign units, following different ‘routes of meaning’ ... it frequently takes different, or even opposite, directions. Thus, a literary text never stops speaking, never reaches an ultimate truth”.

The institutionalization of an open reading, the validity of the reader’s discontinuous journeys and his lacunar procedures, added to the realiza-
tion that pantological readings are impossible, lead to attractions, distractions, abstractions; they legitimize the rights of the literary reading by means of theories which observe the itineraries of the reader, the selective affinities of choice that make somebody else's text his own, because the reader has jurisdiction within the limits of the text.

Thus Jauss (1978) needs not be surprised that “caballa” has in Hebrew precisely the same meaning as the Latin receptio, and that even in modern Hebrew it means the act of receiving, welcoming, sheltering, as well as the esoteric Jewish traditional teachings concerning God and everything God created. The jurisdiction of the reader over the text has been influenced and extended by doctrine to such an extent that it would not be an exaggeration to speak of a Neocalabatic trend in current theories and aesthetic achievements of recent years. According to these views, a literary work appears to be version of an absolute text, of that primordial and perfect writing where every meaning is possible because it has already been foreseen by the text. Nothing escapes the fatality of the Scriptures, a literal determinism also embraced by other religions. “It was written” is the supreme truth in Islamic tradition. In Spanish sino-signo (‘fate-sign’), come very close to each other, assimilated by a common etymology which does not clearly distinguish prophecy from provocation.

The word exists before or after the event: if it fore-tells it; was the fact announced or provoked by it? Just saying it is enough. Linguistic science has not exhausted the magic of language. The sacred, hieratic text still contains all the answers. One must only know how to question it and find its key.

The secret of all (not only mystical) learning, of all initiation, lies in the successive operations of search and discovery. “You would not seek me if you did not already possess me, so stop worrying.” This serves as a semi-consolation to Pascal’s proposal in Mystère de Jesus which Jankelévitch (1980:24, 157) notes on more than one occasion. This seems to comfort him. Man already has knowledge, he only needs to acknowledge it.

A text contains all the letters of the alphabet, and depends upon cabbalistic procedures, the accuracy of reception, the novelty within the traditional moulds (anecdotal lipogrammatic initiatives and other Oulipic exercises and alphabetical games give evidence of an artificial device which makes such literal integrity possible). Segmentation and combination, the text as language is everyone’s work: combining memory and oblivion, “what has been said” and “what has not been said”, the literal and the literary. Once again, it is impossible to ignore the wisdom of the Coheleth, the author of Ecclesiastes, who speaks on behalf of all. Borges (1979:977) said at the end of his Epílogo: “Quizá no huelgue recordar que los libros más personales — la Anatomía de la melancolia de Burton y los Ensayos de Montaigne — son, de hecho — centones. Somos todo el pasado, somos nuestra sangre, somos la gente que hemos visto morir, somos los libros que nos han mejorado, somos tratamente los otros.”

It may not be superfluous to remember that the most personal of books — Burton’s Anatomía de la melancolia and Montaigne’s Essays — are, in fact, centones. We are the whole past, we are our blood, we are the people we have seen die, we are the books that have improved us, we are pleasantly the others.

The rhapsode was originally an interpreter who recited Homer’s poems from town to town in Ancient Greece. He would select the fragments that best suited his taste or his art: the best, the most representative, the most appropriate, in each case, for the local audience. (These characteristics also work in the homonymous musical genre, since the rhapsody takes its episodic character from other compositions which represent national or popular taste.)

Years ago, Menéndez Pidal (1973:40–42) remarked that the heroic nobility of the Spanish romances was due to their epic, national nature as well as to the depuration achieved by folk memory which had taken el saber callar a tiempo [knowing when to keep silent] as a particularly sophisticated aesthetic principle.

The austerity of its verbal expression, the simplicity of its figures of speech, and above all the abrupt interruption of an ending, because it is an ending and not because it is a “dénouement” created in the Spanish Romances an atmosphere of fantastic and mysterious vagueness, an indefiniteness, less vague than an aperture, the perspective of an endless composition where an active interpreter is foreseen or involved. In such traditional repertoire, the end is a potentiality rather than an option. When several endings are suggested there may be no end at all. For instance, the ambiguity of the double dénouement is not an eccentric invention of John Fowles’ (1970) or of Karel Reiz’s The French lieutenant’s woman (novel and film), nor Nietzsche’s paradoxical proposal of a triple ending that would leave his musical composition unfinished. No end, more than one end. The quantitative relationship creates a curious contradiction: if no end means several ends, several ends annul the final finale.

It is necessary to regard the admission of different solutions as inherent in the survival and flexibility of mythical legends, thus supplying a valid interpretative refraction, to overcome one’s own circumstances by adapting to the circumstances of others.
In tandem with the individual acts of linguistic production, final sentences are to be found on the edge of enunciation: they are not so much the end of the narration as the last episode of a diegesis; they have a place on the frontier where again, just like at the beginning, the cord(ons) are extended or distended, fulfilling, as deictics, a double function along the edge between the course of events and the discourse, accomplishing a twofold function of union and separation, of proximity and distance.

On other occasions, as in Les secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan, Balzac's (1937: 65) narrator reaches the end by drawing his discourse away from the characters' lives and the vicissitudes of their histories, in order to bring it closer to the rather more theoretical question of literary discourse in general, without leaving the novel. An interesting décalage takes place, a break-down of levels, through which the author-reader retrieves little by little those personal circumstances from which they had been pulled away in and by the text.

Depuis ce jour, il n'a plus été question de la Princesse de Cadignan ni de d'Arthez. La Princesse a hérité de sa mère quelque fortune, elle passe tous les étés en Genève dans une villa avec le grand écrivain, et revient pour quelques mois d'hiver à Paris. D'Arthez ne se montre qu'à la Chambre. En fin, ses publications sont devenues excessivement rares. Est-ce un dénouement? Oui, pour les gens d'esprit; non, pour ceux qui veulent tout savoir.»

[As from that day, both the Princess of Cadignan and d'Arthez are no longer there. The Princess has inherited a small fortune from her mother, and spends all her summers in Geneva in a villa with the great writer, returning to Paris only some months in winter. D'Arthez only shows up at the Chamber. In the end, his publications have become extremely infrequent. Is this a dénouement? For ingenious people, it is, but not for those who want to know everything.]

The text reaches this point and the narrator puts forth a conclusion which, as such, appears somewhat "forced"; the novel ends only because it has to end somewhere, yet this ending does not pre-suppose any narrative definition, a "true" literary conclusion is still missing. The dénouement remains a matter of the reader's opinion, it means that where something ends, something else begins. Not everything needs to be the object of a final utterance, and an end may be the index of an open situation. These are examples of the strategies of discourse, exercises in sincerity in which a narrator ambivalently engages, to mask the limits, another interplay of cord(ons) through which fiction penetrates reality or (not to the contrary) the means by which reality penetrates fiction; it is not always necessary to see the borderline. The narrator — and perhaps this is one of his specific roles — proposes another version of the interminable variations of "I lie", Eubulides' overquoted paradox which, as mentioned above, is the aphoristic formulation of the bondage of logic, from which the contradictory poetic and verbal product might originate.

For example, in Die Bleierne Zeit, a recent film by Margarethe von Trotta, a child who is eager to learn about his origins, his parents, recent German history, demands from one of the protagonists — who is observing the narrative events and at the same time taking part in them — to tell him everything she knows, to give him an explanation to justify this era of "lead" and affliction. His last words, which close the film, claim: "Fang an, fang an!" [Begin! Begin!].

In relation to Les liaisons dangereuses by Choderlos de Laclos, and also to Proust's novel, Todorov (1967:49) points out that: «Le roman tend à nous amener à lui même; et nous pouvons dire qu'il commence en fait là où il se termine; car l'existence même du roman est le dernier chaînon de son intrigue, et là où finit l'histoire racontée, l'histoire de la vie, là exactement commence l'histoire racontée, l'histoire littéraire.» [The novel tends to draw us towards itself; and we may say that it begins, in fact, where it ends; because the very existence of the novel, is the last link with its plot, and at the point where the story ends, the told story, there, exactly there, begins the story of life, the retold story, the literary story.]

In his commentary of the Infante Arnaldos, Menéndez Pidal (1973) points out that the inconclusion of the "histoire" — the conclusion of the "discourse" (there is no contradiction here) — which remains since the Middle Ages, is due to the continued intervention of different popular attempts, traditional tentative, different tests, until the best interrupted final prevailed, which continues to give rise to renewed strangeness and interpretations. Some end is always expected, thus it may well be that inconclusion is the origin of extraordinary versions; from the epic to the mystic, from adventure to contemplation. Incomplete, the description of the elements of the landscape turns emblematic and the attitudes and words become an enigma. Fragmentation transforms the text: the missing parts introduce the mystery, they consolidate the myth.

The procedures of selection and combination inherent to verbal levels also affect the more complex verbal units of the literary text (or any other written text), which is thus permanently rewritten by these operations. A reader, like a speaker, chooses fragments as units and arranges them in a new way: the two mechanisms reveal the anagrammatic predisposition — a subject to which Saussure paid particular attention — which goes beyond...
the phenomenon of probability on the basis of more literality. There is no point in understanding it reductively: all the words in the text are there for the simple reason that all the letters are there. Recently a linguist remarked that we should not marvel at the presence of homophones and paranomasias, but rather at the fact that they do not appear more frequently. In a broad sense, the anagrammatic nature belongs to the relationship established between the reader and the text, the “mystery” is to be found in each one of us, the secret selection, the unforeseen combination.

When Saussure examines the hypogram, a kind of anagram the system of which he seeks to recognize in ancient literature, he observes the relation between mot-thème of sorts and the entire poetic text. This repetition would not appear only as the repetition of the same syllables or elements according to the rules of versification, nor as a trivial fact of statistical nature, unmentioned because it is taken for granted, but rather as a role or function, and we would risk making a mistake should we attempt to limit it at all costs, while making efforts to define it. Starobinski (1964:243–262) comments on Saussure’s extreme prudence: «Si les faits lui paraissent évidents, leur pourquoi reste inaccessible, comme s’il s’agissait d’un phénomène naturel et non d’une intention humaine.» [If the facts appear obvious to him, their why remain inaccessible, as if it were a matter of a natural phenomenon and not of human intention.]

Trying to grasp the meaning, each reader faces the pathological vastness of the text with detective-like curiosity, akin to the tactics of the reader of thrillers, who knows he must discover the clues in the text, the very clues it tries to conceal. According to Marcescu (1979:47), the reader applies a mechanical alternative of acceptance and rejection, advancing in the text along an itinerary which gropes into the discourse, successively becoming more complex and changing.14

Consequently the “thrilling” expectation provoked by every novel is due to a consecutive imposition rather than to the ingenious inventiveness with which the enigmas are formulated; intrigue is seen as an inherent narrative connection, resulting from the natural successive arrangement of language rather than of facts intentionally plotted as suspense: “...and then ...and then...” which appear endlessly in children’s stories and endless accounts of expected continuity, articulate, in an elementary fashion, a conventional conviction: consecutiveness is twofold: what follows (by succession rather than by juxtaposition), is the result of what precedes (as consequence).

Borges (1974a:499–507) does not ignore this detective-like nature of narrative, and he presents emblematically, in La muerte y la brájula the attitude of the “learned” detective, un homme de lettres, who leads the investigation of crimes according to cabalistic procedures and the reading of the Tetragrammaton, the revelation according to the four divine letters. Due to his “literal” interpretation of it, instead of finding the murderer, he becomes the victim of his own solution: reading one letter after the other, he cancels the meaning and his search is reduced to mechanical nonsense.

The narrative strategy of the writer is two-edged: on the one hand, when he writes the novel, he presupposes the anagrammatic manoeuvres of each future reading and arranges the means, the different verbal units, to efficiently fulfill them; he foresees and relies on the personal moves of the reader, although he cannot define them beforehand. On the other hand, the writer reacts against such a presupposed literary contract, which will alter his work: he neither accepts nor admits that what he writes will not be equally interesting for all his readers. It is difficult to find a writer who, like the narrator of Sterne’s (1930) Tristram Shandy, tolerates — within the limits of the text — that his reader should skip certain passages on the biographical details of his character, accepting that the reader’s interest is not directed towards him. But this is a very special narrator and unlike the author — although sometimes he likes to pass for author — he gets irritated assuming, at the beginning of Chapter XX, that there will be what he considers an unforgivable oversight in the reading. Upset, this character-narrator abandons the diegesis of the principal narration and, in a rhetorical movement, a sort of dramatic parabasis, “he steps forward” in a rather unexpected loosening of the cord(on)s, and begins an asymmetric dialogue, an unusual interaction with his character reader, male or female, another entity caught halfway along the textual road. This narrative jump deserves to be quoted:

- How could you, Madam, be so inattentive in reading the last chapter?
  I told you in it, that my mother was not a papist!
- Papist! you told me no such thing, Sir!
- No Madam, you have not miss'd a word.
- Then, Sir, I must have miss'd a page.
- Then I was asleep, Sir.
- My pride, Madam, cannot allow you that refuge.
- Then, I declare, I know nothing at all about the matter.
- That, Madam, is the very fault I lay to your charge; and as punishment I do insist upon it, that you immediately turn back, that is, as soon as you get to the next full stop, and read the whole chapter over again. (1930:43)
Chapter 8

Familiarity and strangeness: repetition-fragmentation. The narrative of Felisberto Hernández

When I left that room, I felt like an empty room, even though I was not there. A moment earlier, the recitalist had pretended to change my ideas and accommodate them to her way of being; I never would have allowed her to accommodate my room. Now my room was not accommodated by me or her. The discomfort that attacked me when I left the recitalist's room made me wander for a while among the groups gathered around the table. I walked with the room untidy, without the will to tidy it. Felisberto Hernández

[My italics]

The repetitive process describing a narrator's inner state through inter-inanimate forces is quite characteristic of Hernández's (1983:62-63) fictional struggle between surprise and familiarity. Like in numerous other passages, representative of his narrative, the textual tensions stem from two antithetical imaginative tendencies: firstly, a centrifugal force introduces comparisons or extravagant attributes ("I felt like an untidy room"). In spite of the disintegration of the meaning, these odd images are not surprising; they are sheltered by the logical protection of the word "like" which diminishes for a moment the initial oddness. These attributes are either naturalized by an interpretative understanding which assimilates them to the remaining, credible context, or subjected to an insistence which, because of its frequency, the initial strangeness becomes familiar.

The repetition of these eccentricities form boundaries around the segments of discourse (it provokes fractures and fragments) which seem to attract and adhere to each other, blending together their affinities in another unwritten text overlapping the first, organizing this latter by a strange chain of differences and repetitions, without breaking the linear sequence of discourse by a self-controlled parallel de- and re-contextualization. There are no syntactic gaps, but, through repetition, the segments become disconnected and seem to adopt new links and coherence, without overcoming a sort of incomprehensibility which leaves the original text almost, but not quite, in silence, *sotto voce*. This is a first approach to the contradictory nature of Hernández's repetitions.

According to Fontanier's (1978:329) definition, which follows the common meaning of the term: "repetition consists in the repeated use of the same terms or expressions, either as a simple ornament of discourse, or as a stronger and more energetic expression of passion."

However, if this definition is accepted, Hernández's repetition is rather atypical: a mere repetition, neither ornament nor passion, does not adjust itself to any of the purposes proposed for the case by Fontanier, and for this reason it should be interpreted according to a different rhetorical principle. From a linguistic point of view it meets the requirements of coherence which embed a phrase into a context; Hernández's repetitions, however, produce a different textual (de)formation — within the text — creating a type of peri-text of narrative laterality not clearly connected with the main course of events.

With regard to the notion of "frequency" (that is to say, the relationships between discourse and diegesis originating from identical events which are repeated themselves or not repeated in the text) Genette (1963:153), referring to Proust (1966), speaks of «l'ivresse de l'iteration», in an essay we have already commented upon.

Genette (1963) focuses here on a different modality, which is appropriate in the case of Hernández since it is also a question of *inflation* iterative, although it needs to be analysed according to its particular characteristics. The discourse does not advance; it becomes soiled by an insistence which does not respond to any particular intention of emphasis, of emotive or alliterative expressiveness; it constitutes neither an onomatopoetic nor a rhythmic figure.

Nor are the iterations distributed according to a pre-established tactic: stripped of sentimental overtones of traditional rhetoric, they should be considered neither anaphoras nor epiphoras. As there is no phonetic or musical justification for them, nor apocryphal self-referentiality, they cannot be explained by the famous poetic function Jakobson held in such high esteem. In Hernández's text, the message does not turn onto itself with the aim of projecting the axis of equivalence on the axis of continuity, and thus calling the reader's attention to the sonority of the signifier, revealing in this way its materiality, usually obliterated by pressures of meaning and referential needs.
Like the strong emphasis of Proust's (1966: 186–187) repetition petit pan de mur jaune, it is clear that if Hernández did not resort to the onomasiological “treasure” of language, repeating the same sign or syntagm (as if deliberately resisting the synonymic compulsion moving away from the natural shades of meaning within one idea, disregarding the possible irritation brought about by verbal fatigue), it is very likely that he did so only because of the stubborn conviction that the same name corresponds to the same idea; and though unaware of Pascal’s (1973) recommendation, he follows it.

It is quite probable that the insistence on repetition be linked to a desire of appropriation (understood as property and semantic adequacy). It is as if he could re-instate, through mere repetition, the instrumentality of a verbalization which is, if not primitive, at least primary.

However, the desire of appropriation is not enough. Hernández seems to renounce the aesthetic dimension through cacophonous repetition, or even to adopt a different form from those which characterize this function, according to which — as has been said above — words repeat themselves only to make themselves heard. If Hernández’s repetitions were to be classified, they should be included among the intellectual applications of anadiplosis — less rhetorical than other repetitions — because the insistence, in this case, stems mainly from reflection, while showing an aspect which is different from the performative function of language.

Hernández tries to designate, by obstinacy or by monotony, an imagined entity (not a fantastic one: he does not speak of sirens, pegasus, centaurs, nor extraterrestrial beings, but rather of ineffable referents, the recurrent mystery, his ever-present obsession of “what I do not know”; they begin to exist and they survive thanks to repetitive designation. In spite of the fact that they contribute towards an impression of a “rough copy”, of a text “in progress”, the phenomenon cannot be considered merely as lexical sloppiness or as a dubious or clumsy “lack of vocabulary”, but rather like voices of an elementary suspicion about language and its possibilities of faithfully expressing the id-entity he imagines. Hernández avoids the use of synonyms because this identity — although in spite of being imagined, ghost-like — must manifest itself as such in his discourse.

These are recurrent words or expressions which come closer to the notion of isopy as defined by Greimas (1979: 197–199), those supports of discourse that the reader uses in order to grasp its coherence. “Through that spontaneous movement of localization of isotopies, every reader of modern poetry is practicing semiotics without being aware of it”, according to Henault (1979: 90).

Nevertheless, these repetitions were considered atypical, and this was due to the fact that they are expressions which set into motion a similar (though inverse) semiotic movement, since Hernández’s reader feels overwhelmed by the evidence of a repetition of words colliding; coherence is suspended, or at least interrupted, or else it reorganizes itself, stratified in its own way.

The “iterative inflation” produces in Hernández (1983: 31) a thematic dispersion which decomposes the narrative unity within the story itself:

Al tipo que yo sería se le empezaba a insinuar una sonrisa de prestamista, ante la valoración que hace de los recuerdos quien los lleva a empeñar. Las manos del prestamista de los recuerdos pesaban otra cualidad de ellos… la sonrisa se amargaba y el prestamista de los recuerdos ya no pesaba nada en sus manos: … el prestamista había robado recuerdos y tiempos sin valor.

[The guy I was going to be, started to develop a pawnbroker’s smile, when faced with the evaluation that anyone who takes his memories and tries to pawn them makes. The hands of the pawnbroker of memories weighed in them another quality… the smile became embittered and the pawnbroker of memories did not longer weigh anything in his hands: … the pawnbroker had stolen memories and times without value.]

Five pages further on: “…entonces, empecé a ser otro, a cambiar el presente y el camino del futuro, a ser el prestamista que ya no pesaba…” (1983, 2: 36, 43). […] then, I became another being, trying to change the present and the way to the future, to be the pawnbroker that did not longer weigh…]

The repetition of the figure “the pawnbroker of memories” receives a parallel narrative function, so important that it competes, discontinuously, like a character created by the narrator, with the narrator himself: there is no longer a narrator who remembers, but rather a pawnbroker who ponders, appreciatively or otherwise, his memories.

Discourse has followed an infrequent itinerary: it starts from an image, and instead of returning to the literality of its context, it proceeds by means of the stylistic figure, split — by repetition and autonomous development — from the referent which originally produced it.

In another story, a similar competition — through parallelism and rivalry — starts with “stumbles”, both the literal ones of the blind man and the distractions of the sighted, the gaps of his attention (stumbles of another kind). The narration continues to zigzag between the first and second direction: from the literal to the figurative, or it stops at the level of
the figure, and only once it is depleted does the writer return to the
literality of the beginning. The narrator creates images of secondary
fiction, repeatedly verbalized, images in which he himself believes.

The procedure resembles a form of disarticulated continuity, reorgan­
ised along parallelisms, which had been used before in the cinema, and
Hernández, apart from being a writer, was no doubt the impli( cat)ed
spectator. With the changes which result naturally from a transference
of means and medium, he turns into literary species what Krakauer
(1974: 184) called “surface approach”, the surprising analogy between
human legs and cows legs, walking along the street, with the same move­
ment; a man who sleeps on a bench is associated with an elephant,
because it also sleeps.

For example, films by Hans Richter show a hand stroking a splendid
horse and then continuing this friendly gesture along the naked back of an
attractive woman. The caress is like a hinge between the two objects it
articulates: both are associated through affinity (by similitude and
contiguity), included in a narrative coherence based solely on the
juxtaposition of similar gestures: the two stories are distinct but they
remain united.

Jakobson (1963:220) remarked that: “In poetry, where likeness is
projected upon contiguity, every metonymy is slightly metaphoric
and every metaphor contains a metonymic tinge.” Genette (1971:178), in turn,
develops the convergence of these two basic imaginative dimensions.

Taking them as a point of departure, all possible deviations from logic
through the image are conceived, all figuration of reality, the slide from
reality into fiction, of imagination into thought, from one truth to another.
A próximo próximo [close-neighbour]: the resemblance is discovered as
much by similarity as by proximity.

Hernández’s images are mental entities, but through repetition and
extension they acquire a consistency which is personal rather than
objective — “l’imagination est ce qui tend à devenir réalité” [imagination
is that which tends to become reality] — and from a momentary felicitous
occurrence they evolve into a strange, almost stable category ... “The idea
seemed to be seated ... the idea would sit for three months ...” This image
(or idea) appears in the same paragraph in Tierras de la memoria.

On the one hand, “iterative inflation” has been observed as producing
the narrative breakdown of the story; on the other, starting from the same
figurative repetition, a greater topical convergence is observed, a macro­
isotopy which provides unity and coherence to all of Hernández’s work
beyond the limits of each story and beyond topical and narrative auto­
1. The cinematographic image is a partial image

Slight actions, such as the incidental play of the fingers, the opening or clenching of a hand, dropping a handkerchief, playing with some apparently irrelevant object, stumbling, falling, seeking and not finding and the like, became the visible hieroglyphs of the unseen dynamics of human relations,

H. M. Kallen

...por fin la mano se metió en el bolsillo y sacó el reloj... tanteó la aguja sobre los puntos en relieve y después cerró la tapa y lo volvió a guardar.

La otra mano — todo esto sin él levantarse — fue al cajón de mesa de luz — de la misma madera blanca que el roperito tuerto — y sacó los cigarillos y los fósforos.

Felisberto Hernández

It was mentioned above that repetition and fragmentation coexist in a text in a relationship of reciprocity and interdependence: repetition fragments, the fragment repeats. The obvious theoretical and aesthetic convergence of both phenomena has already been stressed. Still one further implicit aspect should be underscored: the contemporaneity of repetition, fragmentation and the phenomenon of film. Malraux (1951: 15–44) noticed and developed a theory on the vital importance of the emergence and multiplication of photographic reproductions, in order to supply an “imaginary” museum (le musée imaginaire) which marks the twentieth-century mentality. It should be added that cinematography constitutes in itself an imaginary turned into museum, an art which exhibits copies without showing an original which might be any different from them.

The subject of imaginaire in cinematography constitutes a common place among Hernández’s criticism; the author’s connections with the theme of the scenic arts in general, the famous relationship between him and the French école du regard and its influences, the observation of the cinematographization of the psychic life — the comparison with Alain Robbe-Grillet is particularly noticeable — the conditioning of his cinematographically-inspired figuration; all concur to make filmic phenomenon a constant in his narrative, the cinema as a topic, a place and a subject matter, where the imagination is projected.

Morin’s (1956) analysis of the “semi-imaginary” reality of the cinema, the double imitation which, according to him, appears with the “cinematographic mirror”, a reflective, two-faced mirror; reflection of the external world and reflection of the interior world, are especially valid to examine Hernández’s narrative aesthetics.

His literature is also part of a “civilization of the eye” (Morin 1956:215), which in his particular literary case, is remarkable for its exaggerated emphasis, a hypertrophy of the glance which deforms the object through a close-up which gives it exaggerated attention. Time does not (ac)count. Once noticed, questioned, the development of the narrative is softened and delayed. Hernández trusts the optical function excessively. It seems that nothing occurs; nothing happens if it does not happen through natural or mechanical sight: the eye and the camera.

This civilization of the eye has not yet surpassed the suspicious efficiency of one of the greatest inventions of realism: the progressive perfection of photographic reproductions and the documentary “fidelity”, the adherence to the authenticity of an image considered authentic just because it is evident, guaranteed by the mechanical objectivity of the camera, increasingly perfect, capable of hiding the presence or the incidence of the person who handles it, as if truth were shown only by itself or — and this is not an alternative — as if only this vision were the truth.

Magical fascination or technical perfection: the photographic image keeps its credibility deeply rooted in imitative thoroughness and, more than by this iconic effect of reality, its credibility is increased by the secondary role played by man, as if it were a matter of two concomitant occurrences. Mechanical registration appears — like never before — to be the presentation marked the least by the presence of the individual. Photography is valuable, above all because it is, in Lotman’s (1977:25) words, “something opposed to culture, to ideology, to poetry, to everything that results from interpretation, it is felt as life itself in its reality and authenticity”. The unforewarned observer is unconcerned with the machinations of the camera, or whoever is handling it. Nevertheless, more speciously than words (considering that the principle of arbitrariness has been of concern to Western thought since time immemorial) the photographic image, or any other mechanical iconic representation is both a tool and an obstacle, another interceding-intercepting instrument simultaneously assisting limits.

No wonder Hernández’s narrator doubts the validity of his knowledge, which is neither reality (because it is his own inner knowledge) nor image
Imitation is the key. The conflict of discovery and disarray is as old as the dynamics of myth and thought: it stems from the well-known opposition between representation and reality, image and idea (“from the inevitable law which requires that one can only imagine what is absent”, in Barthes’ (1973b:187) words, an unsurmountable contradiction which explains to some extent the unforgivable glance, the glance which cannot be repressed, which destroys a beloved thing or dismisses its shadow; it is also the ambiguous gesture of the poet who makes the object of contemplation vanish, and for whom there only remain a lament, a complaint, a sad song, because they are his claim and choice.

“I cannot imagine it because I know it” said one of Wiesel’s (1979:130) characters; for neither is it possible to ignore what one already knows.

“The imaginary man” facing the photographic or cinematographic image is in a similar situation to the Renaissance man who, once he knew perspective, he could no longer ignore it. The invention of this representational technique determined his perception irreversibly: he made good use of this technique, but it was to substantially change his vision: his outlook on the world was never the same after the advent of this new technique. From a conventional line through which man learnt to represent objects in depth on two-dimensional surface, it evolved to another level: from method to conception, from instrument to ideology, from technique to conviction.

Increasing perfection and increasingly less noteworthy, the imitative possibilities of cinema are no longer surprising. However, the realist precision of cinematographic representation does not make it any less arbitrary. At this point in time, it is difficult to try to recover the “innocent eye”. The rules of the game are not those formulated by John Ruskin but rather The “eye” in the text, Caws’ (1981) title. Perhaps the eye, perhaps I: or both, a personal pronoun or my personal view. The iconic preponderance of vision and the mechanical accuracy which improves it do not ensure a fidelity which might conceal the artifice. Ceci n’est pas une pipe, although it represents one, because it represents one. This is the first reason.

Unquestionably, of all representations, the photographic image provides the greatest fidelity, as has been stated already. However, this thorough precision does not overlook tropological figuration: both the photographic and the cinematographic image constitute metonymic types, fragmentary visions of a totality which remains excluded. “I have seen people torn to pieces: the head here, the feet there, the hands anywhere.” This is how the cleaning-woman from the Kolkhoz described the experience of her first visit ever to a Moscow cinema, and, according to Baláz’s (1979) comments, she becomes terrified by the indispensable metonymy of frame and focus. The same reaction of panic was also seen in the West when Griffith showed for the first time the image of a huge “severed” head smiling to the public.
The cinematographic mechanism frames, segments and animates. Literary description does not overlook the new cut up images, although the partialization of verbal material is no novelty since — except for the enormous ironic totalization of Borges' (1974a) *Museo* — it is virtually impossible to conceive a text which corresponds point to point to its referent. Yet traditional literary partialization is a selective partialization (some features, some elements are mentioned, most of the other details are omitted), whereas photographic partialization segmentary as it is tends to be sectarian. It represents a part of the whole but this part is dealt with in every minute detail, or almost every detail: the part is total, if the contradiction may hold.

The words and phrases used by Hernández (1983) to relate subjects and objects in his stories cannot approach the minute register of visual relief but, following the *reticular model* of the photographic image, the camera, the "I" of his narrator, they frame and specify the parts. Hernández uses words as means of representation, trying to imitate, measure for measure (but in such a way that the parts fall apart), detached free fragments which become autonomous from the objects they supposedly belong to, and thus the pieces animate the whole.

Metonymy is the key figure here. One part is represented: the selected one, the part meant to be seen. However, the narration does not limit itself to just displaying the pieces of the puzzle, and as not everything can be seen, the narrator makes use of his "own light" as does *El acomodador* in the story by Hernández (1983). In this different light he can see what others who use an ordinary light cannot. He leans on a partial vision of things so as to make explicit an interweaving of associations and ramblings — the second mirror of which Morin (1956) spoke of — because "all perceiving is also thinking, all reasoning is also intuition, all observation is also invention", in Arnheim's (1969:viii) words.

These flights of fantasy compensate for the unavoidable partiality of a referred world, together with the developments of an overflowing literary imagination which, like in movies, cuts out and combines, provides detail, exaggeration and comparison.

Visual representation is doubly partial: parts of reality, parts of fiction, parts related through contiguity — of montage, of syntax — reproducing by means of logical artifacts the *bric-à-brac* of memory, an objective partiality and a subjective one as well. Narrative continuity is not always present, although the very presence of juxtaposition imitates it.

Art in the twentieth century is seen (and seen) through this *Faux miroir*. Magritte's gigantic eye — eye and sky — like the peephole described by the narrator of *La belle captive* which seduced Robbe-Grillet (1975:62): "There is a square peephole which measures twenty centimetres approximately, perforated on the door of my cell".

Scattered fragments in a skylike mirror seen through a square hole: the cinema or the television screen, photographs, against the codified concentration which integrate and normalize the image in a whole. The coherence and unity of reality needs to be achieved from loose parts and forced, unnatural limits. This is what every artistic vision aims at: to find the meaning of a word, of a work, of a world, or to discover that it is not there, and reveal this lack; to observe fissures, gaps and hiatuses (including those in the conscience), the ideological fillings of the totalitarian illusion.

Hernández's narrator and characters observe the parts they grasp of reality as though framed by a square. The *screen* shows the picture. Ambiguous and contradictory, it both prevents the picture from being seen and allows for it to be. Just like the characters in Truffaut's film *The American night*, Hernández's characters draw away from their family circle, cutting out from the world only the section they want to see, thereby making a gesture which hides them from others; the hiding is double: the camera grasps only a limited vision and keeps us from seeing the person who is looking through it. The glass eye — "the glassy look", a term coined by Jean Epstein (1960) — contemplates the gigantic, monstrous growth of a detail, a feature and the rest risks falling into a void, into oblivion.

The astonishment of the first spectators contrasts with the stupefied but not surprised familiarity of today's cinemagoer who no longer notices the segmented figures and the mutilations which the rigidity of the square necessarily imposes, surrounding him with a world of darkness and silence. Both simple and skilled, the spectator's experience is lost through habit.

The predominantly metonymic displacements, the relevance of fragments, their recurrence, the minute recording of the objects included, the objective enumeration which scatters reading in details, a narrative logic supported by juxtaposition rather than by coherence, are some of the forms which are part of the cinematographic aesthetics in the narrative doings of this century, the narrative of a writer like Hernández, among many others.

The paradigm is valid not only because choices must be made, but also because of the remarkable fragmentation of the plot. Unquestionably, for Hernández — more than any other writer, or anyone else — the cinema is
a real topos, his "real life". Hernández, who has to earn his life living as a silent cinema pianist, also becomes the narrator of his stories, between silence and words (he utters them); here in the cinema, he works not as a writer but as a pianist — almost a fictional "character" or someone who contributes to introducing fiction into the film. As a narrator, someone close to biographic facts, he is still a fictional "character" who finds himself in a marginal situation within the stories he narrates. Between the screen and the audience, between the author and the reader, his presence is halfway underlining the limits: in front of himself, as he plays his piano, he sees a picture; the only thing he knows, but does not see, is that behind him, or rather outside his view, is the world.

Chapter 9

The era of the reader

Until now, it has been our intention to underscore the great interest aroused in recent years by the practices of reading and its varieties, and by the role of the reader in the production of a text. This in turn has brought about a theoretical opening according to which the procedures of literary reception and interpretation have become an object of study which is as recurrent as it is elusive.

Unlike other literary objects studied so far, the study of literary reception has proved to be particularly problematic, not so much out of complexity but rather because of its inconsistency: it is real yet elusive, it produces the text yet leaves no traces of its productivity, easily susceptible to confusion with other related functions or necessarily limited to the restricted experiences of the observer himself.

In the triadic procession author-work-reader, which has been successively studied by literary theory, the writer appeared in the first place, consecrated, rather than just recognized: el hacedor ("the maker"), invested with the authority, or any other of the spiritual or temporal titles conferred upon someone who is supposed to be a creator.

Secondly and endowed with similar honours, there is the work itself, elevated to a superior hierarchical status because it was considered a self-sufficient and self-reflective verbalization, an intransitive, absolute "writing", almost a sacred object.

On the other hand, in the actual reading, the reader is a somewhat blurred object; anonymous, multiple, necessarily dispersed and scattered, unidentifiable, he expressly withdraws from observation, secluding himself in a corner, solitary, darkened by the shade of a light focused only on the book he is holding in his hands. The reader protects himself by a privacy which demands undisturbed silence for reading, of reading, a silence which is its inherent quality, both a requirement and a reward, a need and a pleasure. As Mallarmé (1945:310) said, "between the pages and the glance there is still a silence, the condition and delight of reading".
And this is not the first time man needs to turn his urgencies into pleasure.

Recently, Gumbrecht (1982), one of the representatives of the School of Konstanz, stated that the “project for a literary history of the reader” is a history of frustration, description and enumeration of the failures of a project.

In all probability, these failures have not been circumstantial, but could have been explained by — amongst others — one reason both simple and intrinsic: it is impossible to formulate a history of the reader because the latter finds himself on the verge of pre-history, a partial form of prehistory, because although the writing already exists, it does so only as writing and can only be recognized as reading, not as a document of the reader. The reader (re)produces the writing, but he is a reader precisely because he does not write, and thus reading is his only manner of production. In his case the production of the text is more agir than faire, acting rather than doing.

It has been insistently repeated that the thematic and systematic trends in literary activity during the last decades coincide in their converging interest for reception. In spite of this (and this is not a contradiction), there is a tendency to avoid this topic and to focus the attention more on the other related forms, similarly close, dependent on, yet different from reading itself.

**Chapter 10**

**Critical avidity**

On undertaking the study of reading, the first noticeable deviation is the tendency to concern oneself with critical activity. The reader disappears, easily assimilated and absorbed by the critic who, though himself a reader, is necessarily more than just that. The critic regards writing as the beginning and end of all reading, and this is why he has been excluded from this study right from the start. In this sense, it is timely to recall the forms of discourse which, according to Barthes (1966), “crown” every work.

Barthes recognizes the multiplicity of meanings: “the work deforses through structure”, and thus he has deemed it necessary to distinguish between the clearly differentiated discourse yielded by the work. Consequently, he proposes to call science of literature (or of writing) “the general discourse whose aim is not just one particular specific meaning, but the very plurality of the meanings of the work and literary criticism, that other discourse which openly assumes, at its own risk, the purpose of giving a particular meaning to a work”. Barthes (1966:56) considers this distinction to be adequate since “the attribution of meaning may be written or silent, a distinction between reading a work and its critique has to be made; the former is immediate; the latter is mediated by an intermediary language which is the writing of the critic”.

It does not seem too exaggerated to remark that the main concern (and discourse) of this century is the relationship between literary activity and critical activity. This is not the place to examine this well-trodden problem; suffice it to say that the causes for this consensus are numerous, heterogeneous and have been abundantly analyzed.

Ever since specialized supplements and sections showing the economic reasons for this phenomenon and its material side in newspapers and other media began to appear and to multiply even in specialized university publications (or the trend to universalize specialization, which are opposites only in appearance) a cryptic-critic, increasingly “exoteric”, has become more prestigious. Perhaps this happens as a consequence of academic enclosure, or in order to preserve professional rights and responsibilities, or as a necessary distinction from the all-pervading mass media criticism, because since the introduction of the various formalist, structuralist and poststructuralist theories and analyses, there exists a legitimization of an
increasingly technical or learned criticism which, though considered itself intermediary, is in fact the object/objection of intermediation.

The problems of intermediation already form a commonplace topic in which the most important present-day literary occupations and preoccupations are found and are originated. There is a coincidence — but coincidences are not pure chance but a set of converging circumstances — because literature reaches out to the problem of criticism, trying to define its essence, and criticism in turn attempts against the mediatization of writing, and thus gains access to literary achievement.

Among writers who are critics and critics who are writers, literary discourse and metalinguistic discourse draw close to each other, showing affinities which approach the same textual condition from two different sides, and which induce them, paradoxically, to both self-definition and reciprocal identification.

The movement of identification is twofold, and the attractions stem both from present-day theoretical schools and from aesthetic achievements. In accordance with immanentist practices, the critic seems to disregard the external circumstances of a work and develops a more intimate relationship with it, a less documentary, less dossier-like, less administrative relationship. The task of the critics is concerned more with the purely scriptural aspects of the text; keeping close to the text without closing it, the critic recognizes language as the literary substance and tries to understand how language works when he reads as well as when he writes. Reading, he assimilates doing to writing.

On the other hand — or perhaps on the same — literature abandons the exteriority of the historical referent or extravagance and flights of fantasy so as to devote itself to the observation of its own workings; an introverted adventure — or rather a misadventure — insofar as it constitutes an absence of adventures and miseries, a double misadventure: there is a quest and there is a fascination, because literature seeks its own image and tries to discover its own world, engaging not the work itself, but its imagination, reflected in the vertigo of its mise en abime. When Blanchot (1969:219) wondered "where is literature going?" his own answer was "it is going towards its essence, which is its disappearance". Barthes (1974) predicted the same end. Until recently, the artist, the writer, the novelist, even the critic, continued to act as a voyeur, somebody who spied on others: society, social events, individuals and their customs, private beliefs, thoughts, secrets, intimate emotions, their behaviour, alone or in company. Nowadays the voyeurs are those who spy on him: they see him, they see him seeing him. And by this behaviour,

contemporary writers seem to agree with Plato when they limit themselves to "imitating" only the small world they know, the one they know best, and do not venture any further beyond it. "We are not going to, ask Homer, or any other poet to account for the many things they have told us, or ask who among them was a doctor and who was a mere imitator of the language of doctors" (Plato, 599 b.c.).

In fact, the writer limits his referent by describing (only) the world he knows: his world, a world of books, the world of his books and words; he limits his referent, and thus he imagines less. It is as if the field of adventure had been granted to, and occupied by, Westerns, thrillers, spy novels, science fiction, extra-terrestrial beings, best-sellers and all those standardized (mon)plots novels, belittled by adjectives which classify them and indicate their shortcomings. Myths are the products of strong times, and it may well be that this moment in time is not one of the strongest for imagination, or that one has to search for myths somewhere else, outside literature; in cinema, perhaps, or in television, which have turned from exotic to domestic items.

The works which speak about themselves are the works of critical times, understood as a shortage and overflow of criticism; they simultaneously demythify and demystify themselves. On attempting to reveal its devices, fiction is weakened, or at least, bent.

This is one of the most predictable slides: each time the nature and procedures of fiction are studied, everything becomes contaminated; hence the risk of a new solipsism, no less selfish (solus ipse: "only oneself"), and even more pessimistic. And if merely by exposing it, literary fiction is diminished, then this same specific diminishment is extended to a writing which, overthrowing its margins, introduces fiction into a reality which is not beyond it, because it is limited precisely by its own language: "Dass die Welt Meine Welt ist, das zeigt sich darin, dass die Grenzen der Sprache (der Sprache die allein ich verstehe) die Grenzen meiner Welt bedeuten." [That the world is my world is manifested in the fact that the limits of language (the language which I alone understand) mean the limits of my world.] said Wittgenstein (1969:62).

By adopting a critical attitude as its own, literature is confronted with its own image and discovers the inevitable duality of its condition realizing that an invention is also a convention, which responds to or discusses models, allegories, symbols, figures, images, ideas. It is impossible to avoid the fatality of cognoscitive interposition, of the "epistemological obstacles", of a reality which is no different from knowledge; hence, instead of being mutually endorsing, reality and knowledge question each
other reciprocally, like the reflection of two mirrors infinitely facing each other. “The glance which turns to reason falls into the depth of an abyss” said Heidegger (1964:16) with regard to logos, yet the fall is no less vertiginous if reason addresses itself to the glance.

Due to this introverted vision which closes itself on (against) itself, the writer is aware (and can no longer forget) that the universe is a library and Borges, its director, a man, a clumsy librarian, a blind man who gropes for things in the darkness; in order to saber (ver) la verdad he values and trusts writing, the alphabet; an ordering of knowledge, albeit the most superficial, conventional and arbitrary one. Through writing he finds but enigmas, the same enigmas, each time with different solutions, one invalidating the other. They are only short-term solutions because what today is episteme tomorrow will be doxa or dogma, and what is originality, will be parody. Just “Man” was the trivial, empty and oldest answer with which Oedipus thought he could solve the enigma, but he only managed to postpone it. The answer as revelation was no less enigmatic than the mystery.

Chapter 11
«Le style c’est, au moins, deux hommes»

Un fait culturel n’est tel que s’il renvoie à autre chose. Benveniste quoting Saussure.

Another related subject which shows the tendency to identify the study of reading with the study of writing which makes reading explicit, is the phenomenon of intertextuality or, taking recent studies into account, the phenomenon of transtextuality.

The relationships concerning operations of literary reading and transtextuality, including their fluctuating limits, are not essentially different from the relationships observed above.

Once the subject has been presented, reading reappears, this time assimilated to and through writing and in this essential duality there is an utterance with other utterances where the solidly based universal dimension of this procedure is confirmed. “There is no utterance deprived of the intertextual dimension” as Todorov (1981:95) said with regard to the pivotal statements formulated by Bakhtine on dialogical imagination (the dialogical principle), inherent in all discourse, the inevitable relationship of each utterance with the other utterances. “Any discourse meets the discourse of others along all paths which lead to its object and it cannot but establish an intense and vivid interaction with it.”

Thus literature is conceived as “a homogeneous space within which works touch and penetrate each other”, said Genette (1966:130). The markedly physical and corporal overtones of his view is also similar to one of Borges’ best known concepts, yet it appears modified by a different aspect.

Borges regards all literary production as an infinite reproduction, but he also extends this production (reproduction of a text in other texts) to include all types of physical or biological reproduction. Thus, he compares textual reproduction with the reproduction in a mirror (his ever-present obsession) analogous as well with sexual reproduction (always obsessively absent): “Then, Bioy Casares recalled that one of the heresiarchs of Uqbar had stated that mirrors and copulation are abominable because they both multiply the number of men”, tells his narrator in Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius (1974a:431), one of the most important stories of this century.
According to Rodríguez Monegal (1980:102), whenever Borges mentions “reproduction” he alludes ambiguously to repeated representations as well as to multiplication due to more natural intercourse: “the identity of all those who perform a same basic and ritual action”. The reproduction of the image through mirrors and of man through the act of engenderment can also be verified textually in reading or in literary interpretation. “All men, in the vertiginous moment of coitus, are the same men. All men who repeat a line from Shakespeare, are William Shakespeare.” Rodríguez Monegal links this communion of biological, specular and literary reproduction to the revelation of the “Secret” which unites the people who form Borges’ (1974a:523) The sect of the Phoenix, since the knowledge of this secret ritual ensures the eternity of those who perform the rite:

El rito constituye el Secreto. Este, como ya indiqué, se transmite de generación en generación... El Secreto es sagrado pero no deja de ser un poco ridículo, su ejercicio es furtivo y aun clandestino y los adeptos no hablan de él. No hay palabras decentes para nombrarlo pero se entiende que todas las palabras lo nombran o, mejor dicho, que inevitablemente lo aluden y así, en el diálogo, yo he dicho una cosa cualquiera y los adeptos han sonreído o se han puesto incómodos, porque sintieron que yo había tocado el Secreto.

[The rite constitutes the Secret. It is, as I have already indicated, passed on from generation to generation... The Secret is sacred, yet it is somewhat ridiculous, its practice is furtive, even clandestine and its followers do not speak about it. There are no decent words to name it but it is understood that all words name it, or rather, that they all inevitably allude to it, and thus speaking, I have said anything at all and the followers have smiled or have felt uncomfortable because they felt that I had touched upon the Secret.]

Thus, for Borges, textual and sexual reproduction share some aspects in common: the pact and the Secret, Writing and Silence. Therefore, the textual reproduction generated by reading may be the best proof of the final identity between author and reader, the identity which matters most to Borges (1974a:814), to any writer or to any reader: seeking oneself (reflected) in the other. Because of this, mirrors are infinite and elemental: “Ejecutores de un antiguo pacto/Multiplican el mundo como el acto/Generativo, insomnes y fatales”. [Executors of an ancient pact/multiplying the world like the generative act/insomniac and fatal as they are.]

The mystery of mirrors is no less important than the mystery of reflection. The revelation may lie in the image or in the idea but it is not possible to go beyond it.

Charles (1977:84) said that “a book is written in such a way that it is possible for the reader to rewrite it, in the same or in a different way. Herein lies the real problem: it is necessary to question oneself about this curious ‘availability’ of the book, which on the one hand allows itself to be the rewriting of all the others, and on the other, offers itself to being rewritten.”

When dealing with transtextuality, with a reading which is, rather than re-read, tediously repeated and assimilated through writing, or with the resonance of various voices in a text, voices which are echoes of other voices, voices hidden because they are overly known, allusions concealed out of embarrassment, cut out for fear of redundancy, as an act of rebellion, here the figure of Lautréamont (1938:300) inevitably appears. «Le style c’est, au moins, deux hommes», Bakhtine (1981:119) enlarges the definition with a second person and whoever listens, knows what had already been said before, recognizes and discreetly applauds those voices because there are truths which can no longer be literally quoted.

Isidore Ducasse is considered the prototype of the generative and mysterious duality which occurs transtextually through reading — writing, a literal, ambiguous profanation of somebody else’s text amounting to reverence for one’s own. As Lautréamont (1938:300) used to say and practice: «da veneration engendre le contrefaire (veneration engenders its opposite) and as the risk of veneration lies too close to venereal engendering, his reverence/reference was a double-ravaging plagiarism since he did not usurp somebody else’s glories in order to boast them (plagiarism is — in spite of the fraud — a kind of acknowledgement and admiration for someone else’s qualities) as if his own, but rather to scoff and to devastate them: contrefaire pour contredire, one could say here. Ever slanderous, he tells the most famous truths, he mistells them: decirlas mal o maldecirlas [to mistell or to curse them].

Thus imitated or quoted, the truths of Pascal, Vauvenargues, La Rochefoucault, fall from their haughty and slippery heights, as sententious as they are refutable.

All of this work is deeply affected by literary duality, determined or divided by the presence of the Other, of the foreigner, L’Autre à Mont (evideo): L’ autre à Montvideo, who praises evil so that Isidore Ducasse can praise good. Perhaps this duality — the possibility of saying and denying, also an ambiguity — is another valid explanation to understand the images in a poetic text, ambivalent and uncertain, both “told” and “untold” joys and sorrows.17
Chapter 11

Oui, ce sont des démons. L'un descend, l'autre monte,
A chaque nuit son jour, à chaque mont son val,
A chaque jour sa nuit, à chaque arbre son ombre,
A chaque être son Nom, à chaque bien son mal.

[Yes, they are demons. One descends, the other ascends,
For every night, its day, for every hill, its valley
For every day, its night, for every tree, its shadow
For every being, its name, for every good, its bad.]

Queneau's (1943) poem L'explication des métaphores, where the shadow, the name of the poet, of another man, was written perhaps only to be guessed cryptanalytically, because the mere mention of it is enough to annul him; verses are articulated as figures of contradiction, a chiasmus, a place where writing and reading intertwine, super-impose. A literary text only exists in relation to other texts since, in Jonathan Culler's (1981:38) words: “literary works are to be considered not as autonomous entities, ‘organic wholes’ but as intertextual constructs: sequences which have meaning in relation to other texts which they take up, cite, parody, refute or generally transform. A text can be read in relation to other texts”.

Chapter 12

Every reader reads

In the same way as the studies discussed above, the prolific number of studies dedicated to the reader and the typification of his various modes, has also contributed to the extension of the theoretical approaches to reading. Yet, here again, reading is conditioned by writing and by the explicit participation of the reader in a text (a reader whom the writer has made possible).

Although reference could be made to some earlier works, it is perhaps more practical to begin with the example of Gibson's (1980:2) short study which discusses the opposition between “two readers, distinguishable in every literary experience. First, there is the ‘real’ individual upon whose crossed knee rests the open volume... Second, there is the fictitious reader, I shall call him the mock-reader..., an artifact, controlled, simplified, abstracted out of the chaos of day to day sensation.”

Within a poetics of reading, Riffaterre (1979) has also dealt with the classification of readers, finding an “archireader”, different from the individual, empirical reader with his peculiarities and subjectivity, yet indispensable for grasping stylistic occurrences.

Since then, a succession of valuable and important studies have analysed this fictitious reader. He cannot be confused with the real reader, since this fictitious reader is not part of fiction itself, nor does he occupy a discernible place in the text. In effect, it is not by textual verification that a distinction between this reader and the real reader will be possible. To use a definition by analogy let us place the fictitious reader closer to the “virtual reader”, the reader foreseen by the writer as endowed with “qualities, capabilities, and good taste”, as Prince (1973:180) describes him, yet whose existence cannot be verified.

The real reader stands outside the text but he exists merely as an aspiration of a discourse, a shadow, neither character nor person. He finds himself alongside the “ideal reader” (as vaguely conceived by Prince [1973]), an unverifiable reader who embodies with archetypal perfection all the attributes necessary for the interpretation of a text.

Like Eco's (1979:55) “model reader”, “capable of cooperating in the actualization of the text”, the ideal reader is thought to be able to interpret as competently as the author, on his part, is able to arrange, generatively, the textual strategy.
Let us mention another analogy, that of the “implied reader”, as Iser (1978) calls one of the types of reader he deals with (including contemporary reader, fictitious reader, hypothetical reader, ideal reader, informed reader and others), following the “implied author" as conceived by Booth (1961) in his *Rhetoric of Fiction*.

Iser (1978a:12) understands by this both the virtual significations foreseen by the text and the representative and historical activity that forms part of the process of reading. “This term (‘implied reader’) incorporates both the potential meaning prestructured by the text and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading procedure.”

As with the real reader, it is not of interest (or it is not possible) to define this “implied reader” but, unlike the former, he appears more or less clearly as one more implicit element in the text, a non dit, a kind of presupposition similar to what Ducrot (1972a:9) calls “linguistic presupposition”, that is, implicit forms of expression, an immediate implicit element in discourse which should not be sought for at the level of the utterance “as an extension or complement at the explicit level but rather at a deeper level, as a condition for the existence for the act of enunciation.”

The “implied reader”, who justifies the very act of enunciation — which can only be an act of communication — exists, together with the speaker and the code, already from the beginning. Going beyond the code, language constitutes a point of encounter, enabling verbal interaction among individuals in a particular situation, a speaker who addresses an interlocutor, another individual who is not an accident of discourse but rather its primary condition.

At this stage, we do not need to resort to the old idea of the requirements of *alterity and difference* inherent in every discourse — language as provocation and dialogical convocation — or to the unfolding that marks all literary discourse.

Inseparable from the literary event, the presence of the other manifests itself in different degrees, according to the “sincerity” of the author and when Proust wrote: “en realidad, chaque lecteur est, quand il lit, le propre lecteur de soi-même” [in fact, every reader is, when he reads, his very own reader] he undoubtedly took for granted the relationship of reading, distance and proximity, established first and foremost with the author, and by the author himself.

The recognition of the other as the same, as oneself, is inevitably a Borgesian fictional matrix, in the origin of all literary creation, which goes beyond the well-known convictions of a Doppelgänger, the secret partner of so many folk-tales and legends, and beyond the limits of anthropological definition.

For Borges, duality and ambivalence, the need to be someone else, does not arise only in the writer who lives vicariously through his characters, entrusting them with the reading of an unknown person who would guarantee their survival; they become a natural phenomenon of the human nature, naturally owing to the ambiguous act of thinking and, above all, to the lucid attempts to remember, because “memory turns man into spectator and actor of himself, both at the same time”. Therefore, Borges (1975:12) admits, and accepts with resignation, the inevitability of this conflict:

Si esta mañana y este encuentro son sueños, cada uno de los dos tiene que pensar que el soñador es él. Tal vez dejemos de soñar, tal vez no. Nuestra evidente obligación, mientras tanto, es aceptar el sueño, como hemos aceptado el universo y haber sido engendrados y mirar con los ojos y respirar.

If this morning and this meeting are dreams, each one has to think that the dreamer is himself. Perhaps we will stop dreaming, perhaps not. Meanwhile our evident obligation is to accept the dream, just as we have accepted the universe, and that we have been conceived, and that we see with our eyes and we breathe."

It is also the story of two dreamers: one in Cairo, the other in Persia. This story of Borges’ repeats another, much older one, shared and claimed by various traditions. Believing in the dream of a skeptical guard outside a palace in Prague — they still existed not very long ago, threatening Kafka’s characters with laws unknown to them — a poor unfortunate Rabbi who had come from the ghetto in Cracow is able to understand his own dream and to discover his own fortune. An encounter with someone else allows him to find the key to his own dream and to overcome his hardship.

Any reader experiences, in the duplicity of reading, this paradox which has long been part of popular wisdom: through interpretation one finds one’s own truth in somebody else’s fiction, “...that strange and constant fact... to know that whoever reveals to us the meaning of our mysterious inner journey must himself be a foreigner (a stranger) from another creed and from another race”, in Eliade’s (1978) words.
Chapter 13

A read reader

We have remarked above that the difficulties involved in the study of the reader arise mainly from his dual condition, indispensable for textual validity but concomitantly indiscernible; a spectral and necessary presence, a barely visible figure who watches (its function is *spectare*, to watch), who sees, who reads; and thus reader and text, both, exist.

Unlike the previous definitions, which attempted to define the reader's literary function, we shall deal now with a somewhat less problematic, less speculative aspect: the class the reader forms part of when he appears, inscribed, written and read, an explicit property of the text and of the "spatio and temporal universe designated by the story", according to the definition of diegesis up-dated by Genette (1982) in *Palimpsestes*, when he deals with this kind of reader who may be called a *read reader*.

Genette (1972:265) had previously defined the *narratee* as a character belonging to the narrative instance, symmetrically similar to the narrator: «Il se place nécessairement au même niveau diégétique; c’est-à-dire qu’il ne se confond pas plus a priori avec le lecteur (même virtuel) que le narrateur ne se confond nécessairement avec l’auteur.» [He is necessarily placed at the same diegetic level, in other words, he is not confused a priori with the reader (not even a virtual reader) just as the narrator is not confused with the author.]

The narratee pairs off with the narrator, he also acts in that uncertain zone shared through the narrative situation, metaetically marking another, ambivalent, cord(on), an indistinct, "indiscreet" frontier, fluctuating between diegesis and extradiegesis.

From the simple appeal to the (male or female) reader's specific function, formulated as a *captatio benevolentiae* although it frequently is more hostile than solidary (either the *Hypocrite lecteur* or the revered reader of *Le Père Goriot's* familiar misfortunes), up to less committed solutions: a case in point is the recurrent *vous* and *nous* of Balzac's (1961:19) narrator, which guides the reader's participation through the vagueness/determination of the pronouns, the appeals made to the reader through a circumstantial narratee who is summoned (to the reading), who asks (for other readings), who is supposed (to be reading): «Vous y aurez lu la tranquilité lucide d’un Dieu», «Figurez-vous…», «Où trouverez-vous, dans l’océan des littératures, un livre surnageant…» [You will have read the lucid tranquility of a God, Imagine..., where will you find a book in the ocean of literatures, a book afloat... always confirming him in his role as reader, safely excluded from other roles.

Other narratees may appear more neatly in the text. This is the archetypal case of the caliph in the *Book of the thousand and one nights*, the oft-quoted character-narratee to whom the stories are addressed and who, besides symbolising (through exaggeration) the severe "authority" of the receptor, also represents the strict interdependence which links the narratological categories where textual events are inscribed. The text depends more on the condensation of the narratee than on the initiative or the ingenuity of the narrator, and in like manner every story exists only if there is a receiver who will pay attention to it: the narrator's life depends on the narratee just like the story depends on the narrator.

In previous pages we have touched upon the "textualization" of the reader in recent novels by Calvino (1979) and Eco (1980) and so many others before them. In these works there are conflictive readers-characters, ambiguous readers (since they read and they are read), placed in a two-edged space and condition which was underscored, years ago, by Cortázár (1964) in his short story *La continuidad de los parques* and which Genette (1972:143) was to observe closely in *Métalpsestes*, the study which deals with those intrusions "of the narrator or the extra-diegetic narratee in the diegetic universe, or viceversa".

The character-reader of Cortázár's story is suspiciously related to the archetypal reader addressed — almost attacked — by Balzac, a reader who sits curled up in his most comfortable armchair, with the book held lightly in his hands, far removed from the tribulations of the novel, which are foreign to him.

From within the discourse, the narrator observes the selfish aloofness of the seclusion in which the reader seeks shelter, and describes it, introducing it by a shrewd third person, conventionally narrative. Cortázár makes use of the pronominal subterfuge, identifying the reader-character and the read-reader, because the third person is just grammatical, a non-person.

In the pronoun "he", both characters ambiguously converge and from that pronoun they depart in symmetry, towards the two directions of the context, towards the two planes of the story, without neatly distinguishing one from the other. By idiomatic indistinction the reader-character-in-the-story—who-reads-a-novel-that-is-read-by-the-reader-character-in-the-story. «C’est la faute des pronoms» [it is pronoun's fault], says Beckett's (1953:195) unspeakable character.
In Cortázar’s story, the reader is in a different diegetic level. The third person is the key-device. Like any other narrative person — traditional or otherwise — he bears witness to what happens. In this case he also recovers a specific responsibility, becoming a reader who dies in order to bear witness to his willing suspension of disbelief. He is another martyr who fulfills his role, his literary faith. From the moment he participates in the production of the text he can no longer remain on the margin.

The narrative metamorphosis only takes place through the intermediation of words. The switch of characters — through the use of pronouns with their circumstantial referential characteristics — underscores a property inherent not only in the pronouns and their semantic limitations, but in all verbalization: the inability to distinguish — being removed from a concrete situation — between individuals, an inability which is inbred in language and in signs. It is the only way to guarantee communication.

A sign — even when actualized in and by discourse — cannot elude the universality which it inevitably invokes: it designates and signifies at the same time. This semantic duality which simultaneously involves concept and object is the cause of a confusion which is observed and taken advantage of in literature: this necessary confusion is one of the two-fold aspects of the sign, and fiction — like poetry — turns verbal constraints into energy. This also explains the suffering of Ireneo Funes — Borges’ (1974a:490) extremely learned peasant — who could neither understand nor tolerate that “the generic term dog embraced so many unlike specimens of different sizes and different forms; he was disturbed by the fact that a dog at three fourteen (seen in profile) should have the same name as the dog at three fifteen (seen from the front).”

This lack of formal distinction becomes even more extreme when the requirements of discourse give way to the use of pronouns which make direct reference — without conceptual intermediation — to the situational or contextual referent, and because of this immediacy they can dispense with the universalization of the sign.

Clear indicators in colloquial discourse, pronouns, when inscribed in a real, determined situation, are also the road along which confusion — always deliberate — enters literary discourse, which is autonomous and disconnected from any situation other than its own coherence.

It is not easy to conceive a similar sleight of hand in other, non-verbal, forms of representation: neither traditional painting nor cinema, for instance, could solve a similar shift without resorting to tricks of disguise or cunning swipes: the unavoidable particularization of the image does not favour the natural ambiguity of the verbal narrative procedure, nor does it render it any easier.

In Cortázar’s story, the beginning and the end coincide because in a literary text fate is never fortuitous: “Écrire, c’est prévoir” [writing is foreseeing] said Valéry (1943:47), referring to more than one anticipation. Reading follows a scrupulously prescribed writing: “The dogs were not supposed to bark and they did not bark. The butler was not supposed to be there at that time and he was not there”, confirms Cortázar’s narrator.

With Borgesian rigour, transgression — already in the frontiers of the narration — traverses textual boundaries attaining the hors-text with unreality, infecting it; this time it is the reader-character who becomes involved in the narrative action and becomes his own victim; the reader (not the characters but ourselves) also feels involved: he reads but he cannot avoid turning his head and looking back. “¿Qué dios detrás de Dios la trama empieza?” [Which god behind God starts the trama?]. Once again Borges’ (1974a:451) lines recall the layered aesthetics of his “circular ruins”, compelling us to lean over the abyss: the vertiginous risk of our own image in the image of someone else who is watching us.

Once again, the characters who find themselves on the edge, on the frame, stretch the cord(on)s, loosen the thread of the trama, shape the gaps. Fiction and reality, controverted, indistinct, become closer by means of a metaliterary mechanism: the operation of reading put into writing. The terms of the code become transposed: the user is used, the onlooker is looked upon; just like the axolotl, the strange larva that stares at and fascinates the amazed narrator of Cortázar’s story who also stares at the axolotl, until the reader, also paying tribute to the lucid horror of seduction, cannot distinguish who of them is in and who is out of the aquarium, who and where is the narrator he relies on. A reader — even though he may believe otherwise — cannot simply remain outside the narrative confabulation: he takes part in the plot, and not always against his will; shifting pronouns, transparent glass, narrator’s sights and insights are instrumental in changing narrative positions.

Doppelsicht, a visual display by the American artist Eric Orr, consists only of a construction of walls which functions as a frame, creating enclosed areas inside the museum. From within the space created by this frame, the public can observe other people observing other works and exhibits. The observer observed: just a frame, an enclosed space, another cord(on) which can aestheticize any object: it creates a twofold artistic situation, which illustrates the interest directed towards the receiver, the blurring borders of the aesthetic experience, the questioning of
exteriority/interiority, the need for cord(on)s, like the velvet strings in traditional museums, underlining the aesthetic event.18

The inventiveness of this recourse does not attenuate the relevance of this remote concern. Magritte deliberately entitles one of his works La condition humaine: a landscape, a painting of the landscape within the painting, which continues imperceptibly, perfectly, beyond the canvas, and yet it remains inside it. Where does the painting end? Where does the landscape begin?

This recourse penetrates the discourse and shapes the story. La continuidad de los parques (1964) is an extremely short story, almost a long epigraph, because of its size, its introductory location, and above all, because it anticipates and highlights the meaning of the story that gives its name to the book: Final de juego (1964), the end of the game, of interpretation, of any book, when the players realize that time is up.

The reader is left perplexed with this confusion, this transgression of levels which puts him on his guard. The reader of Balzac, who began to read sheltered by his marginality, shivers in this other story, because even more disturbing than verisimilitude (a possible truth), is the effective fluctuation, the flexibility of a labile border that remains blurred even when marked: every game defends its autonomy by means of its own rules, but every game comes to an end just as Cortazar (1964) fears; for this reason his title, right from the beginning, predicts and warns about this end.

One wishes to believe that a reader remains outside the work; current opinion trusts the rigorous validity of the literary deal, which is closed when the book is closed. A reader does not participate, cannot participate in the writing because his textual performance must conform to a code which comprises writing, yet one which is implicit and silent: as long as he is silent, the reader feels safe. Canetti (1980:47), enumerating the different languages a man should command says that — among others — it is necessary to have “one (language) exclusively for reading, one which he would not dare use for writing”. Different codes which distinguish different domains.

An example like Cortázar’s disturbs the peace and quiet the real (unread) reader, the one who actually holds the book in his hands, seeks in the secluded silence of his reading: his position is no longer invulnerable because, in Charles’ (1977:9) words “reading is a relationship: the book and the reader cannot be separated artificially. The participation of the reader is no epiphenomenon.”

The reader is no longer the disposable figure, a newcomer accidentally added to the work, from the outside, involved, who remains safe and silent, safe from his own everyday situation as much as from the literary situation.

This does not mean that his existence necessarily depends on his appearance in the text: that is another story. Sometimes, his role may be played; his silence becomes verbalized. Yet precisely in this case the risk of disappearing increases; hypostatized in and through writing, reading fades away and the reader loses the specificity of his function; one becomes no longer distinguishable from the other. It is the task of the philologist to unveil this conversion in classical writings, to recognize the frequent and often imperceptible insertions by copyists, illustrators, commentators and interpreters.

The reader’s activity depends on writing and writing depends on reading, yet this interdependence implies that writing and reading coincide albeit without being assimilated to one another.

The narrator can pretend he is somehow supplying a reader; however, the dialogical naiveté with which he appears to establish a relationship with the reader through the narrator is a literary pretence: through the use of a device of suspicious courtesy, he presupposes and appeals to the undivided attention of the reader who, as we know, is the true addressee of the work and responsible for its text; he responds to the text and controls the process of textual production.

Thus, with an interposed narrator, the narrator may deal from the very beginning with a hypothetical reader but his appeal, no matter how forceful, will never be strong enough to cause the real reader to forget his own role. On the contrary: each apostrophe confirms it even more.

Only a deep passion for reading and the ravings which the imaginative outbursts of the narration provoke in the reader, could conceive a Don Quixote, torn away from his environment, abandoning his books, not because he disowns them but because he has excessive faith in them. This is an amazing ethics of reading: because he believes in his reading he stops reading. On the opposite extreme, and in another dimension, there is the reader of Madame Bovary, a character in Allen’s (1978) The Kugelmass Episode, who is displaced from an American college campus and a disorderly, distressed life into the very roots of the novel.

Kugelmass, professor of Arts at City College, is so fascinated by Flaubert’s heroine, that he is suddenly carried away, literally literaturized, as an epiphonic reader who does not resign himself to the incompatibility he sees between textual participation and diegetic exclusion. He consults
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"He who does not expect the unexpected will never find it", Heraclitus (1980:241) once said, and the reader—in and out of the story, more than anyone else, is someone who must always expect the unexpected.

Situated on the same diegetic level, the functions of the narrator and the narratee balance one another and it is therefore not surprising that they should at times exchange roles. To illustrate this, the most notorious example is offered by Boccaccio's (1965) Decameron, where the characters alternately act as narrators or narratees. Far away from Florence but also due to a narrative imagination awakened by isolation, another particularly interesting example of this exchange can be found in Borges' (1974a) story La forma de la espada (also from Ficciones).

Borges' story is of great interest because it lies at the crossroads of the most important aspects of an outstanding vision which has since become an aesthetic feature of twentieth-century aesthetics: 1) it offers a variant of the structure en abîme — his aesthetics of the circular ruins; 2) it shows again how enigmas may be revealed by catoptromancy, that is, through mirrors: it is possible to discover the truth by means of an inverted vision, because it is exactly the opposite replica of its object, the dream of one, the vigil of the other; 3) as a synthesis it also accounts for the vicarious responsibility or, what amounts to the same thing, the solidary guilt, the conviction underlying Borges' work, what he thinks and says: the deeds of one man fall on all men. On account of Adam's sin, everybody is punished. The sacrifice of a Christian, of a Jew, brings redemption. It is not a question of religion but of belief: the Law is for Jews and Gentiles alike. In Jauss' (1981:128) words: "The world of fiction no longer remains as a world in itself, but becomes that which fiction has always been in the aesthetics and communicative experience of art, before it declared itself autonomous: a horizon which reveals to us the meaning of the world through the eyes of someone else."

We know that the explicit presence of the narrator is of itself problematic. I do not intend here to reformulate the commonplace of the omniscient narrator and his ambivalent capacity of inadvertent ubiquity in the story and conspicuous presence in the discourse. Enough has been written on the problems of his ambiguity. His double-faced profile facing, on the one hand, the diegetic universe, observing characters, action, attitudes, places and times, and, on the other, the extra-diegetic, expected universe, telling the reader what he knows about the characters' behaviour, need not surprise us. Not only is the narrator close to the author through whom he addresses the reader by means of a more or less vague narratee, but he is also close to the characters, he knows what they do, think, dream or hide. He is allowed a second degree of interiority which only fiction accepts.

The narrator stands on a point of conflict, the crossroads where he loses his direction and defines — alternatively — Beckett's (1971:160) confused character-narrator, dumbfounded and motionless in the space which engenders him.

...c'est peut-être ça que je sens, qu'il y a un dehors et un dedans et moi au milieu, c'est peut-être ça que je suis, la chose qui divise le monde en deux, d'une part le dehors, de l'autre le dedans, ça peut-être mince comme une lame, je ne suis ni d'un côté ni de l'autre, je suis au milieu.

[...Perhaps what I feel is this: that there is an outside and an inside, and I am in the middle, perhaps that is what I am, the thing which divides the world in two, on one part the outside, on the other, the inside, perhaps as thin as a blade. I am neither on one side nor on the other, I am in the middle.]

In this sense the narrator shares a place with the buffoon of Elizabethan theatre, a character who does not fully accept the autonomy of fiction but...
meddles half-way, in between, mitigating the centripetal tension of fiction with explanations, commentaries and jokes which extravert it. Intended to be heard, sometimes only by the public, sometimes by the actors, these monologues develop the implicit points of the drama: suspicions, intentions, attitudes and actions which are not performed but which must be made known. The dramatic position of this character lies on the borderline, almost on the edge of the scene and of the stage, stumbling and falling out of the play like the Chorus in Shakespeare’s (1937:531) Henry V, like the buffoon who exceeds himself by nearly falling down out of Tiepolo’s fresco.

In La forma de la espada, Borges’s (1974a) narrator is also named Borges. He thinks like him, speaks like him and makes observations similar to those made by Borges on his travels through Uruguay, like the journey he describes in this story, like the ones he used to undertake himself so often.

Thus, the narrator conceals, under a mask of biographical identity, his distrustful nature, the literary function (fiction) of narrating, speaking, lying, or because only through language can such a thing as the knife without a blade and lacking a handle mentioned in Lichtenberg’s (1992:801) aphorism, exist.

The narrator represents, better than anyone else, the verbal genie, through which the absent becomes present and the present vanishes. Verbalization is his foremost mission: whatever happens, happens through language and therefore stands interposed, intervening in reality and in fiction, transforming both. But as Steiner (1975:217) said, a lie is not a vice of language but rather the very phenomenon through which “language is the most important instrument of man’s refusal to accept the world as it is”. What saves man from the fleeting present is fiction, narration, the history-story, the prophecy. That is why the word mentira (‘lie’) in Spanish, so close to mente (‘mind’); mentir and mentar (‘to lie’ and ‘to mention’), so close in the imagination songe and mensonge (‘dream’ and ‘lie’) in French, close to man’s intellect, concept is too close to conceit.

Thus, in one way or another, in all stories the narrator lies. In Borges’ La forma de la espada (1974a), two narrators lie even more: the narrator named Borges lies to us about the identity of a slippery sub-narrator he introduces as el inglés (‘the Englishman’), a narrator who tells the story of a character — John Vincent Moon, an Irishman — involved in political plots and revolutionary actions. On the other hand, this sub-narrator-character seems to lie to Borges — transformed now into his narratee — as well as to us. In the end he honestly confesses his intention: the purpose of his lies was that his narrator should remain unmoved, so that, despite his foreseeable solidarity with the narrator, he (Borges, or his readers) may listen and judge the story of his treason without interruption, without attenuating, through discursive complicity, his condemnation of Moon’s ignominious betrayal.

For a very long time, literary displacements have been regarded as efficient and deservedly so: Borges shifts from author to narrator, from narrator to narratee. His character, John Vincent Moon, does the same: he plays both a sullen, hostile, reticent character at the first diegetic level and as a narrator, and a necessarily more eloquent one at a deeper diegetic level. However, there is one more displacement: the narrator coincides — “in reality, in fiction”, in Kafka’s (1985:474) words — with his character, who hides behind a strategically narrative third person. The shift remains unnoticed. By means of this subtle discursive subterfuge the traitor becomes a hero, the most cowardly character becomes the bravest. A remarkable technique of shifts crisscrossing narrative levels and roles.

This inversion in the discourse corresponds exactly to an inversion in the story: it is not the first time that the victim and the executioner blend into the same identity: the Heautontimoroumenos is one and the same: the victim and the executioner. A series of deceptions merge in a single entity; identified in an individual undivided character, the reciprocity of these opposites becomes indissociable: the one no longer exists without the other. “Everything occurs as if there were a conscience of a witness, immanent in discourse, and a conscience of a murderer immanent in the referent, both present in a single character.” Barthes (1966:20) makes this observation a propos of a similar trick in one of Agatha Christie’s thrillers. The image in the mirror is only produced if someone stands in front of it. Consequently both — image and object — are conditioned by one and the same action.

In Borges’ story there are two narrators: one who is called Borges and starts to tell a story in the first narrative space (Tacuarembó, Uruguay), and a second narrator who is located in a different narrative space (Ireland, 1922) — earlier in time, later in the discourse. “His true name does not matter, everyone in Tacuarembó calls him El inglés de la Colorado”: this comment on the identity of the narrator is apparently meant as an expiatory, withheld out of complicity.

With regard to this type of comments, Barthes (1966:10) said that they fulfill an important discursive function, “it accelerates, slows down, relaunches discourse …it sums up, anticipates and sometimes even misleads”. A narrator remarks that he prefers not to reveal his character's
name because it is of no importance to mention it or — according to parameters implicit in the “prevailing system” — to defend, out of discretion, the veracity of the story without discrediting anybody. The reader grasps (shares) the implications of this kind of “realistic” procedure: if it were not a true story, there would be no need to hide anything. One would be protected by the right of fiction. This procedure is frequently encountered in more traditional narrative texts when an initial capital letter is followed by suspension points, to avoid committing an indiscretion by giving away an identity; or the completely different meaning given to the same recurrence by Kafka’s (1968) key: “K...”. If a name or proper name had been used, fiction would have been introduced; instead, it seems that his reserve endorses, paradoxically, almost silenced, the creditable version.

The narrator, who knows his craft well, openly declares in *Emma Zunz*, another story of Borges’ (1974a): “The story was incredible, indeed, but it was accepted by everybody because it was substantially true. True was the tone of *Emma Zunz*, true was her chastity, true was her hatred. Also true was the offence she had suffered. Only the circumstances, the time, and one or two names were false.”

In fact, as Booth (1961:44) says, all fiction requires an elaborate rhetoric of dissimulation. Although it is true that the basic convention of traditional first person fiction was trust in the narrator, this convention is no longer applicable. In the same way that Balzac’s (1935) narrator states, unabashed, that “All is true” (in the original French text, Balzac’s narrator exclaims in English), the dual essence of the narrator/narratee, author/reader, seems to abandon its dubious exteriority and participates in the text, to reinforce the validity of the discourse. However, since the author’s alter ego is mistrusted, the reader’s alter ego cannot be mistrusted any less. And as Booth (1961:158) proposed an “unreliable narrator”, it would also be necessary to define now an “unreliable narratee”, a narratee whom we must not trust and who would extend that well-known typology.

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Chapter 14

The rights of the reader

The text is regarded as a work of interpretation, the operation of *actualization* through which literary discourse is produced; the textual event takes place through reciprocity, a mutual dependence between the reader (who supposes a reality) and the work (which proposes a reality). What happens is not the finding (discovery, invention, occurrence) of a circumstantial meaning, but rather the very circumstantialization of meaning, the instance where meaning is realized.

The text constitutes the place of productivity which Barthes (1966:52) recognized as a polysemic space where a variety of possible meanings are intertwined, “because if words had but one meaning, the dictionary meaning, and if a second language did not come so as to disturb and set free the ‘certitude of language’, there would be no literature at all”.

Fontanier (1968:59) had said before Barthes that the spirit, with the help of the literal meaning, finds and shapes the spiritual meaning, for “It does not exist for those who take everything to the letter, for those who do not know that the letter kills and that the spirit gives life”. Barthes must have also born in mind the fact that interpretation, that second language the reader learns or applies through the exploration of literature, the “exploration of the name”, a way of “glorifying” literature and “manifesting its essence”, is a truth which had already gone beyond the message of the Gospels.

The reader is an interpreter of the text: he understands it, he realizes it, and he “realizes” it because he understands it. Even when a sufficiently clear and simple meaning has been woven into the text, the reader will be wary of such clarity and simplicity (his role, after all, is to interpret), and hence he will approach the text with the same inquisitive attitude of someone prepared to solve an enigma, to discover a secret meaning, a hidden relation, an elusive ambiguity. He knows that a far-fetched intention to conceal something usually resorts to transparency as an additional subterfuge.
It is necessary to seek and to justify, because in the text nothing is free of semiotic charge or reason. The validity of textual activity and the production of reading is based on the conviction that in a literary text, intention suspends contingency. The text appears as the very process of production of meaning, of a refus de hasard. As Paz (1956:19) said: “What man touches upon becomes tinged with purposefulness: it is like going towards... The world of man is the world of meaning”.

Conceived as a design — the “it was written”, this sino-signo (‘fate-sign' in Spanish) suggests, without going into well-worn etymological vindications, the identification of writing with fate — literary discourse as a space of determination, where everything is foreseen, where not even the accident is fortuitous.

Ambiguity, a virtuality of possible meanings, does not invalidate determination; on the contrary, it legitimizes its validity. It excludes any fixation of meaning, since determination does not imply the proposal of one determined meaning, but rather the certainty that meanings are always to be found in a text. This determination is so inherent in the interpretive event, that it cannot remain indifferent to the principle of literariness: in fact it constitutes this principle. If I do not consider a discourse to be literary, any flaw (clumsiness, redundancy, ambiguity, incoherence, obscurity) will suffice for me to reject it, without submitting it to any of the three hermeneutic instances: I try neither to understand it, nor to interpret, nor to apply it. Faced with a literary text, however, the opposite occurs: former reasons for rejection, now awake my interest, and it is through them that I find the “gap”, the opening, the fissure and the enigma, a position from which the best interpretive strategies can be developed. The more hermetic the work, the greater the hermeneutic activity achieved. (Hermes, patron of the musical arts and inventor of the lyre is also the Greek heir of Toth, yet twice the greater: Hermes Trismegiste, thrice the greatest, is the author of magical books, the mysterious scribe, God of the Egyptians who possesses the plenitude of knowledge, inventor of writing, creator of languages, counselor and divine interpreter.)

This confidence (also a suspicion) in the rigorous textual intentionality of the text, whereby everything is necessary and nothing is contingent, seems to be consolidated by the close relationship between writing and the most traditionally prestigious institutions: law, religion, teaching, where the letter is the norm, where being is having to be; for Ricoeur (1965:27), “the enigma does not block intelligence but rather provokes it; there is something to be developed, to be deciphered from the symbol: it is, precisely, its double meaning”.

From the moment one accepts that in writing everything owes its existence to an intention, it becomes legitimate to think that in reading everything should undergo an interpretation, at least one interpretation. From both sides, risk and hazards are ruled out and the enigma, once proposed, is accepted: «Il doit y avoir toujours énigme en poésie, et c’est le but de la littérature, — il n’y en a pas d’autres.» [There must always be enigma in poetry, it is the aim of literature, — there are no others.] Mallarmé’s (1945:869) statement stands more as a definition than as a norm.

As a result, the poet needs to decipher; being also an Egyptologist of sorts, he suffers — this is his passion — because of the inflexibility of that hieratic demand. Balanced between two tensions, the poetic text suspends its closure: intention closes it and interpretation opens it, and the reverse is also true.

It has already been advanced that the text, contradictorily hollow and compact, forms a zero, the cipher, the secret convention which is not nothingness but the void, an imminence of plenitude. If one believes in the truth of words, “cipher” originates, etymologically, in the Arabic sifr (‘zero’, ‘void’) which is derived, in turn, from the Sanskrit sunva, whose root is svi: ‘to swell’, ‘inflated’. Paz (1969:255) remarks that Edward Conze, the distinguished authority on Buddhism, has pointed out, with regard to the ambiguity of this term, that our ancestors, possessed with a fine instinct for the dialectic nature of reality, would frequently use the same verbal root to indicate two opposite aspects of the same situation. Contemporary theories and aesthetics endorse his view.

“The work is not what I am writing but rather what I do not finish writing, what I do not quite say. If I stop and read what I have written, the hollow appears again: underlying what has been said lies always what has not been said. Writing rests upon an absence, words cover up a hole”: with these words Paz (1979:285) approaches the conclusion of his work Inmediaciones.

Perhaps in La muerte y la brújula Borges (1974a) is dealing narratively with the alternatives of this literary recurrence, a textual necessity that generates the attributions and jurisdictions of each literary instance. In this story, an enigma is formulated in the letters, in the writing, a ciphered writing, and it is up to each reader to decipher and find a solution, albeit a partial one, through his reading.

The hermeneutic fiction of this story lends itself to new recurrences. It may be very dangerous, even fatal, for the reader to adhere obediently to the clues provided by the author. According to Charles (1977), writing
demands from the reader particular qualities: boldness, ferocity, logic, tension of spirit, distrust, hatred. Right from the beginning of his Chants, Lautréamont (1938:15) appeals to these virtues so that the reader will not feel mortally led astray by a genius who depicts the delights of cruelty.

In Death and the compass, Borges' (1974a) narrator speaks about a detective who has to decipher the enigma of several murders, but fails because he bases his investigation on an interpretation, a reading which follows obvious symmetries and perverse repetitions of facts, figures and letters, intentionally displayed and written by the person who devised this stratagem: the four sacred letters, the Tetragrammaton, the secret name. In trying to discover the truth, the detective falls into the trap of a crime he could have foreseen, but which he did not know how to avoid; he himself is the victim who falls prey to his obedient adoption of a pre-established, dogmatic interpretation of a literal reading.

The view that a reader should compromise his own specific task by submitting it to authoritarian prescriptions, even the most qualified ones, has long lost its currency. In the Middle Ages, scholastic doctrine, like talmudic interpretation, dogmatically established that four readings were necessary for the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Observing the same tradition, Dante (1976), in his Epistle to the Great Can (Ch. VIII), endorsed the regular system for readings in the following manner: literal, allegoric, moral, analogic. The procedure was an orthodox application of the doctrine, but it nevertheless propounded four different interpretive readings of the Scriptures.

Later, Lautréamont (1938), beginning modernity, prayed to heaven that the reader be «enhardi et devenu momentanément féroce, comme ce qu’il lit...» [emboldened and having become momentarily ferocious, like the object of his reading...], similar to a shark, desiring as he does «des délices de la cruauté» [the pleasures of cruelty]: «Lecteur, c’est peut-être la haine que tu veux que j’invoque dans le commencement de cet ouvrage.» [Reader, perhaps you want me to develop hatred at the beginning of this work.]

Quite recently, Eagleton (1982) published a manifesto whose vehement words, intending to recover old avant-garde positions, tried to approach the latest developments on the subject: "The Revolt of the Reader", proclaims the organization known as RLM (Reader’s Liberation movement) and its fight on behalf of the oppressed readers anywhere in the world, who have always been brutally proletarianized by the authorial class. This organization’s actions have already won over the man in the street and begun to affirm its power.

Chapter 15

Solidity and precariousness of the text

The tensions between enigma and solution, secret and revelation, intention and interpretation, reading and writing, stem — although not exclusively — from the fundamental dialectic relationship established between one operation, writing — by definition permanent — and another, reading, ephemeral and thus opposed to writing. The permanence of the former conditions the evanescence of the other: "Time interrupts eternity, eternity penetrates time", according to Raymond (1980:119).

Due to the mere fact of its permanence, a text occurs and is transformed, subjected to all the variations which it does not suffer but which it potentially generates. Conservation and change exist as two aspects of the same textual entity, interactively counterbalancing each other; the existence of one without the other would be inconceivable.

Because it is a verbal expression, one must not confuse this double dialectic condition with the bifacial nature of the sign, nor extrapolate certain characteristics recorded by linguists in order to define the signifier — signified duality.

The text remains throughout the centuries, for all time, and it is the task of the philologist — to whom Segre (1979:34) attributes, more than to other scholars, the feeling of the duration of texts, of the transformation of

Gracias a la operación poética, la materia reconquista su naturaleza: el color es más color, el sonido es plenamente sonido. En la creación poética no hay victoria sobre la materia o sobre los instrumentos, como quiere una vana estética de artesanos, sino un poner en libertad la materia.

Jorge Luis Borges

Octavio Paz
codes, of the “essere-nella-storia” — to establish the reference which correspond to the system involved. The signer may change or remain unchanged, just as the signified may change or remain unchanged. Phonetic change or semantic change is a matter of linguistic diachrony and the duality of the text at this level does not concern us. More to the point is Coseriu’s (1977b:206–207) distinction between the three fundamental types of linguistic content: “... the signified which is the content given in each case by a particular language ..., the designation which is the reference to reality, understood as extralinguistic reality or this reality itself, (it is ‘representation’, ‘fact’, ‘state of things’) independently from its being structured by means of this or that language...”. Finally, “the meaning is the particular content of a text or a textual unit..., precisely the content which does not simply coincide with the signified or the designation”.

From the linguistic point of view, the observation of this third semantic category explains the legitimacy of the incessant mutability of the text, reading as a productive operation which renews textual meaning, since reading is determined by cultural, social and biographical factors and, above all, by the tendency to rule out all those forms of reality by means of an imaginative prodigality which takes them into account only to transform them.

*Imaginaire* is the term Bachelard (1943:7) chose to denominate this faculty of the imagination which transforms images, thereby changing their habitual forms. Thanks to this faculty imagination is essentially open and evasive. “In the human psyche lies the very experience of *aperture*, the very experience of novelty”.

Although it appears to assimilate itself to another version of the well-known opposition between presence and absence, the textual occurrence, in this case, is understood as a different duality. It also entails an opposition, but between reading and writing the opposition confronts one presence with another presence. As Mallarmé (1945:861–872) said, the Book is at the same time *Le même et l’autre* [the same and the other].

It seems almost idle to point out the “literality” of the text or to state that a text is “the same”; neither is it difficult to imagine that it may be “the other”. Eco (1975:337) points out that, unlike the message, the text provokes “…the feeling that in each occurrence the word always means something else”.

The inextricable coincidence of both (the same, the other), which unites identity and difference, is what makes the work such a surprising, singular and ambiguous object, the same thing yet something else: a symbolic object. In Greek *symbolon* means precisely ‘to gather’ and ‘to join’ because every work is allegory. Heidegger (1958:70) said that: “One work makes the other openly known, it reveals the other.”

The work has repeatedly been considered to be something else, an allegory; at this point it must be added that the fact that a work is allegory does not prevent it from being “isogory”, the same thing, that a thing repeated is its essence: *the thing itself*.

Heidegger (1958:59) was only interested in pointing out the allegorical nature of the work as the distinctive, essential feature, the truth which differentiates it from utensils and mere things:

> Works of art are known by all. They are to be found in public places, in churches, in houses... The painting hangs from the wall like a hunting gun or a hat... Works are transported like coal from the Ruhr or like logs from the Black Forest. Hölderlin's hymns were packed in rucksacks during the war, just as the grooming kit. Beethoven's quartets lie on the publisher's shelves like potatoes in a cellar. All works have this character of a thing. Yet, the work of art, beyond its “thingness” is something else as well. This something else in it constitutes its artistic core.

It is not a matter of retrieving now the “thingness” (die Dinghaft) Heidegger (1958) so looked down on, but rather of bearing in mind that this material condition he disdained and considered as subsidiary and perishable (like with the gun, the hat, the coal from the Ruhr, the logs, the potatoes in a cellar) is the condition of permanence of the work. The material condition does not prevent the fact that in what we call isogory, lies also the true being of the work.

In Jankelévitch’s (1980:34–35) words:

> Gracian, apologist of the “manner”, would no doubt explain it to us, thus: There is no smoke without fire, or appearance without essence. Appearance, then, is relatively true. ...Not everything is vicious or of bad quality in its appearance: the mixed nature of the sensible compound presents itself to all kinds of dosification, posology, critical separation, since the tares can be separated from the wheat. This is the ABC of hermeneutics... under these conditions, reading — aware of the sensible illusion — can be a reading on sight, a direct reading.

Although it may result reiterative, Heraclitus (1986:79) is always worth quoting. For him, no man bathes twice in the same river, because the river is never twice the same, and neither is man. All repetition seems impossible from this point of view, because all repetitions require, in order to take place, time and thus modification. Because the moments are different, repetition always differs; repetition postponed cannot be the same.
Nevertheless, discourse, the course of the text, seems, in part, to be different: faced with the impossibility of ignoring time, the text remains but only thanks to reading, which time after time places it in history. It is true that reading changes because the readers, each reader, changes every time, yet the text is what it is because it both changes and remains the same: it possesses a strange manner of appearing in history without actually disappearing.

Applied to different circumstances and objects, «l'entêtement du référent» [the stubbornness of the referent] can be adapted for this case. We could postulate an «entêtement du texte» (a stubbornness of the text), the property of “always being there”. This impermeability which Barthes (1981a:17) discovered in relation to the obstinate permanence of the photographic referent, might also be valid to understand the permanence of the text, which is not its most trivial appearance but rather its identity, its essence: «Je ne savais pas encore que de cet entêtement du référent a été toujours là, allait surgir l'essence que je recherchais.» [I did not yet know that from this stubbornness of the Referent, from its “always being there”, was to arise the essence I had been searching for.] It is a pity to omit its Spanish version: “la testarudez del texto”, where ‘stubbornness’ and ‘text’ sound alike.

Unquestionably, text is allegory because it admits, or rather requires, the intervention of another element: a reader who interprets the text producing a meaning which develops in time; the implication of history is the necessary alteration, its condition of alterity. However, it certainly is also isogory, which ambivalently means that the text is not altered but it supports alterity. Thus, it exists as a support (underpinning) of different readings, and it only exists because it supports (it resists) these differences.

Isogory remains as the common model, unseizable yet concrete, essential yet apparent, original — because it proceeds directly from its author — yet reproduced by the individual versions and circumstances of each reader. This special community (the fact that it is unique yet exists through others) establishes it as system and use, code and message, at the same time.

Like in Plato’s (1981) archetypes, in each instance, in each allegory, we can catch but a glimpse of its truth, the essence, which is the ultimate model. It cannot be grasped in its totality, because through reading — just one realization among many other possible ones — we gain access to a relic: the bare remains, the vestiges of isogory in each interpretation.

Even the utopian sum of all the possible readings would still only realise part of the isogoric properties of a text. They constitute its historical variations: “The phenomenon goes by its laws” continues to be the highest aspiration of the wise; it concerns the philosopher and the poet, but not the reader.

This brings to mind the distinction formulated by Trabant (1975:331) about the presence of a langue and a parole in the textual activity, because the interpretation (and also the sum total of all interpretations) can only actualize part of the latent possibilities of the text. The system can never be fully realized in speech, and by the same token neither can an interpretation thoroughly actualize the system of possible content units in a text.

Trabant’s comparison coincides with the view of other scholars formulated before on this subject. In Das literarische Kunstwerk, Ingarden (1973) had put forth the notion that the text is a “schematic” structure, an ideal structure which offers us the possibility of several realizations.

More recently, Marcescu (1979:53) drew a similar comparison, remarking that “the-text-in-itself” is equal to the “thing-in-itself”, to the noumen on which, as such, remains out of our reach and is only revealed in the phenomenal constructions.

This affirmation of the thing-in-itself, of the essential textual constitution which takes place in isogory, moves away from Kristeva’s (1969) notion of a pheno-text (which is more concrete, and closer to the material appearance of the text), being a thing (and not a thing-in-itself) which Heidegger (1973) regarded just as common materiality and the least prestigious aspect of a work of art. For Kristeva (1969), the pheno-text is the verbal phenomenon as it is presented in the structure of the concrete utterance, it is the surface, a signified structure, which does not go beyond the printed text, and therefore Barthes (1973a) regards it as suitable for structural analysis, the privileged object of semiology.

This aspect of the text stands thus opposed to the “genotext” which is “structuration, not structure”, “signifying productivity”: for Kristeva (1969:283), “the geno-text is not l’autre-scène in relation to the formulaire et axial present but rather the ensemble of the other scenes in whose multiplicity there is no index discarded, perhaps cut out, due to the overdetermination which defines from the infinite, the inside”.

Ever since the earliest reflections on aesthetics, the primary concern of all continues to be dealing adequately with the dialectic nature of the work, resolving the opposition between duality and unity, contradictory and harmonious: to be always the same and to be always another, the interactive dependence between propriety and imagination, between permanence and change, between rootedness and detachment.
Tsogory resists doubly. Its resistance entails tolerance and opposition. This plural resistance of isogory is not pointed out, in order to emphasize its material permanence but rather strength — vigorous and valid, hard and resilient — of the textual statute which reconciles philological recuperations with hermeneutic eventualities, rhetoric and discourse theory: an art of eloquence, but mainly an art of reading; the recognition of literality and literariness as reciprocal and necessary principles which, once more, remind us that textual veracity is nothing but its textual version.

Chapter 16

Reading and interdiction: between word and word, silence

Lire: ne pas écrire; écrire dans l’interdiction de lire.
Maurice Blanchot

Si empiezo a tirar del ovillo iba a salir una hebra de lana, metros de lana, lanada, lanagoría, lana turner, lanapura, lanatomía, lanata, lanaturalidad, la lana hasta la náusea pero nunca el ovillo.
Julio Cortázar

The validity of the text results from the dialectic tendencies established between isogory and allegory, between what is permanent and what is interpreted, what is said and what is withheld or, rather, between what is said and what one wishes to say, but does not.

Linguists claim that it is possible to say anything one wants to say. This statement is based on the “principle of expressibility” formulated by Searle (1972:55), who remarked that everything one wants to signify can be said; any “unconfessable” intention, however, can make itself explicit within the boundaries of a given language but, in spite of this, no degree of explicitness will fully exhaust what one wanted to say in the first place: on the contrary, this very explicitness formulates a new intention.

No sooner has an intention been made explicit than it begins to imply another, and so on, successively. There is no point in trying to achieve a final “decidability”, yet the fruitlessness of the attempt does not repeal it, nor does it mean that we are facing an ineffable, extraordinary mystery, nor that the hidden truth is so secret that it cannot be expressed through words; there is just a certain impression of contrariness, because we are not able to reach the end.

There is always room for yet more verbalization, and therefore the intention is not suppressed, but it remains suspended. A new expression unlocks a new secret, a new silence and, as occurs with Peirce’s (1931) “unlimited semiosis”, there is no end to the process: the unlimited semiosis of the text is also affirmed in the dynamics of silence. Nobody possesses the last word, nor the last silence.
Both Cortázar’s (1969:358) example in the epigraph to this chapter and the quotation from Paz (1969:43) (transcribed below) serve as an indication of a mechanism of exhibition: the wrong side of discourse, the vain attempt at wanting to say everything. “Ronda, se insinúa, se acerca, se aleja, vuelve de puntillas y si alargo la mano, desaparece, una Palabra. Solo distingo su cresta orgullosa: cri, cristal, crimén, Crimea, crítica, Cristina, criterio?” [It surrounds, it insinuates, it comes close, it goes away, it comes back in tiptoes, and if I reach out my hand, it disappears, a Word. I only distinguish its proud crest: cry, crystal, crime, Crimea, critic, Cristina, criterion?].

As Paz (1969) suggests in his title (La centena), this is the work of a poet. Both examples illustrate a similar expressive experience “la lana hasta la náusea” as Cortázar (1969:358) himself says. Both believe that the “inquiry”, undertaken by the poet, is a visceral abuse: the violent pretense of exteriorizing, of extracting from within; the expression as scraps; Paz (1969:42) says: “Vómito de palabras, purgación del idioma infecto, comido y recomido por unos dientes cariados, basca donde nadan trozos de todos los alimentos que nos dieron en la escuela y de todos los que, solos o en compañía, hemos masticado desde hace siglos.” [Vomit of words, purge of the infected language, eaten and doubly eaten by caried teeth, filth where pieces of all foods we were given at school swim, and all the food which, along or in company, we have chewed for centuries.]

An attempt is made in these texts to make explicit, by means of putting Saussurean “associative series” into writing, those terms which are normally part of the most elementary implicit. Once again texts make a (self) mockery of the poet’s constant oscillating conflicts between aspiration and frustration: his longing for an essential discovery, for a verbal revelation, but in the end, disappointment, repetition and emptiness.

The poetic achievement does not manage to disguise the worthlessness of this gesture, since it is impossible to avoid the association of a new constellation of unspoken voices set off by every mention; the vibrant aura of allusions and implicitness cannot be rescued from its presence-absence, from its necessary silence. There exists an irradiation of discourse and it would be pointless, as well as foolish, to attempt to exteriorize this choral concurrence of disarticulated voices, which are neither spoken nor heard and which escape, through a dimension of interiority, the incontrovertible linearity of the verbal signifier. The slightest effort — made in poetry or in theory — will lead to a postponement, not a retrieval. To liberate a text from this zone of “what is not said” is impossible. It is a secret. In the best of cases it will be possible to separate it: this is what the history of the word hints at: secretus, from secernere (‘to separate’, ‘to segregate’); a discernment (which has the same etymology), the operation realized by the reader or critic when he describes or produces a secret, of a sediment from the text. Each reader will deal with it in his own way, but, in fact, the secret of the text will always remain “booked”, reserved and kept in reserve. This three-fold reserve makes up the literary event: the book as a reservation of mystery: neither inaccessible nor incomprehensible, it is a mystery because something in the text remains, hidden and shrugged in silence. This reservation of mystery inquisitively provokes the reader, providing him with his “a(n) (a)side of/with the text” of pleasure. Mallarmé (1945:869) said that een nommant un objet, on enlevait aux trois quarts le plaisir donné par le poème qui est fait du bonheur de deviner peu à peu […] by naming an object, three quarters of the pleasure given by the poem were gone, the pleasure which results from the happiness of guessing little by little], to which Barthes (1973a:36) adds another remark: in his view it is necessary to discriminate between the two forms of satisfaction aroused by the text: «…le plaisir est dicible, la jouissance ne l’est pas. Une jouissance est in-dicible, inter-dite» […] the pleasure is “sayable”, the joy is not. The joy is “un-sayable”, interdicted]. Therefore it would be unjust to restrict hieratic mutism and clouding of expression solely to hermetic literature. In the “tempo oscuro ch‘è l‘età degli dei …la lingua fu quasi tutta muta, pocchissima articolata” [dark times, it is the age of the gods … language was almost all mute, barely articulated] and this hieroglyphic and sacred condition of mythological language which Vico (1977) describes, is also on the root of poetic writing. Hermetic work or open work, its literarity is what causes literariness.

If the possibility of decipherment is no sufficient basis on which to formulate aetiological evaluations, a counterpart may also be admitted: an enigma will be plotted in any literary text and the attributions of the reader are needed to decipher it. Reading — his competence to read — consists, at least in finding in each case a solution to the enigma; the mystery is encountered but never exhausted.

As the right and the duty of the reader, the attributions conferred by textual unspeakability entails a prohibition: reading is discourse interdicted.

They form part of the literary pact: the text is in tension between an authorized discourse, which is, however, a mystery, and a prohibitive discourse: reading, discovery and revelation which are not verbalized. Between discourse and silence, literature happens.
In El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan, Borges (1974a: 479) — once again — shows the textual compatibility (or rather, the reciprocal necessity) between discourse and omission; what is of genuine importance is not mentioned. A book always formulates an “enormous riddle or parable”, and all solutions are both insufficient and infinite.

Sé que de todos los problemas, ninguno lo inquietó y trabajó como el abismal problema del tiempo. Ahora bien, ese es el único problema que no figura en las páginas del Jardín. Ni siquiera usa la palabra que quiere decir tiempo. ¿Cómo se explica usted esa involuntaria omisión?

Propuse varias soluciones; todas insuficientes. Las discutimos: al fin Stephen Albert me dijo:
- 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. Omitir siempre una palabra, recurrir a metáforas inefectas y a perífrasis evidentes, es quizá el modo más enfático de indicarlo.

I know that of all problems, none disturbed him and on none did he work so hard as the abysmal problem of time. Now, this is the only problem that does not appear in the pages of the Garden. He does not even use the word that means time. How do you explain this involuntary omission?

I proposed several solutions; all of them insufficient. We discussed them; finally Stephen Albert told me:
- In a riddle whose subject is chess, which is the only forbidden word?
- I reflected for a moment and replied:
- The word chess.
- Precisely — said Albert —, the garden of the forking paths is an enormous riddle, or parable, whose subject is time; this recoustic cause forbids the mention of its name. The most emphatic way of underscoring a word is always to omit it, to resort to inept metaphors and evident perífrasis.

The dialogue concerns a book which receives, cyclically, a title which is the title of the story and in which time is not mentioned; the notion nor the word appear, because time is the raison d'être of this book. The eloquence of the utterances and the reticence about explicitly mentioning its essence, efficiently foreground the topic of time.

In El jardín — the book of/in the story — as in any text, time is omitted; but it is a deliberate omission.

The particular contradictory nature of the literary work has been outlined above. The work of art in general withdraws itself from time and exists as a rejection of history, a “challenge to death”, an affirmation of eternity made after time, due to this multiple resistance it can only occur in the present: “Hundreds of centuries, yet only in the present do events take place”, as St. Augustine (1954: 109–111) could also have said.

Writing remains a virtuality, awaiting a reading which will actualize it, the interpretation which will realize it in a particular present moment. In each reading the text interprets a ragtime, a rag of time; a text is a piece of textile torn away from the past.

Parallel to the auctoritas of writing, to the inflexibility of its prescriptive and legible nature — of the pre-established word which is read as law — there is a hint of interdiction. Between diction and diction, an original, eventual reader may approach; without authorization, such a reader cannot appear. There remains a space between words, within their isogonic continuity, a fracture made of silence through which quietly and secretly the circumstances of reading are introduced: the events and the reader, a double contingency, the tacit and personal presence of history.

In this contingency allegory is formed, a silent construction surpassing writing, the alterity which is developed from the text, yet which does not alter it.

Only one modification is assumed; it is ephemeral for as it is not registered it does not remain; it is free if one thinks in terms of the fixation of writing; and it is doubly arbitrary because it brings into play the entire range of conventions implied by the text: its verisimilitude and conformity to certain aesthetic norms which have the product of previous works, social and historical norms, the codification of the extra-textual reality. None of these are explicitly expressed, yet all literary communication is conditioned by it.

Opposing the “emotional movements” which overflow the signified object, to the inevitable limitations of discourse, Jankelévitch (1980: 204) stated that

The spatial finitude of discourse obliges the writer to invest the words with a suggestive force, and the reader to read between the lines: thus is created, between mouth and ear, a grey zone made of arbitrariness, allusion and free interpretation, a contentious twilight zone which is like the semi-obscure of jurisprudence that builds itself around the laws, and from where all the fantasies of hermeneutics are freely set into motion.
Hermeneutical fantasies are a natural consequence of the discursive openness created by the writer, who acts under the constraints of “the spatial finitude of discourse” as Jankélévitch (1980) named it. Both are equally conventional, even when they manifest themselves differently.

Unlike history, philosophy or other sciences, literature does not make explicit those social and aesthetetical norms upon which it builds. These norms make up a code which, like every code, is always there, even though it remains implicit, except when some non-conformist element requires a metareferential explanation for its right understanding.

The presence-absence of such a code allows for the intervention of other codes which manifest the same duality. Interpretation is agreed upon between an imaginary writing, which is “written and enforced” like the Law, and an imaginary reading, which is not unlike “the custom to tacitly accept”; as put by Barthes (1978: 285), “in each enunciation, in fact, those *voix off* (voices in off): the codes, can be heard”. This means that the text is produced for and against at least two codes.

The text speaks against both codes alike. Their silent presentness is a condition for reading (as white light is a condition for the colours it illuminates), and constitutes the material background necessary for its realization and, above all, the frame of comprehension and social participation in the text is embedded. Tacitly, without interfering in it, the concurrence of both silences normalizes the text: the constraints of the *non dit* (‘what is not said’) is at the same time whatever *on dit* (‘what is said’), the collective discourse which, because it is known to all, remains unsaid: “Lo que dice no dice/Lo que dice: ¿cómo se dice?/Lo que no dice?” [It doesn’t say what it says/How does one say it says?/And how what it doesn’t say?]

Paz’s (1969: 130) play on words and silence does not conceal the labyrinth.

Addressing the silent presence of conventions and systems, Genette (1969: 76) says that:

The relation between a verisimilar story and the system of verisimilitude by which it is determined, is essentially mute: the generic conventions function as a system of forces and natural constraints, which the story obeys blindly, *a fortiori*, without ever explicitly referring to them. In the classic Western movies, for instance, the rules of conduct (to take one example), even the strictest ones, are applied without any form of explanation, because they are rules taken for granted in the tacit contract between the work and its audience.

Interdiction appears as an essentially implicit phenomenon. The only way to analyze it would be to search for an exteriorization that would show what usually remains implied. Therefore, and in spite of the specific nature of cinematographic art, Resnais’ film *Mon oncle d’Amérique* offers an example where it is possible to enjoy a variant of this form of textual participation known as interdiction. In order to study and analyze it, one must resort to exhibition.

The film no doubt provides an aesthetic situation which is quite different from the literary reception which has been our primary concern. Cinematographic and evident — visually, at least — instead of literary and inward-directed, this film shows, from some author’s point of view, those private, tacit insertions from the spectator concerning several characters who are filmgoers or *cinéphiles*, as Resnais or the spectator presumably are themselves. The noticeable coincidences of these cinematographic sequences, which are unexpectedly or hardly contextualized with literary interdiction, facilitate the correspondence — to use a visual illustration — with those inner, invisible, silent literary passages implying interdiction.

Throughout the film brief scenes appear out of context, with no apparent relation to the other sequences: lacking a special frame, lacking dialogue, in black and white and featuring different actors and characters who act in different narrative circumstances, they are incipent quotes from other films which contrast with the discourse of Resnais’ film, while at the same time giving it unity.

Like the reader’s interdictions in the text, these insertions appear hazily and contain associations borrowed from other codes, which are not explicitly indicated but which contribute differently to the production of the cinematographic text, or of any text. Insofar as they refer to other codes, they are representations which are rooted in collective knowledge, norms of behaviour (or samples of normalized behaviour), known, accepted and shared by all. Both a possibility and a fixedness, this procedure creates a “perspective of quotations” as Barthes (1970) said in *S/Z*.

The interpolated scenes appear each time the different characters in Resnais’ film feel desperate as a result of some personal dilemma, or disoriented by a conflict which causes them deep anguish. They appear without prior warning and as quick as a flash, the product of an instantaneous and discontinuous montage. They are fragments from other, older films which have a vague, emotive rather thematic connection with the situation in question. However, such surprise impressions have a strong emotional effect, like pressed or printed letters or images on a photographic surface.
The images and sequences are distributed according to a system of strict correspondence: the character played by Gérard Depardieu is associated with scenes from films featuring Jean Gabin. Likewise, Nicole Garcia is associated with Jean Marais; and Roger-Pierre with Danielle Darrieux.

The continuity of the cinematographic narration appears to be interrupted each time. The discourse is slightly broken up; the emotional jolt forms a fissure through which the evocative imagination of each character penetrates: another situation, other characters; other colours and codes and their corresponding stereotypes. Thus the fracture does not suggest a break; the parts remain connected, the appearance of cracks in the whole are, strangely perhaps, no breaking-up into fragments but an embellishment of the discourse as a whole. By causing the edges to swell, the figures are stratified and by layering the cinematographic discourse, its emotional impact is reinforced.

In spite of the shift of attention, there is no change at the diegetic level, because the flow of the story is only temporarily interrupted, not lost. On the contrary, it is consolidated by adding this dimension of “interiority”, a tmesis which does not loosen the discourse, but rather fixes it solidly, deeply, founded on a shared memory.

In earlier films of a similar nature, cinema had already used this kind of quotations, yet the phenomenon which corresponds to “shown” interdiction had not appeared before with such clear and neat characteristics as in this case.

The procedure of “cinematographic hypertextuality”, discussed above, shares many analogies with Woody Allen’s film Play it again, Sam and what befalls his character-spectator, deeply impressed by his own cinematographic experiences. There can be recognized, as well, Mon oncle d’Amérique as a “hyperfilm” (according to Genette’s (1982:117) classification), but in the film of Woody Allen, we witness not only a literal filmic borrowing from the “hypofilm” (Casablanca, by Michael Curtiz), but also “a transvestism — the text which is unchanged, only transvestized, by the change of interpreters”.

In both cases associations of the imagination are displayed, fragments of memory and scenes from le petit cinéma that the characters and filmgoers of these years have stored in their minds. This is a well-known procedure, but Resnais applies it differently. He does not retrieve them only as filmic quotations but as memories in a personal album, rendering visible those images that are unreachable in real life.

Like gaps in a text, which do not interrupt the flow of discourse, these different scenes do not interrupt the continuity of the film’s storyline, although they alter its syntax. It has been said above that the particular contextual differences give access to a different, interior dimension. In the case of a film, the spectator “can see” what is passing through the mind of the characters, without the discursive intermediation of a narrator who just shows himself by telling about himself. By showing the inner impressions of the character, the literary narrator has to appear in the open, whereas the camera that shows those intimate sequences remains out of sight.

The effect is ambivalent. The quotations belong as much to the characters in the film, as much as to the spectators as to the original text from which it was borrowed. Shared by different partners, quotes create extradiegetic spaces and play with the cord(ons). This enables the spectator to enter the subjective world of the character but, by the same route, the character escapes: he has been a spectator (like the spectator who is watching him) and has seen the same film (as the spectator has). He is also a character-spectator, although apparently, in the case of Resnais, this status is of marginal importance; it forms part of a cultural whole in which we all participate: the spectator, the actors, the director of the film, and especially, Resnais’ world.

Through these imaginative fractures the most personal associations are introduced: each character, within his own universe of affliction (what happens to them) and of fiction (what occurs to them) attempts to overcome the conflict through fragments of artistic experiences — and, as such, alien — but they are experienced aesthetically, as the characters’ own experiences.

Thus, it is not contradictory that the characters’ most intimate problems be seen through cinematographic situations, known to them, to others, to everyone. Indeed, these scenes belong, more than to their corresponding films, to the entire history and mythology of cinema. They form part of a common repertory and it is more from this repertory than from any particular film that they are borrowed.

The relationship appears to be inversely proportional; the more private the disarray, the more public its regularization.

These scenes show fragments of the cinematographic intertextuality of each character yet they are shared by the spectators, who watch the films of Resnais but have also seen the other films (H. Calef: Les chouans, 1946, with Jean Marais; J. Grémillon: Gueule d’amour, 1937, with Jean Gabin; D. de la Pastreilère: Les grandes familles, 1964, with Jean Gabin; J. Duvivier: La belle équipe, 1947, with Jean Gabin, etc.) or other films within this genre. They are fragments of previous, more or less recent films, pieces of la cinémathèque imaginaire, which like the mental and documen-
tional copies of its counterpart, the musée imaginaire, belong to the characters, to the actors, to the director and his team, to their viewers alike.

The normalization may be seen by the projection of the personal conflict in a collective space: shared knowledge, a presumably common repertory, a code known to the individuals involved, the consensus of sense: the norm.

The film is interspersed metacinematographically with parts of old messages that constitute a sort of new code: a common experience, a shared knowledge, conventional references which suspend at a glance, for a short time, its virtuality and makes itself visible through furtive images in black and white; it has been said above that these scenes are taken from old films which reach us without colours like other works of the past, grey with age, like sculptures and images which can be seen in the museums of the world, or the mechanical reproductions of those works (photographic, mental) which are collected in the musée imaginaire where they assimilate with the other pieces. They get to look like each other just as, in the words of Malraux (1951: 19): “black and white photography ‘approaches’ the objects it represents, even when they bear little resemblance one to another”.

The scenes take place in silence because, in their own way, they participate in the nature of interdiction: a ghostly space between one scene and another, a space for interpretation and normalization independent of the narrative alternatives equally interspersed throughout the narration. Within their new cinematographic context, they are arranged according to technical differences, distinguished “typographically” (as though placed inside brackets, between inverted commas, or other punctuation marks), because they fulfill a different referential function: a metacinematographic reference to the code, which both disrupts the scientific realism of the narrative situation expounded in the film, and impedes the eventual actualization of a quote which builds upon and underlines the stereotype. The quotes remain quotes: without leaving the virtual ground of common reference, the cultural mold of collective conformation-conformity.

The absence of colour, the voices which do not keep their sound but as a silent recollection and in a new narrative context disarticulate the flow of discourse without interrupting it, diverting it momentarily towards another level, pressing together different episodes. Interdiction occurs here by quoting the (cinematographic) code, which compromises the entire social system, conventional and established, similar to the “treasure which has its seat in the brain of the individuals”—Saussure’s (1916:49–70) definition of langue.

Idea and image, individual and collective illusion, these representations reveal the ambiguous agreement between interiority and exteriority, of a world of repetitions and shared intimacy, of passion and form. Not unlike myths, this extroversion fulfill a controlled imaginative function; they are flights of an over-excited imagination yet at the same time “repeated discourse”, quotations, fragments of other discourses which bring the imaginative extravagance back under the jurisdiction of the collective imaginaire. This centrifugal force pushes dialectically the individual particularity to the cultural centre of which it forms part, a common ground, a meeting place, as though it were impossible to escape from the historical horizon which never ceases to determine and control even the most private experiences. Concise and laconic, they are “key-images” which, like “key-words”, weld characters and spectators, speakers and listeners together; beyond words, the same corpse lie between them, though in Sartre’s case it is more than just a metaphor.

The cinematographic interdiction which Resnais develops revives some very prestigious literary antecedents: it supplies an open space in which the model is filtered and becomes personal: some vestige of isogory, relics of a fragmented truth which is parodied by displacement and repetition. Thus, not even when the imaginary flights drive one to despair, is it possible to escape from the stereotype. All the more true becomes an illusion when it coincides with the illusions of others.

This procedure brings to mind the escapist illusions of Emma Bovary; the dreams of Resnais’ characters show the same rejection of the hostile mediocrity of a menial existence, the tendency to duplicate adversity through imaginary compensation: “those morose states of dissatisfaction, escapism and unstated anxiety” (the lexical tautology helps to get his idea across).

Loaded with reading, Emma dreams of the marvellous events described in the novels, although not even the narrator shares her enthusiasm:

Ce n’était qu’amours, amants, amantes, dames persécutées, s’évanouis­sant dans des pavillons solitaires, postillons qu’on tue à tous les relais, chevaux qu’on crève à toutes les pages, forêts sombres, troubles de coeur, serments, sanglots, larmes et baisers, nacelles au clair de lune, rossignoles dans les bosquets, messieurs brav es comme des lions, doux comme les agneaux, vertueux comme on ne l’est pas, toujours bien mis, et qui pleurent comme des urnes (Flaubert 1972:41).

[There were but loves, lovers, beloveds, pursued ladies who fainted in solitary pavilions, servants who were killed in every post, horses slaughtered in every page, sombre forests, shaken hearts, sohs, oaths, tears,
kisses, boats au claire de lune, nightingales in the forests, gentlemen as brave as lions, as sweet as lambs, as virtuous as it is impossible to be, always well dressed and who wept a lot.]

Her dreams are unable to fly: they do not reach beyond the shallowness of country life and predictable provincial interests: the monotony of the land, the routine of cattle and ploughs, the petty trivialities of the village, everything Emma loathes.

Irritated and upset, she even anticipates other feelings of boredom: "J'ai tout lu" — she said to herself. It is impossible not to recognize Bouvard and Pécuchet at the beginning and end of the road: Bovary, Bouvard, Pécuchet, if they do not exactly meet in the same fictional field, they no doubt share the same semantic and geographic field, and the tenacity of un boeuf de labour, as Flaubert, like his two characters, imagined himself: 19 the joys (and miseries) of country life.

Unlike other filmic sequences which respond to similar narrative necessities, Resnais resorted, in Mon oncle d'Amérique, to an imaginary film-museum in order to "normalize" the ravings of his characters. He could have used biographical or historical episodes, crucial events in their lives — a personal or intersubjective experience — but instead he prefers to resolve these emotive digressions, using cinematographic quotations.

The contrived objectivity of Henry Laborit's scientific discourse, that functions as an Ariadne's thread or rather as a systematic articulatory conjunction between the different experiences of each of the three central characters, may be seen in the artifice of a hypothesis which does not escape the common fate: the characters end up coming together (parting for good) because neither through imagination nor through science is it possible to avoid the hazards of the narrative.

It is hardly surprising that cinematographic memory, just as literary memory, become confused with private experience on the one hand, and universal memory, on the other.

Each individual discovers his own personal world starting from an experience which is not his own, but belongs to his memory and everyone's memory; an extraterritoriality — which is also a fiction —, the conventional space where all believe to be safe from history, yet where they must share one another's history. It is the common ground of memory: Toute la mémoire du monde, the National Library Resnais himself had documented and portrayed in a film that reminds us of Borges' imagination and not only because Resnais quotes him.

Literature has bridged the gap between individual experience and aesthetic reference: "...writers such as Dickens, Kafka and Proust have built their own world on segments or areas of our joint experience", in Welles and Warren's (1966: 297) words. Proust's (1966: 158) narrator in Recherche addresses this problem, thus:

... où j'avais moi-même désiré d'être un artiste. En abandonnant, en fait, cette ambition, avais-je renoncé à quelque chose de réel? La vie pouvait-elle me consoler de l'art? Y avait-il dans l'art une réalité plus profonde où notre personnalité véritable trouve une expression que ne lui donnent pas les actions de la vie? Chaque grand artiste semble, en effet, si différent des autres, et nous donne tant cette sensation de l'individualité que nous cherchons en vain dans l'existence quotidienne!

[...I had wished myself to be an artist. On abandoning, in fact, this ambition, did I renounce anything at all real? Could life make me forget art? Was there in art a more profound reality where our true personality found an expression which the actions of life did not give it? Each great artist seems, in fact, quite different from the others, and so much oozes that feeling of individuality which we search in vain in our daily existence!]

Thanks to the Sonata of Vinteuil and par un flot sonore, the narrator feels himself carried back to the days of Combray. The similarity of a chord in the Sonata to a passage in Tristan reveals a fragment, which he had previously overlooked: «Et comme on regarde alors une photographie qui permet de préciser la ressemblance, par-dessus la Sonate de Vinteuil j'installais sur le pupitre la partition de Tristan...» (1966: 159). [And so as we regard a photograph which allows us to gauge a similarity, above Vinteuil's Sonata I placed on the desk the score of Tristan...]

That the work is inverted (and invested) in fiction — the Sonata of Vinteuil — becomes evident thanks to its correspondences to Wagner's oeuvre, that is to say, to another invention. Proust's game is twofold: the Sonata of Vinteuil, which exists only intradiegetically — and therefore enjoys only a fictional reality — also gives reality to Wagner's work, whose extradiegetic, though aesthetic, existence already endorses it. Once again, just like the image in the mirror, truth — albeit an inverted truth — is revealed through fiction: one work exists by another.
Chapter 17

Writing and interdiction

...sauver un texte de son malheur de livre.
Emmanuel Levinas

Unlike musical or filmic continuity, literary continuity is not interrupted by the presence of blanks.

Between printed words there remains a blank space which corresponds neither to the voice of the writer nor to his silence. It is valid only as a (typo)graphic convention yet, once contextualized, it continues to make sense between one diction and another. It marks, besides the conventional orthographic extension of words, the blank space which is specially adequate for the representation of interdiction.

In this unwritten space, which needs not to be mentioned, interpretation develops a reading which, without obliterating the text, removes it from its literality. The gaps in the text represent the silence of reading, a verifiable and necessary silence, necessary because it cannot fail to be. Reading has no access to the paradox of the writer, to the fatality of his tragic condition: “Enamorado del silencio, el poeta no tiene más remedio que hablar” [In love with silence, the poet has no choice but to speak]. Paz (1967:74) rightfully states, but it is through reading that his silence is saved.

The etymological kinship between the Spanish words ley (lex, legis) and leer (legere) (‘law’ and ‘to read’) is not accidental; both aspects of the law are fulfilled in the operation of reading: edict and prohibition, diction and interdiction, words and silence. Thus is established a textual relation, a particularly tense one, between the explicitness of the text and the silence of reading: “the anxiety of reading” which Blanchot (1955:55–62) spoke of, and its anguish too.

Once more, Pierre Menard can serve as the prototype of the basic alternative: reading equals not writing, writing equals not reading.

The narrator of Borges’ (1974a:444) story insists on the insignificance of “the visible work” (the adjective appears always in italics throughout this text) of Pierre Menard. This comprises a minor work, due to its attributes and brevity. The narrator does not hesitate to catalogue by means of a literal order, from a) to s) which reduces even further, owing to the limitations inherent to the alphabetical list, the scantiness of a series which, from the start, does not require the unlimited extension of numeration. The taxonomical precision also trivializes the indigence of the case: the questionable virtues of manuscript translations, the transposition in Alexandrine verse of Cimetière marin, an invective against Valéry (1974a:445) which was “the exact opposite of his true opinion of Valéry”; “verses which owe their efficacy to punctuation” and so it continues. The list is full of jokes, ironies and allusions.

It is not only through being amusing that the narrator’s catalogue is not tiresome. Above all, its interest and value lies in that it stresses the contrast between that visible work with the imponderable virtues of the other: “the subterranean, the interminably heroic, the uneven...” “Possibly the most significant work of our time” (1974a:446).

In spite of the fact that the realization of Cervantes’ (1911) Don Quijote is an impossible venture in the XX century, Menard sets out to achieve it.

His purpose was not to copy it. His admirable ambition was to produce some pages which would co-incide — word for word, line for line — with those of Miguel de Cervantes.

Intention surpasses fiction. The perfect literality of his text saves it from any tautological risks. It makes use of the advantages of its posteriority and enriches, with more modern conceptions and personal remarks on Cervantes “the poor provincial reality”, not incurring the superficial concessions to local color which, with typical touristic ease, had tempted XIX-century fantasies.

The same fragment which the narrator transcribes, with a double and contrasting attribution (Cervantes and Menard) is at once theory and illustration: the comparison between two identical texts, interpreted according to the coordinate which corresponds to different times; they mark the dialectical, circumstantial and historical readings which open a breach in the enclosure of the work through which each reader introduces, silently, his own historicity, animating the literariness of the text without modifying its literality. According to Valéry (1971:58): “a change of reader is comparable to a change in the text itself”. The text is trans-historical, but its sense is not.

To make explicit what is implicit may well be the concern of linguistics, poetics, rhetoric, psychology, criticism, but it is not the task of literature. Borges’ (1974a:447) Pierre Menard avoids this risk in the most secure and faithful way: the (re)-production of the text: “La sola diferencia es que los filósofos publican en agradables volúmenes las etapas intermediarias de su labor y que yo he resuelto perderlas. En efecto, no queda un solo..."
The only difference is that philosophy may publish in pleasing volumes the intermediary stages of their labour, whereas I have resolved to lose mine. In effect, there remains not a single draft copy or sketch which can testify to this work of many years.

There is no lack of authorized arguments to defend the task which Menard undertakes. Paz (1967: 71) remarks: "Each reader is another poet; each poem, another poem." Valéry (1971: 49) said before him: "Do not forget that a work is a finished object, material and detained. The living arbitrariness of the reader attacks the dead arbitrariness of the work."

Interdiction creates an intermediate statute — as effective as it is unverifiable — between the author and the reader, between discourse and silence. For Eliot (1933: 30) "The poem’s existence is somewhere between the writer and the reader; it has a reality which is not simply the reality of what the writer is trying to ‘express’ or of his experience of writing it, or of the experience of the reader, of the writer as a reader."

The narrator — an adherent avant la lettre to the principles of the Rezeptionsaesthetik — describes the method used by Menard. With the aim of composing the Quixote based on the personal experiences of a 20th century writer, the writer tried, above all else, to reconstruct "the horizon of expectation" (in the sense that Jauss [1978: 14] attributes to Husserl’s [1978: 53] notion) of those very first readers of the Quixote, who were Cervantes’ contemporaries. The narrator recognizes that it is as impossible as it is useless to attempt the application of this procedure, and therefore he prefers to vindicate his own perspectives.

The comparison (and also the explication) of these intentions and understatements allows one to observe (and to expose) the differences with posterior readers. With the comparison made by Borges’ narrator, the Horizontwandel [change of horizon] becomes evident: each text supposes an infinite sum of different readings and interpretations; while always partial, some are contradictory, yet all are legitimate.

For each reader of Borges, the horizon of expectation is even further complicated: Cervantes’ horizon, Menard’s, Borges’, his own horizon, a stratification of consecutive unverifiable interdictions. One can only imagine the multiplication of "first drafts" which — like Menard’s — will never appear, because they have never appeared before; between each work, barely hinted at, interdictions take place — as if they were additions — and experience a natural growth, which is necessary although it is not evident. Just like the old game of "Black nights and white days", the text is set up between different realities, alternative antagonists of an activity — with its successes and failures — which does not affect the fiction (the game is always the same, although the movements and the players may differ) but these interdictions are not idle or pointless, nor do they occur in vain. Prohibited, silent and secret, they guard, out of necessity and from the eventuality of their positions, the uninterrupted permanence of the textual flow.
Chapter 18

The reticence of the text

...je ne suis pas dehors, je suis dedans, dans quelque chose, je suis enfermé, le silence est dehors, dehors, dedans, il n'y a qu'ici, et le silence dehors, que cette voix, et le silence tout autour...

Samuel Beckett

Garder le silence, c'est ce que à notre insu nous voulons tous, écrivant.
Maurice Blanchot.

Nothing happens to Beckett's (1971:166-177) character; deprived of his limbs and organs he is reduced — like other characters — to a forced contraction, a counter-action like "a beast born in a cage for beasts born in a cage..."; he ignores his own identity, he does not know his name nor the pronoun which would suit him, yet he does not cease to speak; he is made of words — a "ready-made" of words — which are not his own but only leftovers, discarded by others; almost inert, he exists repeating scraps of words. He does not know where they come from and yet he cannot stop repeating them, because we should not forget — not even for a minute — that this continuous verbosity is his only way of existing, since everything in the text is a matter of voice: what happens is only words, an uninterrupted discourse, words pronounced only to avoid silence, and yet which, contradictorily, end up attaining it. There is nothing apart from this.

Beckett has no qualms about repeating it in so many words and, although other writers pretend to ignore it or do not manifest it so bluntly; a text can be nothing but repeated words and silences.

At the beginning of this study, in the epigraph which introduces it, Borges (1974a:202), alarmed by the disproportionate appreciation of current excesses of emphasis and vanity of style — "a superstition of the reader" — anticipates, without any display of dejection, the impending dissolution of literature. That he does not despair at the imminence of these circumstances can be understood because in spite of so much dissipation, he manages to guess the favourable omen of this austere situation: the practice of reading in silence.

Borges believes he can detect in this silent activity a favourable symptom. If among so many words some silence still exists, this phenomenon, however partial, reveals to him or allows him to foresee something else, another silence, a greater and total silence: the advent of a direct communication of experiences.

Faced with the imprudent redundancy of critics and readers who multiply commentaries, who express opinions sententiously and who pronounce definite judgement on the virtues of verbal richness and the stylistic abilities of the writer, the only hope left to Borges is to trust the secret practice of reading and to expect, paradoxically, that its silent communication may be extended to involve all literature: a threat, but also his only salvation.

Like Beckett's character, literature is faced with the obstacles of an uncertain alternative. Borges' consolation is ambivalent. His argument is specious. Silence might be an aporetic solution: it is its finality and it is, most definitely, its end.

Borges, Beckett, Blanchot are not the only writers who have felt the silent temptation as a contradictory threshold of resonance and emptiness, a limit of uncertainty and acceptance; silence is the necessary space for encounter and reception but it is also the space of risk. Blanchot (1955:31) cannot forget that "when all has been said, what remains to be said is disaster" and adds that this "disaster takes care of everything".

Parallel to this obsessive aesthetic persistence, the theoretical preoccupations of recent years have followed or anticipated or coincided: it is very difficult to observe synoptically the moments which correspond to one quest from others; this ambiguous, close acceptance of silence.

A space of double dimensions: condition of reading and literary necessity, silence as theme and procedure has recurrently made its entrance in literature, ciphering aspirations and apprehensions, prophecies and confirmations, a rejection of hablar hablados [saying again what has already been said]

In written language, where there exists nothing but words, they exist only through silence. The multiplicity of theoretical disciplines and literary realizations which appeal to the reader's rights and attributions, do not always take into account that the determining event of any reading process is to keep silence. However, according to Levinas (1975), Blanchot admits that this silence is what everybody wants, including writers. Yet, how should this ambivalent relationship with silence be understood? Does this mean that it is necessary to keep silence in order to observe it, in order to remain in silence, or to talk because no one is able
to keep silent and must continue speaking? Blanchot formulates the excessive preterition which overwhelms so much of contemporary discourse.

While a speculative priority takes charge of silence, literature, for its part, accounts for the same interest but without concealing a sustained mistrust of words and incessant prattle; literature remains suspicious of the discursive manifestation and the irresponsibility of verbal evidence taken at face value. Consequently, in every field there can be observed the advances of an esoteric tendency, a movement towards depth, the fascination of reaching the interior finding a kind of complicity, of intimate secrecy — if not erroneous, then probably erratic — leading to the risk of confusing the quest for truth with the pursuit of something concealed, while the mere fact of concealing truth is not enough to ensure it.

If the balance of a disciplinary and artistic consensus tilts towards diverse modes of silence — the silence of writing and of reading — the fact that the interest derives from this unsurmountable lack of confidence should not be overlooked, above all because these silences indicate that the literary text is capable of dispensing with the precise boundaries between inside and outside, diegesis and extradiegesis, fiction and reality, and can act within this shady zone wherefrom arise all these stories of douanes (customs) or of divans, since douane and divan were virtually the same thing when they were used for the first time, in those sneaky stories of enigmas and oracles, of secret culpabilities and controls which have always existed, and which continue to condition the aesthetics of this century.

This is not the silence which describes mystic solitude nor the silences described in the text; it is closer to the laconism of the modern narrator who, in this way, seeks to renounce the affected privileges of fiction: the silence of reading is extended to every interstice of the text.

In Silences de Flaubert, Genette (1966:242) remarked that “language becomes literature at the price of its own death, because it must out of necessity lose its own meaning so as to have access to the silence of the work. This retrocession, this remissiveness of discourse to its silent opposite which is for us, today, literature itself…” Genette recognizes that in this radical option, the transformation of language into silence and the consecutive dissolution that such a decision carries, marks the initiation of modern literary experience. The silence of reading and the silence of writing. The aesthetical promotion of silence continues to be of general concern to all.

Apart from poetics, rhetoric, literary theory and other related disciplines, linguistics has been the discipline dedicated to systematize to a greater extent these different aspects which do not appear explicitly verbalized but which, equally communicative, come to constitute verbal activity.

Research has been carried out from a wide variety of directions, yet all of these studies have the same common interest. In this sense, their origins could be traced to the analysis of the school of Oxford, or, more precisely, to the formulation of Austin (1962) on performative utterances. In addition, it is necessary to bear in mind Benveniste’s (1966) studies concerning the relevance of the elements of subjectivity in discourse and, consecutively, to the different schools of thought inscribed in the theories of the text and pragmatic linguistics.

Although their importance is not always recognized, it is useful to bear in mind the conceptual and methodological contribution in this direction that Jakobson (1963) made in his renowned Linguistics and poetics, where he outlines the interactive concurrence of the different factors which intervene, basically, in verbal communication and which compensate, in part, for the inevitable reductions with which Saussure (1916), in his time, formulated the linguistic object.

What interests us in this case is that all these expositions coincide in crediting — parallel to the communicative efficiency of words and system of signs which intervene in the “verbal game” — the communicative validity of other constituents of communication, constituents which are not necessarily verbal, and are therefore more attentive to silence than to the voice.

The complex phenomenon of communication is no longer studied on the basis of a speaker’s isolated utterance heard by a listener, who comprehends exclusively by means of a succession of signs, a combination of different phonological, syntactic and semantic units, but tackling a discourse produced at the intersection of numerous factors and decisive for communication, as words themselves and the rules which govern their relationship.

Amongst these factors the priority of the code — established by Saussure (1916) — is preserved; it is only sporadically verbalized yet it is an underlying inherent principle. Concomitantly to this strictly linguistic presence there is also a concurrence of social, moral, historical and cultural codes, non-verbalized systems which are taken for granted; ever-present, equally implicit, they condition the nature and formalization of discourse.

The communicative activity takes place between interlocutors who share this set of common references, above all, who share a "given" situation: things, events, a series of extraverbal circumstances which those
interlocutors tacitly consider part of discourse. It is not necessary to mention them or to describe them, since they are already there. They have a decisive influence on the discourse, yet they escape the regular channels of analysis, since they do not compulsively submit themselves to the linguistic mechanisms of signification which could represent them, even though they are eventually indicated or alluded to by the specific resources of specific relation. The situation is not a frame of discourse but the time-space which organizes discourse in relation to a subject.

Likewise, the presence of a discontinuously silent interlocutor should not be confused with the presence of a mere witness, who might speak later. The listener does more than just listen. Even from his specific receptive condition he defines — without explicitly or intentionally meaning to do so — the concept of utterance according both to the actual circumstances and to his own presence. Discourse adapts itself to whoever receives it, it is what it is because it is addressed to somebody, an idiolect which does not cease to be a language, and thus a shared function which is the system of the speaker-listener. Interlocution establishes a dependence which is, at the very least, twofold.

From the impossible breach in current verbal communication derives the most outstanding characteristic of literary language, a written language only in part, which constitutes a solid basis for its literariness: the lack of a listener in writing, together with the lack of a speaker in reading, determine the fundamental unfolding of a text, an initial unfolding, then a second, then others. Due to this absence the situation remains suspended, annulled or postponed; the text remains in a state of expectation, and therein lies their difference. Different and postponed, different for being postponed, this lacking would be enough to specify the literary condition, the literariness of discourse, a form of isogory, interdiction and suspense.

Insofar as it is a concurrence of circumstances, the situation forms part of the verbal exchange; it forms part of it but it also defines it by limiting the infinite number of aspects which multiply the unforeseeable variety of meanings of an utterance. It is unlikely that whatever is said will have only one sense, yet what is not said certainly has innumerable senses; and interpretation depends on this certainty.

This limitless polysemic abundance is one of the most contradictory properties of silence. If a word lends itself to an open challenge of circumstantial interpretations, then with all the more reason will these interpretations abound in silence. We are not referring to the richness of eloquence but to the interpretive qualities discovered by an absent limitation.

Lacking the regulating buttresses which an established definition would impose, silence precipitates the need for an explanation: suppositions, conjectures, desires, suspicions, fears. More than the despair resulting from adverse information, it is the interpretive demands of this certainty what makes Saint-Loup feel so much anguish. Within his “limitless confinement” Proust’s (1954: 122) narrator suffers interminably from the endless burden of indefiniteness:

D’ailleurs, plus cruel que celui des prisons, ce silence-là est prison lui-même. Une clôture immatérielle, sans doute, mais impénétrable, cette tranche interposée d’atmosphère vide, mais que les rayons visuels de l’abandonné ne peuvent traverser. Est-il un plus terrible éclairage que le silence, qui ne nous montre pas une absence, mais mille, et chacune se livrant à quelque autre trahison?

[Besides, crueler still than the silence of prisons, this silence was itself a prison. An immaterial closure, no doubt, but an impenetrable one, an interposed trench of empty atmosphere, but one which the visual rays of the deflected could not penetrate. Is there a crueler illumination than silence, which does not show us one but one thousand absentees, and each one devoting herself to betrayal?]

Just like words, silence unleashes a type of unlimited semiosis, for if each sign implies other signs, then silence can conceal other silences.

This multiplicity is not alien to the fact indicated above: the absence of an interlocutor involves all the other absences. The situation remains suspended: deferred, it differs; it does not appear, since it is intercepted either because the text draws away from it and ignores it, or because it contextualizes the situation. Verbal con-version is the most drastic way of obliterating reality or of permitting it unlimited access, which is not altogether different. The passage from experience to writing coincides with the literary vocation, which is that very conversion of silence and of things, into a text. Reading fulfills a similar textual action: it refers writing back to an empirical silence which is once again circumstantial and inchoative.

While linguistic observations have neglected the priority of language as an instrument of communication, diminishing the excluding validity of the utterance, of what is said, these observations have increased the value of what is not said: allusions, insinuations, ellipses, understatements, presuppositions, in other words, the omissions which arise from “the rhetoric component” as much as from “the linguistic component” according to the distinction made by Ducrot (1972a: 137).
No matter how redundant, hyperbolic or vociferous the voices of the text may be, these excesses do not suspend what Ducrot (1972a:137) typifies as “the law of litotes” which induces the interpretation of an utterance as if it said more than its mere literal signification.

Inner thoughts remain which will not emerge, deep emotions and understatements which add to the thickness of the layers of what Bachelard (1943) imagined as a “geology of silence” which sustains them (the verb “to understand” is descriptively applied — due to the motivation it has for a non-native speaker — to the operation of grasping what stands underneath).

For this reason, Julien Gracq’s (1980:104) remark concerning Recherche “The compact proliferation of the explicit reduces to a barely sufficient portion, the implicit which is left to the reader” seems rather unfair, if one takes Proust and his readers into consideration. In any case, it is not the vertiginous density of Proust’s text which is capable of drowning the reader’s imaginative production.

For both author and reader, the point of departure of the textual operation is writing, as a proposal of possibilities: a potency and an aspiration. A text is like La peau de chagrin; in Balzac’s (1937) novel, shagreen is “le pouvoir et le vouloir réunis”.

For one and the other, for author and reader, for power and will, as for the textual operation, these possibilities are developed from words. But this is not everything. More than just saying, the text displays a querer decir,20 which is something more and something less than to say, which is before and after words. It exists also as a silence which reading takes charge of.

The writer is somebody who wants to say something (a desire which is different from “signifying”) and his discourse expresses, before anything else, a will to say which lies an intention, an imminence, yet above all potency and a wish.

The reader submits to this will. He is certain that his function is to draw close to the advent of desire and share with the text the convergence of wishing and saying. He knows that words say and wish to say; they are an expression and an aspiration. As well as that, they have meaning.

In order to perform this function adequately, the reader must fulfill an inoperant activity; there is an occurrence in the text which he repeats without leaving traces of his repetition: reading takes place in silence; and only in this way, through repetition and in silence, can its validity be assured. Just as discourse implies silence, so does his silence imply discourse. Within this reciprocity a text is unceasingly, permanent and continuous, it remains and changes: «...ça va être moi, ça va être le silence, là où je suis, je ne sais pas, je ne le saurai jamais, dans le silence on ne sait pas, il faut continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, je vais continuer.» [...that I will be, that will be silence, there, where I am, I do not know, I will never know, in silence one does not know, one must continue, I cannot continue, I will continue.]

These are the words which, contradictorily, finalize any literary work, in this case, L’innommable by Beckett (1971:213). Yet this finalization is uncertain, discourse repeats itself and continues. Something ends but silence begins. All the rest depends on that silence.
Selected writings
Borges and the invention of the name\textsuperscript{21}

Littre leur portà le coup de grâce en affirmant que jamais il n’y eut d’ortographe positive, et qu’il ne saurait y en avoir. Ils en conclurent que la syntaxe est une fantaisie et la grammaire une illusion.

G. Flaubert: \textit{Bouvard et Pécuchet}

For one thing we perceive that Erigena attaches a vast importance to words. In consequence of this he seems to suppose that non-existences are as real as existences.

Charles S. Peirce: \textit{Early nominalism and realism}

If we admit that there exists no literature without language nor Borges without literature — and viceversa — there would be another indissociation between these terms which, like the excessive details of the cartographic representation in \textit{Del rigor de las ciencias}, would be merged in one and the same entity, obliterating each other like the perfect map of the Empire which Borges (1974a), like his fictional chronicler in \textit{El hacedor}, does no longer differentiate from the Empire itself.

Literature is — and has been for some time — considered to be going through a predominantly verbal stage. This instance has been called “the linguistic moment” by Miller (1985), \textit{«le tournement langagier»} by Lyotard (1979), \textit{«la césure du spéculatif»} by Lacoue-Labarthe (1986:27), so that this coincidence we mentioned at the beginning could involve not just Borges but quite a number of contemporary authors. However, very rarely in the history of literature can we gather so many texts proposing a literary and a verbal referent so solidly explicit and identified, so metallic and metalinguistic (hefty words, although the conceptual apparatus which they designate is useful), presenting language as a character and the whole of literature as its background as happens in Borges.

This is not the first time literature is understood as being literally verbal: words, words, words. According to some, the rest is silence; according to others, literature, and there is no rest: just texts. It is known that the world begins by a book: the Genesis which is its beginning (of the world, of the book, of the beginning) and that it might exist only in order to end in a book.\textsuperscript{22} Even though some fiction invents \textit{another thing}, that
other thing is also an allegory, according to Heidegger (1958). The whole world rests between letters. In an epigraph in Jameson (1974: 1) Nietzsche refers to "the prison of language" which the poet should make visible in spite of being himself imprisoned. Paradoxically, this mission is also Borges' vision (Borges, the one who did not see, just as Socrates was said to be the one who did not write).

If Borges could be said to have considered Paradise subspecies of a library — a specificity which recovers the etymology of the original Pardès23 — his own texts are a glimpse, a conjecture and the flow of that Eden; his Vipère de lettre — the expression is Jules Laforgue's (1979) — a bifid type of writing which tentatively touches Eternity; but this attempt does not exclude temptation: if only for the Scriptures' sake, a writing which, contradictorily, is also the beginning: writing at the beginning and at the end. It does not seem indispensable to quote Derrida because such a beginning is a conclusion of History as well as of Theology.

It is not in the idiomatic sense — or idiolectal, as linguists would remark in order to save what the individual realization of a language presents as its own — that we intend to deal with "Borges' beautiful language" (we use the same expression to speak about "Cervantes' beautiful language"), our aim is to consider through his fiction and his reflections a literary language where the verbal takes up all the instances of verbality: Borges took over language, he took it up. To consider it within the boundaries of a language, to "idiomatize" it, would be too restrictive. The word is matter, instrument, theme and discourse: a totalitarian presence (the term is meant without its political connotations), a legitimate totality, because not only the world but also fiction begins by language, and we need no doctrines to believe this.

Apropos Borges' death, the French newspaper Le Quotidien de Paris (16/6/86) transcribed some of his comments on French literature: "I wouldn't say 'night, moon', I would say Verlaine; nor would I say 'the sea' or 'cosmogony', I would say Hugo, I wouldn't say 'friendship', I would say Montaigne."

The alternative is only between words; proper names for common names, where what he would say is confounded with what the poets said or what it would be said of them. Even though the procedure is semantically different, the aim is the same one as of Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius (1974a: 435); "There is no word which means moon... The name is an accumulation of adjectives. One does not say moon: one says aerial-light on dark-round or orange-or soft".

Although transposition and displacement (those operations defined in rhetoric as "metaphor") have been thoroughly described, the series of adjectives it enumerates does not supply the trope, in spite of the accumulation-displacement which the trope involves. The academic rhetorical fiction of Tlön deconstructs the strategies of figurative condensation through analysis, resorting to an (i)logical procedure which dismantles the figurative as well as the rational expression; because it is exaggerated, and therefore absurd, it carnivalesques the recourses of substitution, analysis, imagination and logic: neither figurative meaning nor literary property.

Borges' discourse on language makes it clear that language cannot free itself from the regime of parody; on the contrary, the ironic relevance of its marginal status becomes itself the origin of the parody. As it has been pointed out, the displacement or transference which gives metaphor a name and a definition is not its essential characteristic; the figure itself appears to be different from the term which names it, and not even metaphor — perhaps because it is a metaphor — conforms to the meaning which its name carries and which, anyway, could be applied literally to any figure.

"The moon or the word moon" is still the referent of his linguistic and poetical meditations (manifestoes, essays, stories, poems). When dealing with language, the moon is a constant object and objective, and the word is the cause of his objections: "Sabemos que el lenguaje es como la luna y tiene su hemisferio de sombra" [We know that language is like the moon and has its dark hemisphere] (1927: 35). He may be trying, by means of that recurrent invocation, to protect himself against the risk run by the poet who had forgotten the cipher and fears the curse: "De cuantos ejercemos el oficio/De cambiar en palabras nuestra vida/Siempre se pide lo esencial" [Of those who practise this profession/of turning our lives into words/what is essential is always lost] (1974a: 818). He confesses and sustains the wish to write his real name with "La compleja escritura de esa rara/Cosa que somos, numerosa y una" [The complex writing of that strange/thing we are, numerous and one] (1974a: 820).

Since "there is no classification of the universe which is not arbitrary and conjectural", John Wilkins believes that it is necessary for each word to define itself in such a way that, by this self-sufficiency, it can do without the definitions imposed by the dictionary which the Spanish Royal Academy compiles every few years and the prescriptions of a code which the lack of "organic, unified sense" would invalidate. For this purpose, he invents the "artifice that the letters of the words should indicate subdivi-
sions and divisions”, he “semantizes” all the constitutive elements so that the words of the analytic language do not become “clumsy arbitrary symbols” like the ones he is trying to replace by means of his invention (1974a:706–709).

Everything must have a meaning; the origins of meaning stem from the fact that this whole must have a reason for being: a cause and an end. Nonetheless, neither the recourse which the textual subject of the essay finds “ingenious” nor the strategies of that oversignified verbalization can escape the reducing fate of all knowledge and the quick synthesis of personal understanding. Thus, “the word salmon tells us nothing, but zana, the corresponding word, defines (for a man versed in the forty categories and the subdivisions of those categories) a scaly river fish of reddish flesh” (1974a:708). But the overestimation of the new system is only partial, and the argument easily counter-argued. In actual fact, the old system was not altogether less informative. Yet the analytical language invented by Wilkins would ensure some universality: the incomprehension is general, unless these doctrines are imposed and these definitions spread, even then the failures and sufferings caused by inadequate expressions could not be avoided because, Borges (1974a:706) says, “all the languages in the world are equally inexpressive”. In Tlön the adjectives are monosyllabic; in El idioma analítico de John Wilkins, against the basic principles of any grammar, “each one of the letters that form part (of the words) is significant, as were those of the Holy Scriptures for the Cabalists” (1974a:707).

Just as the Anglican Bishop John Wilkins desired, in the 17th century, “the possibility and the principles of a universal language”, as well as to “the possibility of a trip to the moon”. The moon, for this “intelligent utopist of the international language” is, as it is for poets, more than the dwellings of universality or the space of the possibilities: it is also one of the oldest definitions of poetry.

The problems of language which concern poets are numerous, but amongst them the most recurrent ones are those which question the unmotivated nature of the sign, an arbitrariness which, because it is conventional, is imposed on the speaker who counts on (but cannot account for) a reason for saying, which is his reason of being.

Blindly Cratilist, the poet attempts to renew the spell, appealing to every possible recourse to find in the word his/its truth; this “Quête de la vérité”, more than anything else, bothers him: a quest, a question, and, he remains unquiet. He interposes a (personal) action against the system, trying to gain access to the origin, where the sign and what the sign designates coincide. Such a gesture (a suggestion) imitates gestation itself, the primal scene which is the beginning of the word, the association which society could have established but about whose establishment no-one has a logical explanation or the slightest hint. Borges’ narrator has no explanations of Uqbar: neither in the atlases nor in the encyclopaedias which he consults can references about that presumptive region be found. Only Biy Casares, a narrator, a character of fiction, an author in real life, is given the informative credits which are not registered in the volume, “fallaciously called The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia” (1974a:431), with its correspondingly “false cover”, which is found in a house situated in Gaona Street in the neighbourhood of Ramos Mejía. The Encyclopaedia Britannica has also omitted the entry which corresponds to John Wilkins, according to the aforementioned volume. Curiously enough, every time a language is invented, Borges deems the Encyclopaedia Britannica responsible for the disappearance of the antecedents of this action and its references. But the narrator discovers in a copy of the first volume of The thousand and one nights the manuscript containing “the Brodie report”, but, as if the omissions rather than the certainties could endorse the truth about the origin, it also happens that “the first page is missing” (1974a:1073).

The language of the Yahooos which Brodie describes in this report is not very different from ours. The coincidences are significant: the witness declares that it is a complex language; that context or gestures could cause the strong polysemic tendency of the language to contract. Neither are their customs very strange: “Another custom of the tribe is having poets” (1974a:1077), but even their mothers, like Baudelaire’s, withdraw in fear and disgust: the poet, “under a holy dread, ... is no longer a man but a God, and anyone can kill him”. The coincidences of our language and the language of the Yahooos, with their poetry and religion, are not coincidental. Every word may have a meaning and its opposite, like the books of Tlön. In his avant-garde texts, Borges had expressed his bewilderment at the existence of a word which had opposite meanings: “The fact that they exist is enough to prove the provisional and tentative quality our language shows in the presence of reality. ... In algebra, the plus and minus signs are mutually exclusive; in literature, the opposites merge and impose a mixed feeling on our conscience; but a no less true feeling than the others” (Verani 1986:279). This discovery was not alien to the origin of Borges’ own aesthetics.

Ever since Plato (1961) dramatized in Phedre Hermes’ ingenuity and the invention of writing, a pharmakon which is medicine and poison at the same time and which both preserves and destroys, these antonymic
concurrency in the same voice have fascinated poets and philosophers. An article in *Critical Inquiry* (March 1985:386) cites a conversation between Heinrich Heine and a French lady who used to tell him with anxious fear: "I know that you Germans use the same word for 'to forgive' and for 'to poison'." Heine agrees with her, because the word *Vergeben* means both things.

Hegel (1968:138), for his part, highlights that "it is a source of happiness for speculative thought to find in a language words which have themselves a speculative sense: and the German language contains many such words."

Hegel is talking about the word *aufheben*, a classical example which has been considered with particular interest ever since; it means 'to preserve' as well as 'to praise', 'to become' as well as 'to come to an end', just one word which lends itself to opposite meanings. Although Ullman (1959:120) mentions this recourse as an exceptional case of bisemia, illustrating it with the Latin *sacer* and the French *sacre*, which mean respectively 'damned' and 'sacred', at present this privilege cannot be restricted to fiction or to one or several words, or to one language in particular; this adverse accumulation should be extended — intended — as the verbal recourse par excellence, a procedure which, beginning with irony, casts light on verbal nature in general, and we stand now at this point. Brodie says: "Let us not marvel in excess; in our language the verb 'to cleave' stands for 'to split' and for 'to adhere'" (1921:275); and we should not marvel at the excess.

The differences between the language of those strange beings and our own are not altogether important; even the Yahoos postulate "the intellectual virtue of abstraction". But paradoxically, the language of another character of Borges', Ireneo Funes (a peasant of the Banda Oriental, my homeland, brought up amongst Uruguayan hills and ranchos), is almost incomprehensible for us from that afternoon when he was thrown off a horse and lost consciousness: "Now his perceptions and his memory are infallible" (1974a:488). But it is precisely for this reason that Ireneo is incapable of thinking, as thinking is remembering and forgetting: "he lost consciousness" (1974a:488), a loss which Ireneo, — perhaps out of pride, remarks Borges — considers beneficial because, as he cannot follow our language, he invents his own.

The narrator — like Ireneo — is capable of recounting with total accuracy their last interview, whose hundredth anniversary we could now be proudly celebrating: the meeting took place in March, 1887.

One of the theoretical and poetical problems most frequently and piercingly posed by poets is the lack of motivation of the sign, its arbitrary status; for linguists it is a necessary (natural or cultural) fact, but for poets it is a whim: in both cases, it is arbitrary. And so the poet sets out to counteract this arbitrariness through a "quest for truth", the invention of an origin. Even when he does not discover the primordial act, he can take part in a provisional pretence to which he is barely re-signed: a sign by another sign; it substitutes and multiplies at the same time.

A generalized imitation has been supplied. It attenuates, by the invention, the convention; in poetry everything is devoted to imitating: sounds imitate other sounds, words imitate other words, poems imitate other poems, *d'un Quichotte l'autre*. Through repetition, something is always imitated. Poetry multiplies this repetition on its every plane. Through internal and coherent imitation, the poet tries to imitate other imitations that he wishes he could make but which are not possible because language opposes resistance: all in all, the only true imitation is the imitation of the word imitating another word or itself, the rest is part of the purest illusion, it is by the name of "allusion" that we know it.

Another limitation which afflicts poets is the universal imposition of a language which concerns — or consents — to everyone, a language which is a norm, both general and collective, which ensures its instrumental efficacy, a disposition, the *prêt-à-parler*, the ready-made, made of oversights and thus incapable of accounting for the personal, particular and singular events, it is a sort of subjectivity that in each circumstance it repeats, time and again and in its own way, another *quodlibet universalibus*.

Ireneo Funes is the literary figure of the poet, another *figure* of Borges' (*figure*, in French, also means 'face'), and the preposition indicates not so much the origin or possession as its best representation: the *figure* of Funes is his *más-cará-máscara* (his dearest mask), a master sample of *epistemology-fiction*, a genre propitiated by Borges, narratively unfolding fiction and reflection, knowledge and memory, imagination and perception, a place where he states once more the problem of *representation*, because there is no greater problem: "A couple of times he had reconstructed a whole day. He never doubted, but the reconstruction had lasted a whole day" (1974a:488). Funes' unforgettable memory also answers for the thoroughness of the extravagant, objective or realist aesthetics of his *Museo* (1974a). If memory is as perfect as the maps of the Empire the cartographers drew, how can we avoid suspecting that the original which merges with its representation could be the representation of an original...
that we cannot distinguish? If the representation is as perfect as a perfect crime, either it does not exist or the adjective or the combination are imperfect. That is the problem.

Instead of solving it, Borges proposes an ironical (dis)solution: like the inhabitants of Tlön, the Yahooos or John Wilkins, Ireneo invents his own idioms but, formulated in this way, even the invention becomes tautological: an idiom of one’s own is nothing more than an idiom-idiom, because idios is what belongs to oneself, the particular, and in spite of sharing Borges’ neological disgust, it wouldn’t be inappropriate to name this invented, sharp and common language *Funnish*. In Spanish we would not capitalize it, but we would say *funés*, like we say *portugués* ( “Portugu­uese”), *francés* (“French”) or *finés* (“Finnish”). It is a proper language and “property”, in this context, has more than one meaning.

Once he had got over his taste for the enormous metaphors of the avant-garde, and once his miso-neist conviction was firmly rooted, Borges retraced the steps of any metaphorization or any neologic goal. But, being re-traced, this way is not altogether different: instead of the word and/or the new — and as such surprising — sense, Borges recovers its oldest sense, one which is no longer present, neither expressed nor perceived. Therefore, the fact that it may seem doubly surprising is not contradictory: 1) because it proves to be new and 2) because it proves to be old. Thus an effect of originality is achieved, but this originality lies in the origin and not in the eccentricity. Retracing one’s steps along the path of imagination does not annul it, it reestablishes imagination. The speaker who observes property (and this is not a purism but *a mise en propriété*) reestablishes it in his own sense. There takes place an unexpected breaking of the habitual in that it sends one to a point previous to the formation of the habit: *infinite* is not just the quality of lacking an end but also of being innumerable; *innumerable* is not just numerous but also what cannot be numbered, the debate is unending not just because it is a very polemic discussion but because it affects eternity and infinity. Borges (1963:16) makes a lengthy semantical description of the word infinite:

... it was at one point an insipid equivalence of the unfinished; now it is one of the perfections of God in Theology and a source of arguments in metaphysics and a popularised emphasis in the *belles lettres* and an extremely fine conception renewed in mathematics. Russell explains the addition and multiplication of infinite cardinal numbers and the reason for its almost terrible dynasties — and a truthful intuition when looking at the sky.

The property he discovers in words does not make him abandon their more common sense. On the contrary, Borges manages to signify all its senses, and this semantic wholeness, this series of meanings — which concur and which, superficially, will be attributed to chance — this phenomenon, which could be called at-once-ness in English (I lack a better word; panemia, sinemia, seem to me pompous and paleonimia, pretentious), supplies the conciliations of the oxymoron: “valuable incomprehension” (1974a:498), “the certain, the incredible” (1974a:496), “secret and glorious captain of conspirators” (1974a:496), “the public and secret representation” (1974a:498), and, above all, “or”, a conjunction (the *conjunctionis oppositorum* par excellence) which emblematically resumes in the roundness of its stroke the radiation of meaning in several directions, the core itself of the contradiction. There is another — non-trivial — form of property of language, which *Funnish* involves. On the one hand, property presupposes that words should only be used according to their own sense: the sense they invent. On the other, property also presupposes an appropriation: Ireneo becomes the owner of denomination. “His real name is not important” (1974a:491), but this lack of importance hides the greatest lack of all. In *Emma Zunz* (1974a), the narrator also attaches very little importance to proper names and in this way, imitating its characters (Emma Zunz’s father dies as “Maier”) and observing his narrative discretion, he modifies those names. In *Historia universal de la infancia* (1974a) he said that they “omit their real name — if we dare think that there is such a thing in the world” (1974a:312). These are not the only reasons why Ireneo substitutes the names of numbers. While cabalistic calculus turn letters into numbers, Funes practises the gnostic tradition the other way round, turning numbers into names, and in denominating them he dominates them, he makes them his own.

His national heroes reveal to him the absurdity of the system in force. According to Antelo (1992):

His first stimulus, I believe, was his displeasure at the fact that the name of the men who fought for the independence of Uruguay, *Los treinta y tres orientales*, required two signs and three words instead of only one word and only one sign. Later he applied this crazy principle to the other numbers. Instead of seven thousand and thirteen he said, for example, *Máximo Pérez*; instead of seven thousand and fourteen he would say *El ferrocarril*; other numbers were *Luis Mellián Lafinur*, *Olimar*, *azufre*, *los bastos*, *la ballena*, *el gas*, *la Caldera*, *Napoleón*, *Agustín de Vedia*. Instead of five hundred, he said nine.
Perhaps in the word *cipher* lies one of the clues of a word which names numbers, the secret scripture which is both number and mystery, each one of the numbers and their combination, and that number where numeration begins, part and whole, the vacuum in Arabic (ṣifr), nothing and the circle which circles plenitude, the brim: zero, nought, two names and one figure.

Until he suffered his blow, Ireneo "had been what all men are; a blind man, a deaf man, a stunned man, a forgetful man" (1974a:488). Now, an invalid because of the fall, he is no longer suffering from the *anthropological fracture*, from the mediation-intercession — interception — of thought, from the verbal distance from which we all suffer. The emergence of everything (of the little) that surrounds him in the poverty of his hut prevents him from sleeping, he does not know, he does not think, he cannot abstract or generalize. The intensity of each experience is unique and this is why the only denomination which he requires and proposes is also unique. (Borges [1977:550] in the epilogue to *Historia de la noche* says that "Whitehead has denounced the fallacy of the perfect dictionary: to assume that there is a word for each thing. We work in the dark. The universe is fluid and changing, language is stiff". I do not think he himself subscribes to this denunciation.)

Had he been aware of it, Ireneo would have supported a system of *hapax* — the word might not be quite pertinent. This is how philologists and linguists call words uttered and recorded only once. The well-known occurrence of "the name of the dog of fourteen past three (seen from the side) is not the same as the name of the dog of quarter past three (seen from the front)" (1974a:490) explains why "dog" cannot be understood by Ireneo, for whom this concept is foreign: if each experience is considered as the subject's own, the generic symbol "dog" is no doubt an archetypal exaggeration. Neither Ireneo nor anyone who experiences things in this particular way could tolerate it. Thus the denomination that "thematizes" the mathematical matter, a matter which is just form, which formulates intellectual propositions, unattached to contingency in such a way that they always turn out to be true.

We shall deal with yet another aspect of this *nomenclature*. The narrator generously gives examples of the substitution of names by numbers. (In Spanish the word for 'names' is *nombres*; in French, the word *nombres* means 'numbers'. Allowing for an idiomatic transgression, Funes, in his idiom-idiom, substitutes *el nombre des nombres, la figura de figures.*

But we should not disregard the fact that this denomination makes use mainly of *proper names*, a property linked with the properties already mentioned.

This repetitive denomination also affects other cases, in other texts, and this is why I mention it: in *La muerte y la brújula* (1974a) there is a character called Red Scharlach. *Scharlach* means 'scarlet' in German. It is also a red flower. *Scharlachfieber* is 'scarlet fever'. The name Red Scharlach is the image of its own image. Miller (1987) points out that it means 'red red'. Elsewhere Borges (1974a:737) says: "Johannes Erigena or Scotus, that is to say John the Irish, whose name in history is Escoto Erigena, that is to say Irish Irish."

In the name of La Fontaine one can easily suspect a vague ambiguous sense of freshness and depth. A charm that came from the water. In the duality of his name Chrétien de Troyes would blend the cultural synthesis of a kind of literature which integrates to his profession of Christian clergyman heroic legends of pagan origin according to Dragonetti (1980:22). In the same way that Stephen of Joyce's (1992) *Portrait of the artist* thinks that "God was God's name" — and he sustained it — "just as he was called Stephen", Blanchot (1973:165) arrives to the conclusion that "God is a name". While God's — also linguistic — wisdom makes him answer Moses' question not with his name — a noun — but with pronouns, anticipating the simplification of an identification which is not a definition because proper names do not define but they run the risk of incurring onomastic fetishism (the possession of the proper names entails the property of what the proper name designates) that would limit the infinity of the tautological circularity which, among the pronominal vacuum and the vacuum of the copula I-am-who-I-am avoided. For Augustine (1954:203), God is the thing. Purely and simply, it is that which is, not beyond appearances, but beyond signs.

If Mallarmé (1945:976) could also create his own (proper) meanings in the names of others, why couldn't Borges attach his own meaning to his own names, discovering the oxymoron *country* (Jorge)/city (Borges) of an opposition, an *inversion* which would become the basis of his "specular" or speculative aesthetics.

Barthes (1972:132) did not exaggerate when he assigned Proust's initiation to writing, the initiation of his disposition towards writing, to the discovery or the invention of proper names: "Once the system was found, the works were written immediately." Not just to these authors does the semantic class of the proper names (the Name) present "the greatest constitutive power". Plato's (1981) character Cratylus is suspect of a sort of onomastical platonism (which is also a patronymic) which, beyond designative singularity, more than the father's name that gives name to a family, anticipates and determines a nature and an essence with different fates: "The proper Noun is thus the linguistic shape of reminiscence".
Ireneo’s reminiscences were perfectly precise and individual (his own). Each day brought to him 70000 memories which his memory would record just by recalling. It was only natural that he would take advantage of the semantic vacuum of proper names to carry out the most of the conversions which the incoherent tabulation of his numeration proposed: numbers do not behave conceptually, and between those two significant vacuums he tried to appropriate (through proper nouns, he made them his) the peculiarity of a singular circumstance that he could not oversee: the ruffled mane of a wild horse or “the shapes of southern clouds at dawn on the thirtieth of April of eighteen eighty two”. The phrase inscribed in Magritte’s picture representing a pipe, denies more than once what it flaunts: «Ceci n’est pas une pipe», even when it represents it, because it represents it. To a smoker “sometimes a good cigar could well be a good cigar”, without more ado, naturally, and it needs not represent something else nor require another explanation. Like Angelus Silesius’ famous rose which flowers because it flowers, “A rose is a rose is...” or “Die Rose ist ohne Wahrum. Sie blühet weil sie blühet”: the rose is without reason. In the same way, poetry excites a sort of challenge of the word against the concept it contains, a verbal presence that poetry supplies, an epiphany of words, with total propriety, without referring to anything else but itself.

It was in these senses that the invention of language in Borges was worth considering: the recovery of a poetical property multiplied, a property which from his first writings to his most recent ones is always present. His invention is not different from his discovery of language. Both terms are etymologically indistinct, because inventire is to find, to discover something that already existed. He traverses an etymological itinerary extending beyond lexicology and the linguistic disciplines, it becomes a search of the truth and, just by searching, one finds or one invents.

Some journalistic statements published on the occasion of his death were the beginning of these notes; we shall finish them with excerpts from one of his first texts, El tamaño de mi esperanza (1926), a title which departs from (and is part of) a publication by Lugones (1921), not at all poetical, which deals precisely with his mathematical reflections “O” the letter “O” the figure, and the circle (letter or figure) is closed in writing.

Cualquier léxico es perfectible y voy a probarlo.

El mundo aparente es un tropel de percepciones barajadas. Una visión de cielo agreste, ese olor como de resignación que alientan los campos, la acrimonia gustosa del tabaco enardeciendo la garganta, el viento largo flagelando nuestro camino, y la sumisa rectitud de un bastón ofreciéndose a nuestros dedos, caben amados en cualquier consciencia, casi de golpe. El lenguaje es un ordenamiento eficaz de esa enigmática abundancia del mundo. Dicho sea con otras palabras: los sustantivos se los inventamos a la realidad. Palpamos un redondel, vemos un amontonamiento de luz color de madrugada, un cosquilleo nos alegra la boca, y mentimos que esas tres cosas heterogéneas son una sola y que se llama naranja. La luna misma es una ficción. Fuera de convenientes astronómicas que no deben atarearnos aquí, no hay semejanza alguna entre el redondel amarillo que ahora está alzándose con claridad sobre el paredón de la Recoleta y la tajadita rosada que vi en el cielo de la Plaza de Mayo, hace muchas noches. Todo sustantivo es abreviatura. En lugar de contar frío, filoso, hirviente, inquebrantable, brillador, puniagudo, enunciemos puñal; en sustitución de alejaniento de sol y progresión de sombra decimos atarder...

El mundo aparente es complicadísimo y el idioma sólo ha efectuado una parte muy chica de las combinaciones infatigables que podrían llevarse a cabo con él. ¿Por qué no crear una palabra, una sola, para la percepción conjunta de los cierres cociendo en la tarde y de la puesta de sol en la lejanía? ¿Por qué no inventar otra para el ruinoso y amenazador además que muestran en la madrugada las calles?...

Sé lo que hay de utópico en mis ideas y en la lejanía entre una posibilidad intelectual y una real, pero confío en el tamaño del porvenir y en que no será menos amplio que mi esperanza (1926: 69).

[Any lexicon is perfectible and I shall prove it.

The apparent world is a jumble of shuffled perceptions. A vision of the rural sky, smelling perhaps of a resignation which the fields have, the tasty bitterness of tobacco burning the throat, the long wind flagellating our path, and the docile rectitude of a cane offering itself to our fingers, come as one to any conscience, almost at once. Language is an effective classification of this enigmatic abundance of the world. In other words: nouns are something we invent for reality. We feel a circle, we see a pile of light the colour of dawn, a tickling feeling makes our mouth happy, and we lie by saying that these three heterogeneous things are one, which is called orange. The moon itself is a fiction. Apart from astronomical convenience, which does not concern us here, there is no likeness whatsoever between the yellow circle which is now clearly rising above the wall of La Recoleta and the pink silver I saw in the sky of Plaza de Mayo, many nights ago. Every noun is an abbreviation. Instead of counting cold, sharp, boiling, unyielding, shiner, pointed, we enunciate “dagger”; instead of going away of the sun and progression of the shadows we say “dusk”...]

The apparent world is extremely complmented and language has made only a few of the indefatigable permutations which could be made with it. Why not
create a word, just one, for the joint perception of the cowbells insistently jangling in the evening and the sunset in the distance? Why not invent another for the ruinous and threatening gesture which the streets show at dawn?...

I know what there is of utopic in my ideas and in the wide distance between an intellectual and a real possibility, but I trust the width of the future and that it will not be less wide than my hope.

Finland-bound (on the way to Finland)

(Between rhetorical and geometrical figures):
The semiotic spectre in La muerte y la brújula by Jorge Luis Borges

“I’m a believer in the genius loci”,
says Sherlock Holmes.

... a version of a universal struggle: of genius with Genius, and genius with the genius loci.
Geoffrey Hartman

Like the authors mentioned above, I also believe in this opposition of genius with the genii loci, and I also appeal to the protection of other place-bound geniuses, requiring the watchfulness of the loci communes, or topoi koinoi, as Aristotle (1964:275–276) called them long ago, long before the indifference of repetition reduced them to the rigid triviality of stereotypes. This is why right now, here, in Finland, where those guardian spirits watch over the “common place” of our meeting, I will try to present an account of some semiotic coincidences which, like in that Treatise of common places called Topics, constitute our “first principles” which “rising from opinions that are generally accepted by most people or by philosophers, initiate reasonings that may be applied to more than one subject”.

Observing how the “figures” of the imagination slip or turn into geometrical figures and also how the threat of an interpretation which fixes patterns on a plane, and taking into consideration the circumstances of these observations, we will try to perform the following tasks:

To observe research strategies in order to guide our reading of the problem (which may be a criminal investigation, an epistemological inquiry or a theological exegesis), from a semiotic perspective: a quest for the truth, foreseen as a sort of quest of intelligibility, in the sense proposed by Fernández (1983:324):

If semiotics promises intelligibility it does so for at least two reasons. First, signs are always put forth within a certain context and from a certain point of view. An awareness of that — an awareness very semiotic in nature — is the ground from which the intelligible must proceed. Second,
Intelligibility always involves the clarification of the relationship between — the negotiation between — the self and the other. This relationship is central, as these papers make clear, to semiotic thought.

We adopt then *semiotics* as a methodological point of departure, considering that “this overarching discipline” as Bouissac (1988) called it, will hopefully enable us to study the way in which signifiers signify, and provide answers to questions beyond those addressed by other disciplines such as grammar, semantics, linguistics, rhetoric, and logic, which have asked similar questions but which, because of their discipline-specific bias produce “fragments of knowledge”, and no more. If, due to such disciplinary limits, they disregard the possibility of reading literally and figuratively at the same time, they run the risk of simplifying the complex experience to which every interpretation opens.

To question the likelihood of a *semiotic reading* as a process of symbolic comprehension, which means taking into account, at the same time, both the literal and the figurative sense, thereby creating a textual interpretation which goes beyond the borders of traditional rhetorical and linguistic exercises, and seeks to achieve a co-incident interpretation of signs, a *combination* (in the sense of *symbolein*, ‘to combine’ in Greek), closer to the symbolic mechanisms of syllepsis (as found in manifold rhetorical varieties) than to any form of ambiguity, because in each text there are processes of signification/communication involved.

To address the discontinuous dynamics between rational, limiting, imposed knowledge on the one hand, and transgressive, unpredictable turns of the imagination opposing them on the other. This will enable us to study the possible tensions between *topos* (place) and *tropos* (movement), between abstractions and figures, between geometrical and rhetorical figures, between conceptual meanings and their contextual oscillations, diagrammatical reasoning and the role reserved in epistemology for creative interpretations and recourses of creativity.

To remark that the starting point of this work is the Spanish word *rumbo*, a nautical word in its origin but which presently also means ‘direction’, ‘orientation’, a word which sounds similar to *rombo* (*rhombus*), a regular, geometrical figure. Etymologically, *rumbo* derives from *rim*, the old Scandinavian word meaning ‘space’ or ‘place’, whereas the Greco-Latin word *rhombus* comes from the geometrical figure found in the compass. Both words have semantic affinities, yet their association seems strange.

Finally, we can still give another turn to these coincidences between languages and places, keeping in mind that in French *topique* means what *vient bien à sa place*, and that in English *topics* is also “the art of finding

the best possible arguments”.

This viewpoint involves an adequate localization of the mind, a geographical mind-set, in which the questions concerning the notion of truth and meaning are given a place within a definite space. Starting from this “spatialisation”, we shall attempt a reflection on reflection and its means.

1. A coincidence of places and books

Sebeok has definitely read the works of Charles Sanders Peirce and of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; it is also true that Umberto Eco has read them all. Now, starting from their work, we can read Jorge Luis Borges, and even though we are not certain of whether Borges read Peirce, it is interesting to study several points of co-incidence in their writings:

- Borges (1985:49) dedicated a remarkable poem to Sherlock Holmes.
- He possessed a profound knowledge of the novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle;
- He frequently read and discussed “the detective novel”.
- With rare erudition and fervor, Borges (1951) made an in-depth study of Germanic Medieval literature.
- From different literary points of view, the breadth and variety of his interests have focused upon the subject of representation and its media, upon thought and its metaphors.

Therefore it is not surprising that *La muerte y la brújula* (1942), a story Borges remembers as his highest achievement in the genre of the detective story, is also the story Eco quotes (1984) as a model of abduction, nor is it surprising that this story be one of the best semiotic examples of literary semiotic-fiction, a genre which has increasingly engaged the poetic as well as the theoretical imagination of authors and readers in recent years.

Even if I refer to this story in particular, my aim here is not to apply semiotic methods to make one narration intelligible, to show that literary discourse can be interpreted through a theory of reading or a hermeneutic procedure, but to succeed in recovering, once more, the ambivalent "meaning of the Greek word *theoria*, in two of its original senses. Indeed, *La muerte y la brújula* is approached here as an allegory of both representation and comprehension, and also because it so happens that literary discourse makes theory visible, intelligible. “We love more deeply than we know…” but, nevertheless, at least we know that we love…
In spite of the fact that bibliographical references are quite recent, we might retrace our steps to other ages and go back to the sagas, beginning with the voyages of Eric the Red and his pre-discovery of America, the nautical skills and adventures of a European who settled down in the American continent and to whom Borges (1951 and 1966) dedicates a study in his vast philological work entitled Literaturas germânicas medievales. And, without leaving this legendary land in the far north, we are reminded here, in the homeland of the Scandinavian heroes, of the Kalevala, the national epic songs of Finland, compiled and published by Elias Lönnrot (1802 – 1882), now celebrated by all.

La muerte y la brújula (1974) is a story in which names, numbers and letters count symbolically, that is to say, they count in several ways. It would not be redundant to remark that, in this story, letters count: they tell and they order at the same time. As doubly significative and secret entities, they illustrate the cabalistic principle which identifies the Spanish nombre ("name") and French nombre ("number"), ciphering in writing a literal, geometrical, theological and semiotic key. In English they form a "figure", a language where the signifier of figure means the graphic symbol of the number, a diagram, a geometrical shape, and also a figure of discourse. "Figure" has the same meaning in a number of other languages, in which "to figure" means "to imagine", and "to figure out" is to understand. Currently, names and numbers can be combined interdramatically without following esoteric and gemetric procedures in order to do so.

Borges' plot starts in a room of the Hôtel du Nord, where the stabbed body of a man is found. It is the body of a rabbi, a Jewish scholar who was getting ready to participate in a Congress on the Talmud. The first investigation provides but one clue, some letters on a sheet of paper placed in a small typewriter: "The first letter of the Name has been uttered". Two detectives, inspector Treverinius and detective Erik Lönnrot, investigate the crime. Both characters seem to be each other's mirror-image, while they share a common background: opposed variants specularly constructed starting from one and the same detective, closer to Sir Auguste Dupin than to Sherlock Holmes. This pair of detectives has a talent for solving their professional problems by means of "pure reasoning" and for discovering the identity of criminals with the dogmatic rigour of the same logic which is instrumental in discovering patterns or deciphering a cryptogram: hence the close attention given by them to numbers, letters and names.

In spite of dealing with a violent death, with consecutive crimes and predictable traces that the narrator quotes literally each time when he finds the inscriptions, and as long as the narration develops, both detectives follow an unconventional, intellectual procedure. The clues which they successively discover are letters of the alphabet ("The second letter of the Name has been uttered") and "The last of the letters of the Name has been uttered"), which both detectives follow up by searching in the victim's library. They conduct their investigation by reading his books. In the stories of Borges, the text "bibliosphere" is extended to include even policemen and murderers who are "men of letters"; their clues and traces are signs of a textual universe. Character-readers, character-authors, the author as reader, the reader as reader; Borges' fictional universe, like the Midrash Rabba, started by a book and, like in the work of Mallarmé (1945), is destined to end in the same way, or perhaps therefore, it would not end at all.

Starting with the first murder starts a regular series of four crimes which are perpetrated punctually, ritually, on the third day of each month, or, according to the (Christian or Jewish) custom, on the eve of the fourth day. For Treviranus, who defends the Trinity, this is a clear sign of three: "I'm a poor Christian — he answered — I have no time to waste on Jewish superstitions". For Sebeok and Eco (1983) in their book The sign of three, his number ciphers "the driving compulsion to send our readers back to the funhouse of rampant triplicities beginning with the highest meaning of three, namely, the triliteral name of God in His own language". However, the heuristic reference which really counts is, for Lönnrot, the sign of four. Although he does not mention Conan Doyle's (1952) well known The sign of four, he starts from the principle that the mystical symptoms in the clues are intentionally left by the murderer, and this detective, a "brusquely bibliophile or Hebraist", chooses to understand them as cabalists understand the Scriptures, that is, as a textual whole without chance elements, where everything is part of a perfect, shipshape, order. The nautical term "shipshape" is used here metaphorically, a common procedure throughout the pages of the story.

Following the conventions of logical reason rather than the commandments or concerns of theology, Lönnrot sticks to a hierarchy of rules and follows them point to point, guided by letters and numbers on that surface. Convinced that his text is the mysterious Tetragrammaton which indicates the secret name of God, he never considers not taking it literally, or looking for other clues outside the four letters. Instead of venturing an interpretation, he proceeds methodically and mechanically: venturing and following a literalist scheme he draws the map of a fixed itinerary during which there is no room for creative ideas nor to invent but which reads to
an end that will reveal his failure and his success, both at the same time. Under the authority of a sacred formula, he frivolously and unthinkingly identifies the four letters with the name of God, without suspecting that the data which he thinks he finds or discovers, allude to the problem of the \textit{nomen innomabile} of God. “If God does not have a name, he is unnamable, but ‘unnamable’ becomes thus the name of God, and the whole problem remains closed up in an aporia”, said Barthes in the Colloque de Cerisy (1978:22).

Three crimes are perpetrated in regular succession and on equal distances one from the others: a symmetry of points in time and in space, which apparently form “the vertex of an equilateral and mystical triangle” (1974a:503). Marked on the map, in red ink, the triangular regularity of the scheme seems for Lönnrot, beyond doubt. At the end of the story, the murderer will prove him right: “I sent the equilateral triangle to Treviranus. I felt that you would add the missing point. The point that determines a perfect rhombus, the point that prefixes the place where an exact death will wait for you” (1974a:507).

The double supposition, is really one: Red Scharlach supposed that Lönrom would suppose that there was one letter missing in the configuration of letters. As characters of a detective story, perhaps both had in mind the hypothesis of Tobias Gregson, the detective of \textit{A study in Scarlett}, who supposed the letter “L” was missing to form the word “RACHE”. It did not occur to Conan Doyle’s (1982) character either to venture beyond his most immediate code nor to remember that, in another code, that word meant “revenge”. The isovocalism (JHVH and RACHE), the professional bias, the share narrative and detectivesque universe and the enigmas and clues that the letter “L” contains, justify the su(per)position of several hypothesis.

Certain of the efficacy of his hermeneutic strategy, Gregson has no doubts about the goodness of his reasoning. Credulous at times, naive as well as learned, he mistakes an ineffable method for an infallible one, a rhetorical figure for a geometrical one. Using a compass (for finding directions) and a compass (for drawing circles), the investigator locates hypothetically, but with orthodox precision, this point where the fourth crime is supposedly going to take place. In doing so, he anticipates the fourth crime and instead of preventing it, he confirms it.

Foreseeable, logical, literal and schematic, his well-reasoned guess is not entirely his own, but the result of a scheme contrived by someone else. He thinks he is discovering something but, in fact, he does not think, but instead obeys orders, with the mechanical movements of a 	extit{golem}; the automaton servant who becomes alive because the rabbi inscribes on his clay forehead the secret, divine name of God. Erik Lönnrot wants to learn the truth but he does nothing to discover it; he only repeats the code letter by letter. The reductionist nature of his reasoning strategy turns the truth (Hebrew \textit{emet}) into falseness, turns him into inert mass (Hebrew \textit{met}) and his fate into fatality.

Lönnrot cannot escape the illusion that his data may be taken as if they were found at random and not as signs inscribed in a conventional code, an a priori writing which he not only does not interpret but which he repeats literally, thereby depriving the abstract model of the divine enthusiasm of the Platonic interpreter, of the hermeneutic magnetism of the Heraclian stone. He just lets himself be guided exclusively by the nautical magnetism which leads him to follow the precise course indicated by the compass.

When he reaches the place of the crime, he creates a place for it to happen there. To be sure, there, at his final destination, the murderer is waiting for him. Red Scharlach, one of the many names of the murderer, had been slipping as mere “facts” the explicit signs necessary for his own discovery.

This event, which according to the narrator is felt by the detective as “brusque intuition”, and which a semiotic like Sebeok must call an “abductive suggestion” coming to us “like a flash” — as Sebeok (1983:26) quotes Peirce — is in this case only a thinking route invented, closely defined by someone else. The murderer in tandem with the narrator weaving an intrigue is really a trap, and is intended to catch, by seductive method, conduct or seduce the detective or the reader, either one easy prey. Thus, when the text ends, it is also their end. Like Oedipus of Thebes, anyone who conducts a search to learn the solution of the enigma and to believe in that solution, can fall prey to a similar textual device.

In the final analysis, the detective realizes that his hypothesis, apart from being interesting, had been accurate. Yet this does not prevent him from making one fatal error: the investigator cannot remain outside his inquiry, he is implicated by his own method. When the other is known, he is no longer “other”; knowing suspends exteriority, and what used to be strange, \textit{extraenus} in Latin, becomes internal: in one word, the one and the other are identified, they know each other, which means that they are both distinct and the same. The investigator discovers the murderer, he identifies him; he also discovers the victim, he identifies and is identified with him: he is himself the victim. In fact, Red Scharlach kills him.

Also in \textit{La abduccion en Uqbar}, Eco (1984:7–8) shows surprise at the fact that Peirce saves the name “abduction” for this kind of hypothesis: “It
is curious that Peirce had used a term like 'abduction'. He has formulated it in analogy with Deduction and Induction (and also referring to Aristotelian terms). But we cannot forget that in English 'abduction' means kidnapping...” Through his story, Borges makes these senses of the concept “abduction” compatible, by combining them on a symbolic level.

Just as the existence of the literary text depends on each reader, the reader also determines the fate of a character. In spite of the fact that in The final problem Conan Doyle decides to let Sherlock Holmes die, we know that the strong protests expressed by his readers made him resuscitate him in The return of Sherlock Holmes (1987).

Unlike his author, this immortal character would have continued to live on and through the text: each reader adds new adventure, each reading creates another act. Perhaps the “literary biography” of the character as it emerges from each “different repetition”, the oxymoron which every reading is, helps make the enigmatic ending of Borges’ (1974a: 507) story less upsetting to make it less final and less historical, closer to unlimited veriginous semiosis, the infinite wisdom of a definition that refers to another one, an end without end:

It was already night; from the dusty garden the useless cry of a bird rose. Lönnrot considered for the last time the problem of those symmetrical and periodical deaths.
— In your labyrinth there are three lines too many — he said at last. I know of a Greek labyrinth which is one single straight line. On that line so many philosophers have got lost that well can a mere detective get lost in it. Scharlach, when you hunt me in some other avatar, pretend (or commit) a crime in A, then a second crime in B, 8 kilometers away from A, then a third crime in C, 4 kilometers away from A and B, halfway between the two. Wait for me then.

The next time I kill you — Scharlach replied — I promise you this labyrinth, which consists of one single straight line and which is invisible, infinite.

He moved a few steps back. Then, very carefully, he fired.

Sherlock Holmes explains to Watson that the secret to solve the problems of police investigation lies in the ability “to reason backwards”. Peirce (1983:24), repeatedly said that “abduction or retroduction” can be used indistinctly, because the procedure consists in “backwards reasoning”. In Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain, another story in the same book, Borges’ (1974a) character is a writer who has written a novel from end to beginning, following the same backwards plan illustrated by his title April March. In La muerte y la brújula, Lönnrot asks Scharlach to proceed progressively backwards in a future case, in the direction suggested by the famous detective and the semiotician.

This is not the first time Borges (1974a:256) resorts to this paradoxical form of reasoning, a regressive and infinite kind of retroduction, in order to ensure Lönnrot (suddenly turned theologian, unexpected double witness who knows and suffers for what he knows), sub specie aeternitatis, a contradiction which is also a self-description: “the vertiginous regressus in infinitum is perhaps applicable to all subjects”.35 Sebeok (1983:17) recalls that, for Peirce, “Abduction, that is retroduction... is a means of communication between man and his Creator; a ‘Divine Privilege’ and to reach this purpose the means is worth eternity.”

Borges’ story illustrates allegorically what theory, by itself, can only explain with difficulty. “It is easier to know it than to explain why I know it”, Sherlock Holmes said to his astonished assistant, in an Augustinian manner of speaking, and Carrol (1960) explained that “the best way to explain it is to do it”, because this difficult ambivalence saves literary discourse from the rigid reductions of reason, highlighting each time in theory its original duality, the vision which, without abstracting, invents, the same imagination that can be at once specular and spectacular.

“During those nights I swore by the god who sees with two faces and by all the gods of fever and of mirrors, to weave a labyrinth around the man who had sent my brother to prison” (1974a:505).

Like the murderer in A study in Scarlett, who signed “RACHE” each one of his crimes thereby duplicating the word by a show of revenge, Red Scharlach legitimizes his serial criminal revenge by the perfect geometrical regularity and theological anonymity of his schemes. As victim-murderer-detective-judge, all at the same time he does not seek the truth (which he already knows, which is at least ambiguous), but he seeks to verify, by revenge, the dual nature of knowledge; which is for/against man, a twofold labyrinth. In Harrowitz’s (1983:17) words, “the detective method has a far-reaching appeal which can be explained by its poetic and scientific nature, its double face”. We already know there are no innocent interpretations or hypotheses. Also in this story, the winner ends up losing: it is a detective story, about crime, investigation, of discovery and knowledge, and once again, like at the beginning, a story of guilt and knowing, knowledge and punishment, remain associated through the inscriptions and the Scriptures. “Scharlach, are you looking for the Secret Name?”

Once more detective Erik Lönnrot knowingly roots the interpretation of new facts in old texts, he puts forth a hypothesis authorized by old
hermeneutically legitimizes the series of crimes starting by taking them in a particular fact or an unknown fiction to the model of something already known, an old structure or an existing text. Now, if detective Lönnrot hermeneutically legitimizes the series of crimes starting by taking them in a predictive succession, if he adheres to the letters forming God's name, in a fixed order, it would be equally legitimate for the reader to interpret the plot of the text starting from Caprettini’s (1983:1335) onomastic clue: “The detective story as/is a universe of clues”. But, in spite of the relevance of the literal and anagrammatical temptation to interpret the story — a temptation also felt by the so called “other Saussure”, it is perhaps preferable, not to attach a special meaning to the (highest suggestive) initials of the name, EL, because they suggest a theological association that could bring us the same risk and damage it did to that discoverer/discoveree, that interpreter/interpretee who is like Plato’s (1961) Ion, in which Plato cannot be told from Ion. “If one finds a few anagrams then they can be dismissed as the results of chance; if one finds many, then that suggests that they are all too easy to find.” In both cases, the investigator would rather leave them aside to avoid their possible interrelations and combinations and to observe only the strict, linear and consecutive programme.

It might not be too farfetched to associate the name of Erik Lönnrot, a detective who sets out to discover new knowledge based on known facts, with that of Elias Lönnrot, the famous researcher who, amongst other works, received due credit for his recovery of the Kalevala. These associations are not limited to a philological affinity, because their names are, also in part, the same. In addition, there is the double association of both Lönnrots with the name of the Scandinavian discoverer: Erik in both cases, Red in the case of the sailor, — rot, ‘red’, also the character...

But these are not the only similarities in name. The murderer hides between two men disguised as harlequins, while he himself is disguised behind a series of pseudonyms: Guinzburch, Ginzberg, Gryphius. The narrator tells us that one of the nicknames of the murderer is Dandy Red Scharlach, while another is Red Scharlach. Scharlach is German for ‘scarlet’ (red), and is also a kind of bright red flower. Scharlachfieber is ‘scarlet fever’. The name of Red Scharlach is the reflection of its own image: it means ‘Red Red’, as Miller (1987) points out. Borges (1974a:505) often uses the artifice of the name to show his obsession with the double, with dualities, with the symbolism in proper names, in his own name or, generally speaking, with the symbolism underlying the figure and the fracture, the break of the natural relation of man with his world, the asymmetry that becomes a hotbed that gives place to the imagination and language:

For nine days and nine nights I agonized in this deserted and symmetrical farm; I was racked with fever, that hateful two-faced Janus who looks on dusk and dawn, and haunted my sleep and my waking hours. I came to curse my body, I came to feel that my two eyes, two hands, two lungs, are as monstrous as two faces.

The identification of the murderer and the detective goes beyond their joint participation in a circumstantial encounter. Each of them knows who the other is, yet they are no longer distinguishable, they are identified insofar as they are accomplices in the same crime. In the poem where Baudelaire quotes Terence, as well as in Borges’ story, the heautontimoroumenos is as one, so that if the victim is his own victim, he is both victim and executioner, and if one is the victim and the other the executioner, they cannot be distinguished either. Besides, symbolism in colours and names can be considered a variation on A study in scarlet (1882) and this, together with The sign of four, are the novels which Borges highlights in the brief introduction to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle which ends his Introducción a la literatura inglesa.

Perhaps the phonological and structural similarities between the names of Sherlock and Scharlach are just exemplary instances of the many legendary and historical symbolic meanings which are given to names and those who carry them. Neither in this story nor other stories (La forma de la espada, Toma del traidor y del héroe, Tres versiones de Judas) did Borges deem it necessary to distinguish the murderer (Scharlach) from the detective (Sherlock), the subject from the object. The search of truth approaches one to the other, contracts them together in one action which underscores an affinity that starts out as physical proximity and ends as intrinsic similarity.

Il n’y a peut-être qu’une stratégie fatale et une seule: la théorie. Et sans doute la seule différence entre une théorie banale et une théorie fatale, c’est que dans l’une le sujet se croit toujours supposé plus malin que l’objet, alors que dans l’autre l’objet est toujours supposé plus malin plus, cynique, plus génial que le sujet, qu’il l’attire ironiquement au détour. 

[There is but one and only one fatal strategy: theory. And certainly the only difference between a banal theory and a fatal theory is that in one the subject always is assumed to be more malign than the object, whereas in the other the object is always assumed to be more malign, more cynical, more genial than the subject, for whom he waits ironically.]
This narration by Borges is also an allegory of reading and it could even have given origin to de Man's (1979) *Allegories of reading, because de Man starts with “Semiology and Rhetoric”, and Borges also considers each reading as a rhetoric that must carry the marks of an imagination which can only take place just within a “prison house of language”. In spite of the fact that interpretations are regressive, unlimited readings, in much the same way as a sign refers to another, previous sign, in *The library of Babel* (1974a) each reading refers to a previous reading, and so on *ad infinitum*. No reader can avoid this in this “reading gaol”, and even though they are entitled *actes sans paroles* they are “speech acts”, felicitous contradictions many Englishmen — or «au contraire», as Beckett used to say according to Ellman (1987:91) — many Irishmen have duly accounted for, as have all those who continue to ponder these definitions.

The story becomes a multiple allegorical exercise, an allegory of the allegory, which all literary reading is: an hermeneutic practice at the intersection of rhetorical functions, tropologic strategies and persuasive and seductive operations involved in reading. Even in stories, in the outrageous imagination of Borges' characters, of Cervantes' (1911) *Don Quixote*, of Flaubert's (1972) *Madame Bovary, Bouvard and Pécuchet*, remote and safe from history, inside the universe of fiction, it is impossible for the ravings of a literal reading to survive: “the letter killeth”.

Despite its letter-based, literal nature, reading can only be figurative, and “figure” is meant here in all its senses: as a kind of imagination through the word, it is also the figure that directs the geographical and epistemological route of the detective-victim murderer, a direction that enhances the semantic, rhetoric and cosmographic meaning of the literal, cardinal and geometrical figure. Four holy letters, four points in the map, the rhombus⁴¹ which forms a cross and precipitates the (re)cognition of truth, although once again, he who wishes to find it or believes he can find it, will be sacrificed and will depart this life.

“Next time I kill you — replied Scharlach — I promise you this labyrinth, consisting of a single straight line and which is invisible, infinite.”

The regularity of the geometrical figure, vertically laid out, and the chromatic liveliness of its yellows, reds and greens, are explicitly described in several passages of the story: an emblematic vertigo which appears multiplied in the vitreaux which fragment vision in rhombi, in the harlequin costume (which is also a disguise), in the painted billboards⁴² which cover the front of a paint store, in the accuracy of its map-like representation: the rhombus as a heraldic figure, a blazon between the arms and the letters.

Borges does not say so, but (or because) it is a well-known fact that rhombi are the ports of a compass, that the compass gives direction to *rumbos*, “rumbos y rumbos mágicos” as Cervantes (1911) said, and which always point towards the North.
The miracle of the roses and Borges’ ultrarealism

To begin with, and under the aegis of a figure of “initiation” with which Borges (1974a:639-642) himself used to begin his texts, I recur to the beginning of one of his works (1951) where he quotes a statement of Valéry (1938), which Borges retracts to Emerson (1821), who had attributed it to Shelley (1844), and so forth forwards, but backwards.

Following these repetitions — procedures are repetitions — I shall try to imitate Borges’ own imitation, a sort of regressive progression inherent in the nature of language, the technical term for which is either anaphora, intertextuality, or transtextuality (there are other alternative denominations). “The anxiety of influence”, as discourse theorists would say today, refers to the creation of forerunners, which Borges attributes to those writers who discover or even invent, in texts of the past, affinities which are recognized not as cause but rather as consequence of their own texts, even though the latter are of a later date.

I believe that these chronological — or simply logical — inversions which Borges reserves for writers should be made extensive to the reader with similar legitimacy because precisely the reader-lector-collector synchronically (or anachronically), gathers in his “imaginary library” similarities scattered by history and texts. Borges (1974a:711) the writer, but in his role of reader, recognized the changes which Kafka made in texts by Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Bloy (1846–1917) and Lord Dunsany (1878–1957); Proust (1866), a writer who was particularly well-disposed toward la recherche of a time he imagined suspended rather than lost, assured some years before Borges that he had found traces of Turner (1775–1881) in Poussin (1594–1665), as well as a phrase of Flaubert in Montesquieu.

It is predictable that the past will modify the present; more interesting, but less studied, is perhaps the idea that the present — which is a future of that past — can modify previous texts. They appear to be movements towards precise moments in the past (most texts are dated), but they tense up giving those previous texts the air they need to breathe: an aspiration (desire) and/or an inspiration (grace), two expressions which are distinct for literary theory but which physiology and theology tend to use indistinctly.

Borges (1974a:639), in La flor de Coleridge, delves into literary past to retrace “the history of the evolution of an idea throughout the heterogeneous texts of three authors”; T.S. Coleridge, H.G. Wells and Henry James. We hope to show here that Borges’ text from Otras inquisiciones (1974a), refers forward to The purple rose of Cairo by Woody Allen (1985) and to our compatriot, the French poet Jules Laforgue (1979). The title I have given to this paper, “The miracle of the roses”, is also the title of one of his stories, published in Moralités légendaires of 1886.

Through repetition, time contracts; each coincidence entails likeness and difference; Derrida (1972b:9) would say that the différence, as opposed to différence, highlights the idea of postponement, as well as the idea of diversity which is its more common meaning. On the textual level a rite of initiation is enacted — which is also an imitation of sorts — a return which is less a turning to the past than the suspension of all time, a glimpse of eternity, a nostalgia for another time, which the ceremony punctually celebrates. A past previous to the primordial exile, previous to all subsequent exiles, a past which, since it is not present, may be confused with absence, the remembrance of and the longing for a garden, the paradès in Hebrew, a paradise which, according to the Midrash, can be reached through several interpretations (four at least), because die Rose is ohne warum, it flowers because it flowers, like the famous rose of Angelus Silesius’ that Borges repeatedly mentions.

Something is said which has already been said, in such a way that what has already been said becomes — thanks to that repetition — a model, an archetype, an idealized Idea. By the text a dynamic entity embodies and dramatizes the essential condition which concerns us: capitalized Ideas or Ideas with a capital I, imitations, textual repetitions, a longing for eternity, the fate of a future that refers us to an original past, to Paradise, where it may be possible — through interpretations — to pick a flower as in Coleridge’s dream, which Borges (1974a:639) tells thus: “If a man dreams that he walks through Paradise, and he has been given a flower as proof that he had been there, and if on waking up he finds that flower in his hand…. then what?” Coleridge’s dreamer finds in his hand a present (a presence, a gift) which is proof of an absence, proof of another space. Borges tells in the same essay that Wells’ character finds in his turn a withering flower, a proof of another time, because thanks to the Time Machine he had brought back a keepsake of the future. That a souvenir from that pasado-mañana be no longer fresh is hardly surprising, as this is the foreseeable future of any flower: Ronsard, Corneille, Laforgue, Brassens have sung this phenomenon. Henry James’ character, Ralph Pendrel, travels in the Sense of the past (the title of the book) and finds himself in the 18th century facing his own portrait. This pre-posterior-
displacement — an English speaker might call it preposterous! — would be absurd were it not for the double sense, the double direction in which the textual operation necessarily proceeds.

Once time is suspended, it is only natural that coincidences should accumulate and become unavoidable. For example, the assumption of the paradisiacal flower which is not only Coleridge's idea but also Borges' own, is not just the product of an extravagant romanticism. In the following essay, Coleridge's dream, Borges (1974a) tells us that the poet had dreamed his poem Kubla Khan with such precision that, when he woke up, he could repeat it with total fidelity. However, the interruption by an unexpected visitor prevented him from reconstructing it in full. He only wrote down around eighty verses out of the three hundred which he remembered of the original version. Of course we know all this from Coleridge (1934:85) himself, who tells it in an introduction to his poem Kubla Khan or a vision in a dream.

Coleridge's dream is by no means the first. Borges refers this dream to another dream, the one told by Beda the Venerable (673–735) who in his Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum reconstructs the double poetic revelation which illuminated Caedmon, an illiterate shepherd who receives in a dream his first poem, and therefore, a double vocation: his voice and his calling. Both — poem and vocation — begin singing "the beginning of created things", the summons and the gift he received in his dream. Through this poem, many things are dreamt, begun and created. Many strong parallels, coincidental or not, may be drawn between Beda's sacred antecedent, the dream that inspired Kubla Khan, and the dream of the Mogul Emperor, the reason and the name of Coleridge's poem.

Borges remarks that the Compendium of stories, a French book of 1836, records that Kubla Khan had his palace built according to a plan he had seen in a dream which corresponded exactly to a plan which recalled or reconstructed Xanadu (and On the road to Xanadu, we should not leave Orson Wells [1980] by the way). It is unlikely that Coleridge could have learned of that coincidence, as he died two years before the book was published and his poem was composed twenty years earlier.

But if the initiation is supported by many different sources, very sacred texts, and if it be thereby recognised that words have a creative force — or poiesis, according to the Greeks, or performative function, as contemporary linguists less poetically classify this dual realization of the action-diction, the enunciation which creates words and things (Austin [1962], Benveniste [1971] and their epigones), then it would be unfair or at least partial not to extend this recognition to its negative counterpart: the destructive force of words, a similar but opposite realization, which would complete Austin's (1962) How to do things with words.

Let me clarify these still general remarks by another story, also written by Borges. Without any reference to Coleridge's dream, he tells many years later the story of a Yellow Emperor (he does not say his name) who accuses a poet (he does not say his name) of having robbed him of a palace (he does not say his name): "In the poem the palace was complete... It was enough for the poet to read the poem aloud for the palace to disappear, as if vanished and blown up with the last syllable" (1974a:801); whereupon, the Emperor did not hesitate to have him executed. In the same way as the poet of the story, to whom the poem "afforded immortality and death", with words one palace is destroyed and another built, like the successive temples of which Nietzsche spoke. Through words, things come into existence and cease to exist. Words re-present things and through this "re" — a contradictory prefix — they are no longer present (and therefore they represent) and come again, they make themselves present once more (they are re-presented). Thus the poet believes that poetry is produced within the confines of the sign and of what the sign names; the poem is born of the nostalgia of what the sign has annihilated, but through that same sign conjugates it up again.

The word paradoxically preserves things and repeals them. By the word they simultaneously pass away and are born, to grow and multiply. The palace which vanishes in front of the Emperor's eyes begins to appear in the vision of the poem that represents it, of the reader who interprets it. The problem is one of representation which, ambivalently, makes the thing it represents vanish, while at the same time it multiplies it.

It would not surprise me if this was the mysterious miracle of the flower which becomes the proof of a dream, of or the poems about the dream, which remain when dreams and the wonders of the palace, of stories and of people, have vanished. There remain flowers and fragments, as if nature and poetry could only survive as an anthology: anthos means 'flower' in Greek, botanic and poetic stamen which reproduces itself: it is both pro-creative and re-creative. Derrida (1972a) spoke about dissemination: semen, semis, semantica. In the poetic, philosophical imagination of Borges, of Derrida (a reader of Borges) texts and flowers are perhaps closely related, particularly if there are dreams and memories involved.

For example, the narrator of Funes, el memorioso remembers — and for Borges (1974a) and his narrator this is a sacred verb — our Uruguayan gaucho with a passionflower in his hand. What does that passionflower mean? The flower of passion? The book of the Passion? “Passing from
books to flowers is easier than passing from roses to letters” said Borges (1974a) in a text from *El aleph*. But we can pass over (Pass over) these coincidences: Borges does not make them pass through all those semantic steps: in this case he simply does not differentiate books from flowers.

When in the story Borges turns the flower into books, poems, verses, and letters, this transformation is the proof of the dream. Borges knows that the dream cannot last and he can do little more than leave a memory. In the prologue to *La moneda de hierro* (1976), he says: “I can write down the vague words I heard in a dream and call them *E in Traum*”. His “*dream*” is no longer a dream, it has turned into words, even though it is still called “*dream*”, it is nothing but a voice or two voices. But this is Borges’ way of remembering his dreams: he verbalises them. The word is his version of the dream, its *conversion*. If it were a dream it could never be true: the Word converts it.

In this *conversion*, of a dream, a belief, an opinion, into a word, lies what I call the *miracle of the roses*. “The legendary miracle of the roses” says Laforgue (1979) several times in his story about a woman who suffers from tuberculosis, as did Laforgue himself, a poet who has faith in «la *voix du sang*», because “blood turns into roses”, and «grâce aux roses roses» the main characters of his book can devote themselves solely and purely to their own illness, their own death.

It is surprising — even though it should not be so — that Laforgue, repeating the name of the rose, also names its colour. By the same token, Borges says in *El ingenuo* (1976: 63):

| No hay en el orbe una  |
| cosa que no sea otra, o contraria, o ninguna. |
| A mí sólo me inquietan las sorpresas sencillas. |

Me asombra que la espada cruel pueda ser hermosa, Y que la rosa tenga el olor de la rosa.

[There is not in the orb anything which is not something else, or contrary, or nothing I am only concerned with simple surprises.]

It amazes me that the cruel sword can be beautiful And that the rose has the smell of a rose.]

Neither smell nor colour can be foreseen by the poet who can only dream them, remember the dream or remember the past, long for Paradise, which resumes both the dream and the past; these things are the past (a time that is not present), they are Paradise (a distant space); of both differences, in time and in space, the flower turned word, poem, gives evidence.

A la región del sueño, inaccesible
A la memoria humana; De esa región inmensa rescato restos (1977:417).

[Into the region of dreams, inaccessible into human memory; From that immense region I rescue rests.]

Roses are ubiquitous in Borges’ work, from his first poems, those of *El fervor de Buenos Aires* (1974a), where we find the image of the “inaccessible rose”, which is as “inaccessible today as the roses/that to the first Adam gave Paradise” *El hacedor* (1974a).

I offer you the memory of a yellow rose seen at Sunset years before you were born (1974a). (In English in the original.)

No matter of which colour, no matter in which language, Spanish or English, what matters here is the permanence of the rose that survives the distant time, the past space, and reminds us of a “Paradise lost” which may be either biblical or literary, but is always textual:

| O blanca rosa de un jardín borrado, |
| Deja mágicamente tu pasado |
| Inmemorial y en este verso brilla, |
| Oro, sangre o marfil o tenebrosa |
| Como en sus manos, invisible rosa (1974a). |

[Oh, white rose of a faded garden, Magically leave your past Immemorial and in this verse do shine, Gold, blood or ivory, or shadowy Like in his hands, invisible rose.]

The rose, continuously evoked by Borges as a distant image from his childhood, only becomes tangible through the books that are close to his dreams and memories:

| Pero te sé más lejos que aquel niño |
| Que te entreví en las láminas de un sueño |
But I know you are farther than that child
that caught a glimpse of you in the pictures of a dream
Or here in this garden, one morning.]

(The title of the poem is in English in the original)

In Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain (1974a), the narrator confesses
that he took the plot from the third of the eight stories supposedly written
by Herbert Quain; the plot, that is, of The rose of yesterday — always
the rose and yesterday previous to the text. Yet what he borrowed was more
than a story about relics, dreams, and beings who are capable of transcending
the frontiers between different spaces and species.

Rooted in some yesterday, and far away in some lost Paradise, the rose
becomes severally invisible, especially for Milton (1994) who would not
have been able to see it even if he had held it in his hands, because Milton,
like Borges, was blind. In On his blindness (1974a) (in English in the
original) even if he speaks about it in English and in the third person,
Borges refers to his own blindness, this is why this rose is like Milton’s,
doubly constant and invisible: since it belongs to the past it is out of
sight, yet even if it were there, neither Borges nor Milton would be able to
see it:

...mis ya gastados ojos
Pierden en su penumbra, de las rosas
Invisibles y de las silenciosas
Multitudes de oros y de rojos (1974a).

[...my worn-out eyes
Miss in their darkness, the
Invisible roses and the silent
Multitudes of golds and reds.]

Yet because he cannot see them this does not prevent him from thinking
of them constantly, which is like seeing them, or dreaming about them, in
his imagination:

Repito que he perdido solamente
La vana superficie de las cosas
El consuelo es de Milton y es valiente

[I repeat I have only lost
The vain surface of the things
Comfort is in Milton, a brave man
But I think of letters and roses.]

Intelligible, invisible and interior; intimate, distant and primeval: the
rose is the memory of other times, a memory recorded by the word. The
word preserves and transforms fragments of a dream into texts. Absent, yet
always there, that “unending rose” is the eternal attribute of a blind man
who is, like Thyrsias, the seer of the future, who reveals the past thanks
to his blindness. His gift grants him a lucidity in the darkness, it seems to
be a form of death which eternity conforms.

Soy ciego y nada sé, pero preveo
Que son más los caminos. Cada cosa es infinitas cosas. Eres...

Rosa profunda, ilimitada, íntima,
Que el señor mostrará a mis ojos muertos (1977:459).

[I am blind and I know nothing, but I foresee
That there are more ways. Each thing
is infinite things. You are...

A rose profound, unlimited, intimate
Which the Lord will show to my dead eyes.]

The rose is invisible because the seer is blind, but his blindness reveals
the invisibility of the dream, which is not real, the invisibility of the
archetype which words remember and record, originated in that space
which belongs to another species, in that time eternal, where consecutive
succession or logical order have become irrelevant because there time does
not go by. Time is permanent and it ensures that the text multiplies itself
in innumerable variations, for each reader and in each reading. In the word
“rose” the archetype of the rose is evoked or revealed:

Sí (como el griego afirma en el Cratilo)
El nombre es arquetipo de la cosa
En las letras de rosa está la rosa
Y todo el Niño en la palabra Niño (1974a).

[If (as the Greek states in Cratylus)
The name is the archetype of the thing
The rose is in the letters of rose
And the whole Nile in the word Nile.]

The word is an archetype of the rose, like the river that flows in time and
changes with it; the image is well-known but Borges (1977:429) writes
that “Solo perduran en el tiempo las cosas/Que no fueron del tiempo” [The
only things that last in time/Are the things that were not in time]. The river
may flood or the things may fade away; yet the word remains unaffected in
time, even though it belongs to it. Borges (1974a:466) quotes: «O tiempo, tus pirámides» [Oh time, your pyramids] and in another text (1974a:866): “Oh time, your ephemeral pyramids”. Because they believe that death will be another life following this one, the Egyptians preserve death in the time of the pyramids which last one day each day every day, ephemeral and constant. Allen locates his own “miracle of the roses” nearby. The film is called The purple rose of Cairo and tells that, to the astonishment of the tourists, archaeologists, explorers and spectators, in the interior of the pyramids — where the pharaohs survive or “surdic” in splendor — the roses painted on the walls multiply and bloom into real roses, everywhere. This is the theme of an old film, in black and white, also called The purple rose of Cairo, which exists only inside Woody Allen’s film, which is recent and in colour, with a title which, according to Woody Allen himself, is the title of a Dixieland melody, in remembrance of the time in which he watched two or three films a day, when the cinema really was his paradise.

The example of cinematographic multiplication is germane to an art made of reproductions, of copies that are an exact replica of the original, as it happens in the movies. In Historia de la eternidad Borges (1974a:364–365) said: “It is not enough to take the cinema at face value, as mere images of images, idols of other idols...”. Perhaps for him, too, cinema is one of the contemporary forms in which the ancestral myths of the caves are present, and where, in the dark and fumbling, man lets himself be blinded by what he believes to be truths only because he sees them with his own eyes, even when he knows he only sees a projection of images on a screen which prevents him from seeing anything but shades and shadows.

So numerous are the points of correspondence with The purple rose of Cairo, that the spectator, any spectator, is not surprised to find that the spectator in the film, whose name is paradoxically, Cecilia, is named after the patron saint of music, whereas her name also refers to a blindness (caecitas means ‘blindness’ in Latin) which is in fact not uncommon among poets but, which affects few spectators. Neither is it surprising that Cecilia plays a part in the film-within-the-film, nor that a character in the film leaves it to meet her, to shake hands with her and to kiss her. (Balaz [1979] has analysed cinema as a new art capable of presenting a picture on which there is a painted road, along which goes the painter who has painted the picture, on which there is a painted road along which goes the painter who has painted a picture, and so forth.)

Fascinated by the character in the film, the archeologist Tom Baxter, Cecilia lets herself become enraptured by the exciting world he belongs to.

From the other side, from beyond the screen, she brings with her a ukulele that she keeps as a token of love, like the flower her lover gives her on their date, while from her seat — already at the end of the film — she watches again Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers singing “I’m in Heaven” and dancing “check to cheek”, or better still, face to face, as God, according to Paul, will be seen in a Paradise to which Cecilia was also admitted to enjoy the lucid ludic charm which cinema exerts when it fulfills dialectically our dream, both the real and the unreal, in a real dream.

Like in Caedmon’s poem, the palace of Kubla Khan, Coleridge’s poem, this flower and other flowers, Cecilia brings with her something from beyond, where she cannot remain but from where she at least keeps a token. Now “token” is a particularly significative word because, as well as meaning souvenir, it means password a mot de passe, the formula or phrase that gives access to forbidden places and enables one to cross the frontiers between different spaces. Token is the word used in Peirce’s (1931–1958) theory of semiotics to designate — Neoplatonically — the sign (sinsign in his lush terminology) which, used in this particular way, brings to mind a type or legisign. Unlike Saussure’s (1916) sign, Peirce’s token is a sign that presents a material evidence, an actual token of something, a symbol which makes something that is there visible, brings it into sight. At the same time and in addition to the objective presence which makes things real, the token is the sign of something else, the trace index of something that has existed and continues to do so because of the token’s force to represent it, something presented as a memento, a gift, a present, offered to someone who is about to leave. The Oxford English Dictionary has sixteen entries which interweave in a common significiation: each sign records two recollections, it recalls more than a single record.

Like Laforgue, like Borges, Allen (1978:15) is also a master in the art of crossing narrative frontiers. There are several rhetoric names to refer to such transgressions which use to appear in his cinematographic and literary narratives. In his story The Kugelmass episode, the main character is a professor of French literature at the University of Stanford who, himself fascinated by Flaubert’s (1972) heroine, makes a particularly resourceful use of his strategies as a professional reader, perfectly acquainted with the most lucid and state-of-the-art theories of reading and interpretation. He suddenly finds himself in the Bovary’s bedroom in Yonville, and brings Emma back with him to Manhattan, and this is where Allen and his characters quote Borges and his texts: real quotes and strange intrusions which Macedonio Fernández would not have disapproved of; but, of course, he was only acquainted with Flaubert’s (1972) Emma, who
believes herself to be a copy of reality, that is to say, she does not dream of being real: and this is what Macedonio (1982) begrudges her.

There are painted roses and filmed roses everywhere: “POURQUOI, Pourquoi?” wonders Laforgue (1979), in the final verse of his poem Complainte des complaints where he also wonders “why exhaust oneself growing painted roses!” (“Maintenant, pourquoi ces complaints? ... Sot tabernacle où je m’entreine/A cultiver des roses peintes?”). Both questions: “WHY? Why?” are really one question, repeated: the first, in capitals, and the second, less universal and archetypal, resemble typographically those roses painted in the interior of Allen’s pyramids or in those pyramids which Solomon does not mention but which he certainly had before his inner eye when singing his love for the Shunammite in the Song of songs. Laforgue’s (1979) songs were Complaintes (plaintive songs): the “complaint of complaints” refers to Solomon’s verses and to that grammaticalized repetition used in Hebrew to express the superlative, a form which Solomon’s song consecrates. Unlike our superlative adjectives or adverbs expressing the highest degree of some quality (because a quality can logically present degrees), Hebrew can also express the superlative of a noun (the name of a thing or concept), in order to reach, by duplication and exotolm, the supreme form of the archetype, the idealized Idea, beyond all possible variations and different version of it.

The first time Borges (1974a) dedicates a poem to a rose (Fervor de Buenos Aires), he uses precisely this procedure:

La rosa que siempre está sola,
La que es la rosa de las rosas,
La joven flor platónica.
[The rose that is always alone
The one that is a rose of roses
The young platonian flower.]

He revived then the Greek myth of the blind seer, and anticipated his own blindness, albeit transferred to the flower, severely symbolic, an archetype which is the shadow of things to come: “la rosa ardiente y ciega que no canto” [the ardent and blind flower I do not sing to], which precedes all the unattainable, invisible roses, the Rosa profunda to which he dedicates his whole book, even when the word rose suffices for all roses past, present and future, the only flower in a garden which Borges is no doubt contemplating now that not only his eyes are dead, leaving in our hands his text, a text that is different each time we repeat it, because for Borges (1977:109), “conservar y crear, tan enemistados aquí, son sinónimos en el cielo” [to keep and to create, so estranged here, are synonyms in heaven].

Borges (1985:87) reports that a commentator of the Gushlam I Raz says: “I shall no longer perceive the Universe and I shall perceive the zahir”. According to the idealist doctrine, the verbs “to live” and “to dream” are strictly synonyms; of thousands of appearances I shall pass to one and of a very complex dream to a very simple one... He says that he who has seen the zahir will soon see the Rose and he corroborates this with a verse interpolated in the Asrar Nama (Book of things unknown) by Attar: the zahir is the shadow of the Rose and the tear in the veil and Borges repeats this same passage at the end of his story El zahir (El aleph).

The rose of roses is not a simple intuition (as Benedetto Croce said of art) but the intuition of an intuition, so much so that it reveals La rosa profunda, the personal image, the archetype, the artistic (id)entity: like the word, it accumulates the double vision of what is most particular (the poet’s image) and most universal (I do not dare say “doubly universal” even though I distinguish the concept that corresponds to all the objects and all the individuals), virtues and virtuality of a flower that does not stop disturbing him in dreams and in waking:

Me alcanza desde ayer de mí y de neblina;
La imagen detestada perdura en la retina,
E infamia la vigilia como infamé la sombra.
¿Por qué brota de mí cuando el cuerpo reposa
Y el alma queda sola, esta insensata rosa?
(1977:455)

[It reaches me from yesterdays of myth and mist;
The detested image remains on my retina.
And infamy guards it like she defamed the shadow.
Why does it flow from me when my body rests
and my soul remains alone, this foolish rose?]

The poem, which is not complete, is from La rosa profunda; its title is Efialtes, the name of the demon, Ephialtes, who is associated with nightmares but it also means ‘nightmare’ in Greek. The title of Borges’ poem suggests the duality of the specific and the universal, because, like the first verse says; “In the depth of the dreams are the dreams”.

In the last paragraphs of this chapter on “The miracle of the roses” I shall try to gather some scattered observations which, taken from several lectures held by Borges, I have called his “ultrarealism”. I gave this qualification to a dimension of reality in his work, a reality which goes
beyond realism, ultra-worldly, beyond space and time, past and permanent: Paradise or Garden of Eden, a pagan Topos Uranos or perhaps a less transcendent "on the other side of death", as Borges (1974a:912) said referring to another poet, Edgar A. Poe (E. A. Poe, El otro, el mismo). Abstrated from accidental circumstances, this is realism in its most ancient sense, a reference to the reality of Ideas, of which individual beings, mere things (as the forms of a reality came to be called that no-one dared anymore to put between quotation marks), are only evanescent, shallow and fleeting incarnations.

By using the term ultrarealism I have also tried to make reference, ambivalently, to the fact that in this period Borges had overcome the limitations of the ultraism of this first period, yet without disavowing it; in other words, he has tried to improve himself, an improvement understood as an Aufhebung (in Hegel's, Heidegger's or the deconstructionists' sense), an improvement which places this ultraist period in the historical development of Borges' work; and I use the term "historical" here in the sense Borges would have used it himself: circumstantial, incidental and transitory.

Finally with ultrarealism I want to refer to the opposite of history, if history admits as its opposite a hyperbolic story and outrageous reality. It would then mean that which remains the same and eternal despite or thanks to the many variations which realism inflict on it: neorealism, surrealism, hyperrealism, photorealism, magicalrealism, objectiverealism, socialrealism and even royalist and absolutistrealism, those evanescent variations which, like roses, continuously turn into other roses (Los conjurados: Nubes I). So many are the historical and theoretical variations (Jakobson's [1973:31] casuistry) that the concept, rather than alluding positively to the imitative representation of reality, seems to question it. Therefore, it denounces by its own variety and vastness the abuses and subtleties of a concept which does not prevent it from becoming all the more transparent. Thus it jeopardizes, with excessive fidelity or technological precision the paradigmatic cartographic perfection of Del rigor en las ciencias, a two-sided penetration of reflection (a penetrating subject, and a penetrated object), what is lost is the illusion, which is a requisite of art. While understanding by truth merely what is present and immediate, daily and ephemeral, unaware, what is lost is the dimension of time, the thread which is not the plot by the texture, the text, the textual fabric, the veil that weaves illusion and which is revealed in the work of art.

Borges (1976) says it and "William Shakespeare has dreamed of it, Eternal like the carnal act". Like love, it is the death by the sword which materializes in Hamlet — the king, the prince — like the Divine Word materializes in the womb of the Virgin to give Life. Not long ago Borges (1985) said: "Tal vez en la niebla hubo una espada/Acaso hubo una rosa" [Perhaps in the darkness there was a sword/Perhaps there was a rose]. Between the arms and the letters — as Cervantes said, and he was not the first one — there is the rose incarnate, without colour, the rose engendered by the Word to give evidence of a dream, the timeless archetype which is Borges’ eternal Reality.
Between two languages:
Jules Laforgue, a Uruguayan “figure”

Biographical and poetical notes for the study of a rhetorical figure

To Taube, Paloma, Ionit,
one name for the three.

Éclats d’un vase que trop de lumière a brisé.
Edmond Jabès

1. The background of this work

First of all, some remarks about Jules Laforgue, based on several writings by Haroldo de Campos (1987), in particular Más allá del principio de la nostalgia (1987a). Secondly, the points of correspondence with the hypothesis put forth by Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Leyla Perrone-Moisés (1983: 97 – 117) in their Isidoro Ducasse y la retórica española,49 that is, the similarity of a phenomenon which is common to both Franco-Uruguayan poets as read by Iberoamerican scholars. Thirdly, the possibility of a convergence between this study and Benjamin’s (Block de Behar 1987c: 135-146) theory of translation as interpreted by de Campos (1987): the theoretical and poetical attempts at a previous language, a pure language which, despite the fact that it is not the mother tongue it is an original language, a return to the eternal: in one word, it is the idiomaterno [mothertongue], according to de Campo’s (1987) contraction.

2. A retrospective at the beginning

Tú, madre del Verbo cercada de hespérides desnudas.
Cuya habla es siniestra cual la voz del oráculo,
Y bifida como la lengua de los Dragones.
Haroldo de Campos

Jules Laforgue was born on August 16th, 1860, and despite this civil event being a fact, when Laforgue (1979) describes his place of birth, he does not place it near Independence Square in Montevideo, nor some meters away from the River Plate, nor in America, but somewhere else. In one poem he says he was born in a city he does not name but which could be easily located geographically: it is Tarbes, in southwest France, where, on leaving Montevideo, the Laforgues settled together with other relatives who also came from my country.

Another fact is that Laforgue spent the first (the fourth) part of his life in our country and yet, in spite of the limited nature of his precocious French, he decides to write only in French and he insists on repeatedly presenting himself as an “honnête poète Français” [honest French poet] (1979, 1:232).

Where does he say where he was born? In one poem he says, quoting “Oh, dans un couvent, dans un convento [Oh, in a convent, in a convent]” (1979, 1:189). The decision to write in French should not be considered a strange choice, although his own and others’ testimonies explicitly acknowledge that Jules Laforgue did not know this language well. Since it is equally unknown whether he knew Spanish well, it is not even certain that it had been a decision.

But without saying so, without making that decision, there is a strange, Spanish ring to his French, a foreign element, a present absence, a way of being, as well as not being, in an intermediate state, between one language and the other. “If you do not command your own language, you will not be a foreigner. But know your language and you will be a foreigner somewhere else.” This apothegm, attributed to the Fathers of the desert, is ambivalent and it stands true not just for this poet. How to defend, then, despite the contradiction between actions and words, an origin which he himself denies in his verses, his versions and conversions of a poetic truth protected by the law? A foreigner everywhere, the poet remains in a space between two spaces, on the breach that separates them, or the bridge that unites them in another language.

Some time ago, I tried to give a survey of Laforgue’s poetics (1987b), which I defined as “The metaphors of displacement” (1987). I presented, on the one hand, a Uruguayan perspective, but I tried to avoid, as far as possible, the inconsistencies which are the product of a trivial and provincial nationalism. I paid heed, on the other hand, to the rhetorical dichotomies in Jakobson’s linguistic analyses. In Two aspects of language and two kinds of aphasia, Jakobson (1956) opposes the metaphorical and metonymic poles, which are present in all verbal activity and in various forms of thought, even though one usually predominates over the other, depending on cultural, personal and stylistic models. I now understand that
such a rhetorical-biographical dichotomy could also underlie Laforgue's Uruguayan "figure". Born in Montevideo, registered "Julio Laforgue" in the Metropolitan Cathedral, he can hardly be considered a far-fetched figure. Therefore "figure" may perhaps be interpreted in this case as two figures: 1) according to the common meaning of "personality", 'person who is well-known or important in some way', 2) in its rhetorical sense, although rhetoric has not included it in its list of terms as a "figure of fantasy", which does not possess any nationalistic association, provincial or parochial, but refers to the situation of someone who, on leaving, on departing, remains in two languages, like someone who is in two minds.

As said above, when referring to "the metaphors of displacement" we imply both figures mentioned above: a metaphor: *meta* ('beyond') and *phero* ('take'), as a translation, a displacement, change of name in both cases; *meta* ('beyond') *onomia* ('name'), a metonymy. Therefore, they are similar in origin and in nature, even though the taxonomy which orders the inventory of rhetorical figures has chosen to oppose them. This has a double meaning: if a figure tends to unfold (a sign in two), two figures tend to coincide (two signs in one). On the one hand they attract one another, on the other, they draw apart. Figures play a double game, they bet on the double meaning: if a figure tends to unfold (a sign in two), two figures tend to coincide (two signs in one).

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Where does it end? [Writing! How? What is language? Where does it begin? Where does it end?]

Grojnowski (1988) quotes Laforgue's qualms, the initial queries which concern him as a poet, revealing his perplexity faced with the irrevocable imposition of using one and only one language, the obligation of limiting it; of giving it a beginning and an end. He asks several questions — a quest (about the origin: where does language start? and about the end, where does language end?), and another quest, a complex question, several problems which are in fact only one question. The double question is not Laforgue's alone, nor has it only been asked by the Uruguayan reader of Laforgue's work: it is a question asked by any author who is concerned with rivalry between languages, which is essentially a problem of limits — the limits of the language or the limits of the world — where the co-action of the limits of language is questioned — the violent action whereby one is obliged, by force, to speak in a determined language or not to speak. Besides this co-action, there is another form of shared action which is also a co-action, even if it takes place as a cooperation between languages. Where do languages start? Who gives a goal, a direction, a sense to words, who accepts this sense or rejects it, who defines it or defends it?

In *L'imitation de notre-dame la lune*, Laforgue (1979) talks of "langes gardiens" (Les linges, le cygne). One reads twice, one reads two voices: both of them guard something, like the angel (l'ange) or the diapers (langes) do in the same language (language). In both cases Laforgue refers to the same childlike innocence in which sex is out of sight, or simply nonexistent. If it is a diaper, it is shielded off, if it is an angel its sex is unknown: an angel is simply an infant, (literally someone who does not speak), sexless and speechless. Ignored and guarded, protected by the guardian angel, the infant's sex still wears diapers, like the angel, who is a messenger, safe between God and the world. The Word was enough in the beginning, but we know that this "paradisiacal vocation" (the expression is Haroldo de Campos') was not kept in the actual languages. It is necessary to know the language, to differentiate between its elements, to articulate them, that is, to repeat them and thereby to oppose them.

Bin bam, bin bam
Les cloches! Les cloches! (1979, 1:154)
A broken bell, broken in two. The bells toll.

Les cloches! Les cloches!
La cloche brisée, by Mallarmé (1945: 240)

"The bells, I say, the bells, break down their tower" and they toll, echoing that more remote tower, in ruins from the beginning. "It is necessary to read at least twice all these words" warns Derrida (1981: 26) in Glas, a bell which tolls death, and this title is not translated, but remains in its original sound and silence, as a (heart)break. Nostalgia of the absolute knowledge that has been lost, a loss that originates from the age from the Zohar:

When he tries to translate Baudelaire's poetry, Benjamin finds broken voices, fragments of a vessel, rolling stones, pieces, and his task is to restitute them, to painstakingly put them back together. Benjamin (1983) revives the cabalistic figure of the shattered amphora, a well-known image from the Zohar:

Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel.

Paul de Man (1986: 89–90) did not disguise his perplexity at the ambivalent figure of Benjamin's perfect synecdoche (in which a part of something is used to signify the whole), an allegory that occupies a central place in the cosmogony, ethics and history of the Cabbala and which Benjamin refers to the task of the translator: each translation restores a part of the meaning of each work, and each work restores a part of the work's total meaning.

Translation is a form of interpretation, a mystical doing in which the transcreational trails of Haroldo de Campos can be detected. Criticism is yet another form of interpretation and vindicates the restorative function which Bloom (1982: 4) assimilates to the function of the poet himself. The very title The breaking of the vessels claims for the restoration of the first light, the voice of the beginning: "A poem is spark and act, or else we need not read it a second time. Criticism is spark and act, or else we need not read it at all."

There was once a pure language from which each language is but a part, every work another part, and thus each word that is figured gives, in more than one sense, a glimpse of unity, the primeval unity, one, unique and primal — among words which were not yet distinct. It is this singular and immense initial light that the jugs or vessels are unable to contain, and it breaks into pieces; a light irradiates, even if it is broken.

Ah! L'enfant qui vit de ce nom, poète!
(Complainte de la fin des journées)

[Ah! The child who lives on this name, poet!]

Thus does the foetus of the poet complain for the poet, for the mother and for the tearing away at birth, the first glimpse of light which occurs through something which breaks:

Puis, frêle mise au monde! (1979, I: 118)
[Later, fragile mise au monde!]

How to speak in a particular language? How to write in what he calls «une vipère de lettre>, with a twisted, inverted, split tongue (in both senses of this word)? Where does this language start? Where does it end? The expulsion from Eden was also the birth of knowledge, of a naissance, two revelations in a single adverse advent:

Ah! suis-je née, infiniment, pour vivre par ici? (1979, I: 120)
[Ah! was I infinitely born to live around here?]

Once set in motion, departure never stops. Laforgue's ship leads him away from a homeland that is also his; later, the death of his mother (of so many births); his departure from Tarbes, from Paris, from Berlin, from this world for good. The language/letter division of his exiles, from «cet
just as Lautreamont who turned Eugène Sue's (1837) character into text, one built on top of the other like a city built on the remains of another city, like a temple is erected which has built-in reminiscences of other cities, and although it may bury old ruins, in it the world finds a new order, new vessels contain the original light as well as the scattered pieces.

3. The temptation of the name

Some time ago, Bonnefis (1987:155), a French critic, in an exercise in strategic combinations, recognized the poet's name, by anagrammatically reading “Laforgue” in some lines of Hamlet or the consequences of filial piety, a text that is particularly well-suited for transitive identifications of this nature: «un laboratoire d'aquafortiste irrémédiablement rongé de sales oisivetés. Un fumier de livres, un petit orgue” [the laboratory of an aquafortiste, irrevocably gnawing at dirty leisure. A bookish compost, a little organ, (an orgue)]. There is one syllable too many, but it does not count. Concerning Laforgue, any play on words seems legitimate. The poet himself plays with the letters of the alphabet as he plays with the exiled language in exile becomes fate, even before it becomes an obsession or a duty...

Does Brodsky call language a sword because of the English word word? These are fragments of a greater Complaint, which appear in the Complainte du pauvre chevalier errant (1979, 1:118-120) and perhaps, just as Lautréamont who turned Eugène Sue's (1837) character into The other, Laforgue (1979) likewise slips a Quixote in his Juif errant, or perhaps the other way round, he slips the exile of a Jew into Don Quixote. The translation remains halfway between wandering and errant, between the one novel and the other, a nomadic name. Neither poet says whether the preference is to a narrator, to Cervantes or to Eugène Sue. It is just a guess, in the same way, I guess, as Lautréamont's name is related to the name of a city, which is ours and also his: Montevideo.

Every reading embarks upon an adventure and however linear the itinerary may appear to the eye, each reader has a hermeneutics which is his own, private, particular, anagrammatic and idiomatic; a lector selector of scattered fragments, which are more or less clear, more or less disguised, which he restitutes: he builds one text with the help of another text, one built on top of the other like a city built on the remains of another city, like a temple is erected which has built-in reminiscences of other times, and although it may bury old ruins, in it the world finds a new order, new vessels contain the original light as well as the scattered pieces.

at the foot of the letter L, the name of the letter which is name and pronoun of God, and a feminine pronoun at that, the name of his mother (Lacóley), his sister, as he says in his letter (1979, V:154), the letter which is emblematic of all other letters, livres, lectures et lecteurs, of reading and readers. Finally, a divine monogram, literary and familiar, of his proper name, lengua and letra, le-a le-e, as he would call his wife, Leah Lee or, in Spanish “transcription”, lea lee (meaning ‘read reads’).

Therefore, I sometimes read Laforgue's initials in Borges' name, an "abbreviated, capital, onomasticrhyme" of which Borges would not have
disapproved of. Raúl Antelo (1992) recalled that for Borges, “the Thirty Three Orientales”, the Uruguayan national heroes, were in fact only two: Lautréamont and Laforgue and this is our point.

The precarious semantics of proper names makes them particularly susceptible to all kinds of ciphered literality. Like our fictional fellow countryman, Ireneo Funes, Borges applies the particularity of those names and of other names, to particular designs, because proper names and numbers (French *nombres*) particularise but rarely define. Each reader adopts Laforgue or Borges in his own way, adapts the poet to his or their language. (I acknowledge the ambiguity of the possessive.) In translating *Cohelet* as ‘He knows’, de Campos (1986:6) tries to “hebrewise” his language. Some days ago, in a lucid review which appeared in France about the French translation of Borges’ (1985) *Los conjurados* and his *Atlas*, Quignard (1988) ended by remarking, with the greatest naturality, that “Jorge Luis Borges is one of our best writers of the Second Empire”. The appropriation is perhaps exaggerated, a détournement majeur or a détournement de majeur, investing the author with an alien identity, purposefully ignoring the place of his birth, a mystification which Borges himself fostered, fighting until the end of his life against the inevitability of a fact he would not accept as it was. However difficult it is to escape the fate of birth, death responds perhaps to a freer or more conscious decision: “Cuando quiere se mata. Después el hombre de su vida, lo es también de su muerte.” [When he wants he kills himself. Master of his life, man is also master of his death.] This quote from Lugones in *Utopia de un hombre que está cansado* (1979:501) leads us to thinking that Borges chose a Swiss death, a less tragic or less comic option than *Suisseide*, Jean Tinguely’s self-chosen death, and which this Swiss-born author invited in his *Homage to New York*, but which surely did not happen in reality.

4. Langues-lettres compared

From the moment a writer or reader knows two languages, he can no longer ignore them, and he behaves like a translator of sorts, comprehending both languages. Through his intellectual gesture he re-unites the scattered fragments of language and, in bringing them together, he makes sense of two senses which happen at the same time — a timeless moment, similar to the secret miracle of a purely internal event. A double *langue*, a *langue* forked in language of departure and a language of arrival, the biunivocal correspondence of translation, results in a simultaneity which suspends the consecutive succession of the sign. Two voices are heard at once, as one, annulling the (not just Proustian) instant; the temporality of discourse neither stops nor passes, therefore translation also suggests eternity.

Benjamin, de Campos, and other poets and philosophers have elevated translation to an angelic mediation, mystical re-creation or the messianic transmission. However, when Brice Parain (1954), based on a linguistic premise, reminds us that “one cannot say two words at a time”, he fails to realize that the poetic vocation goes beyond these limitations. Instead, I would venture that it is difficult to not say two words at a time, because *bivocity* is a condition of language; it is a surprising phenomenon only because it is usually forgotten.

The poet repairs the semantic gap, he stops to observe it, he closes it. Against the linguistic and/or logical argument of a compulsive and necessary linearity, the poet shows here his deepest nostalgia; instead of proceeding, it turns back, recovering the sense of the verse, which is in fact an inverse sense. The translator does not give up, he sees and he does not see: one language reflected in the other, palimpsestous writings, filigree readings. He sees double, which means seeing and not seeing, it is the double bind, the double blind which does not make him blind; but the poet does not stop to ponder the enigma of this ironic di-vision to a considerable extent, because this is the task of the translator: *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*. Benjamin’s title could be read as an enigma: *Aufgabe* is not just ‘task’, in German it also means ‘to give up’, *(aufgeben* is ‘to give up’)* and this double purpose, this task which is also to give up, takes place in two opposed actions which are said and realized at once, in unison. Without needing to take up problems of translation, language is itself a kind of bi-language, like the double-think Orwell (1961) described in 1984; “to know and not to know” is his example of this, as if the mystery of the word was its own explanation, and “the best way of explaining it is to do it”.

Laforgue, a translator of Walt Whitman, a French reader in the German court, a reader of readers, a critic of the impressionists and of other poets, does not settle for being an individual (in the etymological sense), a condition that does not agree with him: “An indivisible being. Well! Am I not one, really?” Laforgue wonders. “No great writer is without an identity crisis”. MacAdam (1987: V) quotes Hartman in the introduction of his book on comparative literature, dedicated to Rodríguez Monegal: “The book is the product of a personal obsession. I had to discuss Latin American and Anglo American writing at the same time”. To attempt this
is an academic challenge, different but no less challenging than the challenging text I read, printed in many colours, on T-shirts, bags, and badges worn by New York “Hispanos”: “I’m proud of being bilingual” and even if this Hispanic pride is biased with nationalistic resentments, the slogan does not contradict Pound’s (1918) remark when he says in *Pavannes and divagations*, that every culture is at least bilingual. Pound’s adhesion to Laforgue is shown in this text and in many other instances. If an imaginary dialogue is inherent in every discourse, and is manifested in the impossibility of not quoting in each discourse other discourses, if discursive polyphony is the necessary repercussion of several voices in each voice with each utterance, then the double language or the parted language of/in which Laforgue speaks, would be included in the general rules of discourse and would require no special explanations.

Curiously enough, when Laforgue admits that he commands his language in a “more minute” fashion, he also states he does so in a “more clownesque” fashion (Letter to his sister Marie, May 14, 1883). In the same letter he tells her he has decided to «faire de l’original à tout prix [to do the original at all costs]. The more accurate the more parodic; his saying “I repeat”, is the same as saying paradoxically “I lie”. Repetition is “saved”; it remains safe or it does not remain.

Grojnowski (1988a) dedicated an excellent chapter to Laforgue’s originality, *Le démon de l’originalité*, and in the same year he also wrote a whole book on this subject. *Jules Laforgue et l’originalité* (1988b). This French critic underscores that it is the pre-Freudian notion of the Unconscious (his “Inner Africa”), through which he searches for originality in some form of *dis-culture*, Hauser’s (1986:66) disarticulated model — which Laforgue mentions several times — or the model of a child, either someone who no longer recognizes the norms, or someone who has no knowledge of them yet. It is an inner originality, but one which comes from the outside («il articule des propos venus d’ailleurs» [he articulates phrases which come from elsewhere] [1979, III: 199]) or from pre-existing models («o gerbes d’un passé, pays soi-disant natal» [oh, offerings from a past so-called homeland] [1979, III: 207], etc.) yet nowhere does Daniel Grojnowski seem to take into account that this strange, exterior, interior, anterior originality could well be an *originality*, because Laforgue was born in another land, this one, and this acknowledgment does not settle or reduce his originality, but traces back to its beginning.

Parody controverts everything and, as Laforgue’s (1979) narrator Pan says, “all is in All”. Genres, titles, sayings, are observed but their norms are not observed. The Imitation he dedicates to Our-Lady-the-Moon is no real *Imitation*: Laforgue writes in one language to be understood in another and between one fragment and the next, he outlines the principles of an art that has no end (*ars longa*) nor ends. Every narrative plays on interidiomatic homonymy, the interaction between French and English:

O femme, femme! toi qui fais l’humanité monomane! Je t’aime, je t’aime. Mais qu’est ce mot: Je t’aime? D’où vient-il et que sonne-t-il avec ces deux syllabes quelconques et si neutres? Pour moi, voici ce que je m’ai trouvé. Aime ne me dit quelque chose que lorsque j’associe à ce son, et par une inspiration non fantaisiste, le son du mot britannique *aim* qui veut dire *but*. Ah! *but*, oui! *Je t’aimes* signifierait ainsi: *Je tend vers toi, tu es mon but*. (1979, III: 185).

[Oh woman, woman, who made humanity monomaniac! I love you. But what is this word: I love you? Where does it come from and what is the sound with these any two syllables, and such neuter ones? For me, this is what I have found. “Aime” says nothing to me except when I associate to this sound, and by a non fantasist inspiration, the sound of the British word “aim”, which means “but”. Ah! “but”, yes! “I love you” would thus mean: I tend towards you. You are my aim!]

In the beginning the narrator said that “Immortal and young, Pan has never loved as he and I understand love”. By transidiomatic subterfuges both of them love and understand in an ambiguous manner: “We love more deeply than we know” could be the motto of this god, the «double son of Hermes», indicative of the ambiguities of poetic language. “Puns of language connect with puns of identity” Fillman (1987:36) states apropos *The importance of being Earnest* and, when dealing with Laforgue and Pan, puns should not surprise us.

Also in verse other instances of homonymy, both inter- and intra-idiomatic, occur:

En deuil d’un Moi-le-Magnifique
Laçant de front les cents-pur-sang
De ses vingt ans tout hennissant,
Je vague, à jamais inoccent.
(“A Paul Bourget”. First poem of *Complaintes*)

From an ambiguous and bilingual reading like the one encouraged by Pan and the poet, the *cents pur-sang* of the text could both refer to one hundred horses or one hundred percent, depending on whether the signifier of “pur” is understood as the signified of the French adjective pur or of the French preposition pour, thus allowing a complex interpretation that the interlingual homophones discontinuously recall. To give an
example from another author: the title of Ernst’s *La femme 100 têtes* is explained in the translation [The hundred headless woman], but the contradiction is preserved (by duplication) it vaguely refers to some “non-country” which this poetical license makes possible. Laforgue, following Lugones, invokes the barren or exuberantly fertile goddess:

Madonna et Miss
Diane-Artemis

Here, there is a subterranean connivance between languages. Although “the patroness of hunting”, as Mallarmé (1945) says, is indistinctly “the Greek Artemis or the Latin Diana” it must be observed that a virgin is not the same on the edge of both languages. Translation creates a synonymy of sorts between languages, which seems less legitimate than it does within the same language. The different signifiers appear all the more different; the related signified becomes all the more surprising; while the unity of the second verse, beyond the possibility of a reciprocal translation, hints in few words at the “natural” alliance that could be arrived at: a harmony previous to the break-up and diaspora of languages.

Durrell (1986:18) remarks that T.S. Eliot, an admirer of Laforgue, repeatedly said that his texts were untranslatable.\(^6^2\) It is an arguable impossibility. On the one hand, Laforgue’s texts are as untranslatable as many other poetic texts, which are translated in spite of all obstacles; on the other, a different segmentation could lead us to understand the notion of “intranslation” as a blind, in-depth translation.

Translation is a *mot-de-passe*, a pass-word which makes the word pass beyond frontiers, a sort of clandestine movement concealed in verbal complicity. Laforgue embarks on a displacement towards the origin, towards the sea, towards the mother, looking for their «je ne sais quoi qui n’a de nom dans aucune langue» *Moralités légendaires*: «Le miracle des roses» (1979, II:80) [I do not know what, which has no name in any language] in a “language of truth”, in a truly poetic language, overcoming along the way idiomatic faults and shortcomings. Hebrew, in Hebrew, is both the name of a language and the name of a people, and it was the name of the one who came ‘from the other side’ (Abram). This man, Abraham, was himself the origin of a people and the very root of his name names a verb meaning, precisely, ‘to pass from one place to the other’.\(^6^3\)

Although traditional rhetoric used to enumerate, classify and define the different species of irony, it did not describe them as corresponding to a figure which may be characterised by duplicity, one does not know whether it plays double or fraction, whether it multiplies or divides:

Paronomasia, antanaclasis, diaphora, dilogy, syllepsis are all comprehension, precisely what syllepsis means in Greek: they are homonymic\(^6^4\) and polysemic phenomena underestimated by linguists like Saussure (1916:126–127),\(^6^5\) rhetoricians such as Fontanier (1968)\(^6^6\) and laymen who did not notice that, between those two semantic poles, signs oscillate revealing all their potential meanings.

Allons, dernier des poètes,
Toujours enfermé tu te rendras malade! (1979, II:154)

[Come on, last poet,
Always locked in, you will become ill!]

Ill and silent: *enfermo* (in Spanish) and *enfermé* (in French). Confinement is an unpleasant condition con-figurated between two languages, or in a double-edged language: *Vipère de lettre* is written where illness and knowledge start together. When Laforgue (1979, II:154) says «Allons, dernier des poètes/Toujours enfermé tu te rendras malade!» he acknowledges the existence of poetic *intranslation*, the inner translation of the poem, its inward (re)turn where the verse winds upon itself.

*Intranslation* is not found only in Laforgue\(^6^7\) but the figure which, from here, from this language, we notice as a breaking in a thousand pieces: «Il faut tout casser...» from “Simple agonie”, *Derniers Vers* (1979, I:165). Laforgue tries to pass for a French poet, but “to pass” is more than “simulation”, it is in fact to “translate”.\(^6^8\) For this reason, in this case, translation should not be understood as a false discourse but as the discourse through which poetry let two languages pass.
Anaphoric imagination in cinema: an approach to Fellini's Intervista

When considering the questions which contemporary theory of cinema deals with, it is perhaps useful to attempt, once more, a theoretical approach to the anaphoric imagination, because the duality which this specifically verbal figure entails coincides in the point of departure of quite a number of the theoretical issues concerning cinema in general as well as those dealing with procedures which allow for several exchanges between theory of language and theory of cinema in particular.

In recent years, it has repeatedly been argued that the term “theory” is significantly syllogistic. An etymological revision has tried to prevent its reduction to the speculative, abstract reflection, with which it is usually exclusively associated. Today this semantic reaction has partly regained the spectacular vision which the notion of “theory” had in the beginning. This is not limited to recovering a terminology. It is perhaps also instructive to point out that theory itself is also in the process of giving up these doctrine reductions, because theorists no longer accept the “division of roles” but defend the idea of marching in a single direction. If theory claims for itself several forms of vision, it would come as no surprise that literature and cinema do not resist the attraction of an ever-prevailing theory. A few years ago a manifold cinematographic novel by Puig (1976), interposed throughout quotations from Freud and Marcuse, among other distinguished theorists, with all the disciplinary rigor that conventional academic research requires, but which are not germane to the novelistic genre.

In this case, and in order to gain access to this possible double vision, I would like to propose a sequence of L'Intervista, a film by Federico Fellini, the end of which has recently been the object of several theoretical commentaries by Chion (1988). Here we will not only attribute to Fellini the properties of an intellectual imagination, the games of the double vision which in English is equivocally called the mind's eye, the homophonous synthesis which provides this procedure with a noun (its name) and a pronoun. It is already widely acknowledged that Fellini repeatedly treats the cinematographic universe as a common place (a commonplace), and the topic of cinema as its topos par excellence.

This is why it is perhaps unnecessary to observe that this film is not set in Rome but in Cinecittà; that it not only starts in this place endowed with a dubious reality, but also with a scene in which the film-maker tells his own dream. In doing so, he becomes the director-narrator-character-director-actor-spectator of his own films, multiplied by other actors who simultaneously represent him in different periods of his life. Some time ago, in his paper on The nightmare, Borges (1980b:38) said that “dreams are aesthetic works, maybe the oldest expression of aesthetics”. They take an oddly dramatic shape, because we are, as Addison said, “the theatre, the spectator, the actors, and the fable”. Fellini introduces himself as being interviewed (or “half-viewed”) by telling a dream when he is about to start filming America, the novel by Kafka (1962). In his latest book, Paz (1987) said that the true theme of poetry is poetry itself; in the same way it could be said that the theme of Fellini's cinema — never secret, almost always explicit — is cinema itself, at once poetry and theory, vision and revision.

So there are several instances through which the cinematographic subject introduces us into this area where theory and practice intersect, where the cinematographic product, the aesthetic event, bears the traces of a theory which is less and less immaterial to cinematic practice. Whereas in the past age of severity theoreticians were extremely careful in distinguishing, analysing, recording and systematising every aspect of their subject, they now seem tempted by an opposite force. This allows for the
possibility that cinema as a “total social fact” — as defined by Metz (1984:62) — be, not so much the grandiose and grandiloquent pretensions of the Gesamtkunstwerk, as one of the causes of this “all-embracing”
(re)turn which without setting aside the differences of a division, fosters a double vision.

Just as Folly (Erasmus 1993) announces in front of the great assembly of all the nations its wish to sing its own praise — like Don Quixote who, in the second part of the Quixote (Cervantes 1911) reads and comments on the adventures of his own character — and just as in Foolish wives (Erich von Stroheim’s film), Mrs. Hughes reads a book called Foolish wives, so does Fellini intervene (in) L’Intervista, he steps into action to explore the very “frontiers of the story” that is, those foggy areas between fiction and facts, fiction and other fictions. Fellini is one of those men “brave enough to travel to the limits of discourse”, and it is precisely on those limits that the anaphors approach the paradoxical, albeit without merging with each other. For many years, from Apollonius Dyscolus to Karl Bühler, from the 1930s to our days, scholars have underscored that the anaphora forms a separate linguistic entity, a hybrid species halfway between one verbal space and another one which is not called so, between different times which advance by returning, exposed in the textual crossroads where saying and showing are no longer opposed.

It is well-known that, in recent years, the analysis of the reservoir of figures of enunciation has become a recurrent theme in the theoretical writings on cinema. However, I will not try here to lead these thoughts towards a deictic conception of the elements of cinematographic enunciation, which — as Metz (1989:15–34) says — are resistant to being adapted to filmic reality. Therefore (before discussing the possibilities of the cinematographic staging of the anaphora) it is necessary to define and defend its specific verbal character. Of course all figures have a double reference which is their primary rhetorical feature, which presents in the anaphora a duality of a different kind, one which falls into two different categories; as its two functions set the anaphora apart from ordinary rhetorical phenomena. While in rhetoric anaphora is defined on the one hand as “the repetition of a word or expression for rhetorical or poetic effect”, this is not the whole story:

Rome, l’unique objet de mon ressentiment
Rome, à qui vient ton bras d’immoler mon amant

This is the well-known example with which Mounin (1974) illustrates the rhetorical entry anaphora in his Dictionary of linguistics. It seems odd that the repetition of “Rome” seems to be the obsession of rhetoricians and theoreticians of all times alike. In the introduction to his Les figures du discours and even though the anaphora must be one of the figures which figures less, Genette starts by analysing the coincidence — itself also a syllepsis — of its two meanings, one literal and the other figurative: “Rome is no longer in Rome”. Recently, Aumont (1989:199–203) also expressed his deep disappointment over a time in which no dominant theoretical paradigm exists, thus: “Suddenly Rome is no longer in Rome.” Maybe this is why Rome can no longer be found in Rome, but in Cinecittà.

It is also known that, in addition to this rhetorical frequency as a rhetorical figure, the anaphora serves an important linguistic purpose which appears assimilated to deictic and personal pronouns, insofar as it refers to a part of discourse which has been mentioned before. Through this strictly pronominal function, repetition is avoided: instead of repetition, there is substitution. However, as a rhetorical figure the anaphora can also be assimilated to repetition. On the one hand, it avoids repetition and, on the other, it approaches it. Etymologically, anaphora is that which refers or carries back (anapherein), thus indicating a movement which is expressed in both uses of this figure.

Even though it plays different verbal roles (linguistic and rhetoric), and even if these roles are mutually opposed, the anaphora presents in both cases several common aspects: both types of anaphora refer to a previous mention of the word, expression or idea, indicating it either by pointing at it or by giving it special emphasis. In either case the transphrasic relation reinforces the syntactic and semantic cohesion of the discourse, which, through differences or repetitions, flows in an easier, steady stream.

But it is still necessary to mention yet another duality. If we simplify somewhat Jakobson’s ideas, both as they were formulated in the beginning, and as in the form in which they were later fine-tuned by him, as did Genette (1972), we may accept that in the art of painting, each artistic school tends to foreground either metonymy or metaphor. The anaphoric transformation participates because of its duplicity, in both figures: from the rhetoric point of view, the anaphora shows the relation of similarity, insofar as every repetition is a sort of similarity; while from the point of view of linguistics, repetition is not only made more interesting through anaphora, but it is one of the most effective syntactical structures to ensure continuity in the contiguity of discourse. By interweaving different planes, the anaphora shows yet another shift: resemblance — which is always referential — applied to a discursive operation (I insist here on the distinction advanced by Metz (1984) in his Le signifiant imaginaire).
When dealing with anaphors there is one ever-present risk, namely what Metz (1984:224) calls "the permanent danger that the discursive notions (syntagm and paradigm) and the referential notions (metaphor and metonymy)". This confusion is particularly bound to happen in the study of cinema, where, according to Metz (1984:269), "there is no code level exactly equivalent to what language is in spoken or written chains, the distinction between the linguistic and the rhetoric aspects fades".

It has been stated above that the anaphora is a specifically verbal process, that is to say its functions are inherent to the nature of the word, so that the anaphoric seems to be language-bound. However, historically and functionally, the anaphora is linked to deixis, which is not an exclusively verbal phenomenon, even though it does occur in all discursive gesticulations because it transpires in a given situation (I say "given" so as not to oppose "real" to "verbal"). Apollonius Dyscolus distinguished between deictic pronouns, which refer to objects and anaphoric pronouns, which refer to segments of discourse. It is necessary for someone to be within a Zeigfeld, a deictic field (Bühler 1950), and within its limits, hic et nunc where the pointing finger or the extended arm (another index), make a specifically human — or divine — indicative gesture divine (I wish to emphasize the ambiguous similarity of the gesture-maker). This gesture is the point of departure of language, at least according to the myth of the deictic origin of language, the point of departure of indicative and representative language, although theoretically viewed both aspects of language have been distributed among different fields. This is not the only time that indication and creation are point-signalised and intermingled. Hic et nunc, they are specified within a spatial-temporal determined situation in which its now/here may also become a deliberately vague nowhere, no/where, because in a cinematographic enunciation, they are mere indexes of an imagic reality, whose images, as Metz (1968:23) remarks, "are still perceived as images".

Bühler (1950:197) advanced that, neither in a painting nor in the composition of a musical piece, were there authentic signs comparable to anaphoric demonstrative pronouns, and the formal functions of which are exclusively or mainly being indicators of sight and hearing. Other authors agree in saying that these are not the only kind of embrayeurs which remain absent, because non-verbal enunciation is not marked anaphorically. Indeed, in cinematographic enunciation there is no use of embrayeurs because there is no need to "actualize" a discourse which is already actualized. There is no need to "situate" a discourse in a given situation when that very discourse has given place to the situation. In Metz's (1989) words, "we work within systems that are languages without language" (in French, langages sans langue), and others after him have repeated his argument. On the one hand discourse in cinema remains situationally unmarked because there is no actualization; on the other, any object (re)presented already implies an embrayage procedure: from the moment it appears it is marked, and for this reason the mark itself remains concealed as such. Without explicitly saying it, the cinematographic image of a gun is more than the representation of a gun, its indication: "This is a gun"; yet this is made clear by showing the object itself. More than the representation of a pipe, it is the deictic explicitation by the word inscribed on it what triggers the well-known correspondence Magritte-Foucault (1973) about the quality of images which run from Wittgenstein (1969:51) to Barthes (1981a:156) and is still open today. For Metz, the image is always actualized, and so he does not use any specific embrayeurs, literary narration, any discourse, tends not to use the primary pragmatic frame: "I say that... I say that I imagine, remember, love, suffer...", giving place to the figure of interiority which through the verba dicendi underscores the verbal status of fiction and of Benveniste's (1971:184) "operation of thought", which all discourse presupposes.

Fellini is interviewed by Japanese reporters, but the film shows Fellini's own L'Intervista. "I do not want to make a portrait of the artist, but to be in the midst of this deafening and jumbled atmosphere, which is my life and works" says Fellini to Alain Finkielkraut (1987:227) in an interview about L'Intervista. Subsequently, he shows this atmosphere, which is his habitual environment. No matter how fiction shifts, Fellini does not move from that here, where he remains: "I always take my here with me", a statement which Heidegger understood as the basis of his Wahrnehmung. Deixis can dispense with the word, but to show something the something needs to be present here and now.

Even though every film seems to deny the director's voice — after all it is an interview — Fellini indulges in ventriloquism, rare exercise: he tells his dreams, his projects, he remembers, he gives verbal instructions accompanied by gestures; the instructions do not anticipate the action, because here it is not possible to separate the word from the action. His words have a performative force which obliterates their referential renvoi so that the sign becomes a signal, it points and acts: it is a saying-doing, a showing-doing, a saying-showing. Like the anaphor, it does everything at the same time. Beyond the rigidity of the theories of non-coincidence, Fellini's voice upheals the pleonasm of a paradoxical Auffehnung, exaggerating the coincidences between voice and image: Fellini's voice:
“Look, I want you to make the same gestures, to adjust your jackets, hands in your pockets, smiling, to look at the camera, like this.”

Fellini does not conceal himself as “master of ceremonies” — Metz (1989) evokes Albert Laffay’s title —, and the instructions which are commonly not spoken aloud but imagined, are here exposed, demonstrated: a monster. The sign of the master-film-maker, who sticks out his neck, genio y figura, who shows himself in the open knowing that “the re-created self is a threat to the self”. Giving with his own voice instructions about things and actions, he exercises a paradoxical prerogative: the presence-absence of his always imaginary signifier. In his Remarques pour une phénoménologie du narratif Metz (1968, II:48) referred just to “authorless stories, but stories with a speaking subject”. However, “the impression that someone is speaking is not linked to the empirical existence of a particular narrator, known or knowable, but to the immediate perception, by the consumer of the story, of the verbal nature of the object about to be consumed. Where there is speaking, there must be someone speaking (... parce que ça parle, il faut bien que quelqu’un parle). In Fellini’s film, this impression is transferred to the image. If there are film-makers who believe in reality and others who believe in images, Fellini is one of those who believe in “the reality of the image” and to legitimize it, he diegetizes its attributes. As an extradiegetical participant, he still participates in the diegesis and this participation serves as an intervention between discourse and history. Jost (1980:121–131) said that, unlike natural language, cinematographic discourse does not have any equivalent to deixic words: the marks of this metalanguage are not fixed; as enunciative markers, they often fall upon the enunciation. Thus, if the film manages to show its markers, this is achieved through representation. Contrary to what is believed, the credits are not a form of deixis, but the verbal and visual representation of this deixis: “These are the credits” or “Here comes the credits”. Guns or credits, it is also the same, even when the latter is a case of metadieversivity.

Except for the alternatives of the dialogues and verbal narration, cinema seems to lack any element corresponding to the pronominalization of the image: in cinema the imagical presentation of “things” and persons designates noun and pronoun at once. The performance of the same actor throughout the film reinforces the syntagmatic continuity, a role which in order to avoid redundancy in verbal discourse is discretely played by anaphora. When Metz (1968:68) breathes new life into the FIDO-fido theory applied to the cinematographic image, or when Barthes (1980:165) exhausted himself trying to verify — as he himself called it — “the stubbornness of the referent” (L’entetement du referent) “that his has been”, both speculated about a manifest contingency by permanence, an anchorage of the same reference in the discourse which prose, with its characteristic abhorrence of repetition, does not easily tolerate.

Suffice it to remember the literary parody of this continuity as “lack of anaphorization” in Puig’s (1976:128–133) novel El beso de la mujer araña where the narrator repeatedly refers to “the boy... the boy... the boy... a father ... a father... a father...”. A fanatical movie-lover, Molina, the character-narrator of the novel, explains the films to his cell-mate, Valentin. He remembers or invents the stories, but in order to preserve the specific “cinematographic language” he does not allow himself a single pronoun to identify his characters. Every time he sees them in his imagination, he names them, every time he names them, he uses a noun.

Fellini inverts the terms of this literary caricature and in the same way as the cinematographic image represents the individual person by using an actor to represent it throughout the film, Fellini undercuts this identity by using different actors for different characters who arrive simultaneously, in one Mercedes, at Anita’s “home”. Through this diversity he disarticulates a personal identity that presents as a dramatic anagram of sorts, a broken personality made of different, transliterated personal characters, letters, and languages. In E la nave va... it is not certain whether the ashes of the prima donna, which fly into time, are those of Edmée or those of Medea, the tragic character who, in another film (and by another director) was played and sung by la Callas, a name that, heard in Spanish, means tais toi, which is, in French, a perfect homophone of Tetua, her surname. Thus Callas’ name is turned into a fatal imperative, not just for herself.

In L’Intervista Rubini plays Fellini, or rather Marcello, the journalist from La dolce vita, who arrives as a young journalist at Cinecittà; he plays Rubini, Fellini, Marcello, or even el Duce, because “Anche lui era giornalista” [Even he was a journalist] as the fascist in the train scene says, taking multiple advantage of the indicative ambiguity which the anaphoric use of the pronoun lui suggests. The indicative vagueness of the language as an instrument of communication is highlighted by an anaphoric mise-en-cinéma in which, without the contextual support of words or written mentions, the anaphora loses its functionality and becomes vacuous.

But the point here is not to underscore once again that the anaphora is a specifically verbal figure, but to argue for its possible cinematographic pertinence. If by designation is meant the relation of the sign to the world, the anaphora, in the same way as deixis, combines into one and the same
procedure two distinct designative processes: a deixis which, by crossing
different spaces, produces a centrifugal movement directed outwards,
towards the exterior, towards the variable aspects of the enunciative situ­
ation, and second deixis that, through repetition, crosses different times,
making a backward movement, directed towards what is anterior and
interior, bringing collective memory into play. To highlight this form of
resignation in absentia and to differentiate it from the demonstratio ad
oculos et ad aures, Bühler (1950:200) speaks of “deixis am phantasma”. 84

The sequence of L’Intervista obeys to all the rules of anaphora: it
repeats a fragment of an earlier film but no matter how faithful the copy, it
repeats with a difference, the repetition somehow redefines the statutes of
fiction. It is a documentary version of a fact (a film), of a cinematographic
event which has already taken place and which for this reason considerably
increases the “impression of reality”. Yet more than its double, it is some­
thing different; it impresses the spectator, who not only appreciates the
appropriation of the object, but also the appropriation by the subject,
while also appreciating that the twofold appreciation/appropriation has
already taken place. 85 This procedure involves a common, known, shared
reference, a quotation, une citation in French; in Spanish, however: una
Cita has a more intricate meaning, because its felicitous syllepsis creates,
within the same word, more than one encounter: first, the encounter with
a previous film, a fragment in the memory, and a rendez-vous, in the case
of a romantic encounter with a sentimental allusion which in the English
language excludes the appointment, even though it regains its capacity to
indicate (“pointing out” is the first meaning of indication in the Oxford
English Dictionary and denominate — ‘the action of denominating’ — is
the eighth).

Overcoming language barriers, in L’Intervista la Cita — both as tryst
and as indication — has a nonverbal encounter; Marcello or Mastroianni
or Mandrake or a simple Man - my exercise in monogrammatic polysem­
plays with K, and encounters Karl, Kafka, Kane, King — who appear by
magic — the magic of a cinema which of the etymologically means
movement, referring to its moving images a movement that reveals repeti­
tion 86 and where the anaphora, which we are concerned with here, is
recapitulated:

Turning to the others with the pleasant tone of voice of a stand-up
comedian:
Mastroianni: and now, my dear friends, with your permission I would like
to perform a little trick to honour our beloved hostess. ... Oh, Mandrake’s
wand, my order is immediate: bring back the beautiful times of old!

He gives a thrust, and at that instant a cloud of smoke raises; in it takes
shape a white sheet that unfolds like a screen.
Mastroianni (languid and stylized, slurring to a whisper):
– Music…

In the silence that befalls the room the charming notes of La dolce vita

The magician’s gesture points at a sheet. It is the gesture that gives
place to it: a space and an origin. The screen works as a cordon (Block de
Behar 1984) that is to say, it shows ambivalently: it shows and hides at
the same time, the shadows turn fiction into memory. The faint sounds of half­
heard music repeat a strangely familiar image. In the same way that
anaphors repeat without repeating, the music repeats with a difference,
thus bringing together in this way more than one coincidence, the chords
of a fairly complex Stimmung which, in joining, diversifies. The anaphora
exceeds the limits of the diegesis of one film and runs over into other
diegesis, a mise-en-cinéma where the image is not lost in an abyss of
reflection even when, unfolding, is both clear and confused at once, a
contradiction that is the beginning of all identification. Significantly, some
years ago, Metz (1968:224) referred to Fellini’s Il 
87 as a “double mise-en
abyme, because it is not only a film about a film-maker but also a film
about a film-maker who reflects on his own film.

Slipped into a narrative that does not break loose, the citation crosses
different diegeses, transcontextualising itself in a Cita which underpins the
fictional universe, the magic of cinema, the magic of Marcello-Mandrake
— magus-ex-machina — who diegetises at the same time the pointing
gesture and the “actualization” of the past, narratively justifying the
procedures of the actualization of deixis in discourse, as well as the past,
which is a present from the past. Through L’Intervista points outside itself,
outside its own story, 87 but this outward movement is accompanied by its
opposite, an inward movement directed to a previous text — when it can
be identified — and to the other side, within the same time but in a
different space, where a nostalgic Cita with Anita takes place, where the
Chinese shadows meet again on the white sheet, two phantoms which
become “cinematographic shadows” by being pointed at, by their memory
of earlier movies, magically shared, as the script says:

Both index and pointing finger, extended arm, cane and wand, the
anaphoric gesture shows and shows itself in silence. The anaphora keeps a
delicate balance, tilting between deixis and language, repetition and
silence. The image is not the same, even though it repeats the sequence,
because it repeats it without words: it shows it and no more. Ostentation

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and repetition, indication and anaphora: "this" (if it is there) and "this" (if it is no longer there), both figures are the same, but in the image their similarity is exhibited in silence.

Without words, as if movies had once been silent, la _cita_ takes place in secret; if it is a _date_, it is perhaps a lovers' tryst in which time is ambivalent, filled with anticipation, and in which Anita's anaphoric (or cataphoric) dress, her generous body wrapped in towels, remind us (or announce to us) that she is coming out of a ritual bath, celebrating a pagan-Christian conversion where the goddess emerges from the water and Marcello's baptism is celebrated by repeatedly reciting the formula of _the quest_ — the question — _of identity_: "But, who are you? Are you a goddess, the mother, the deep blue sea, the home, are you Eve, the first woman to appear on earth?"

Like another famous "dumb-show", _L'Intervista_ also shows the past in silence: for the Prince it is "The real thing" and reality can do without language. In this case, the _cita_ is a quotation, the very image of repetition and difference: _déstaj_(mais)-vu. It is the same sequence and a different one, but like the other, pointing gesture, it can dispense with words and is enacted in silence. In more ways than one, the encounter partakes of the ambiguities of the anaphora. The _cita_ discovers the wonder of this encounter despite the differences: a journalist and an actress, a man and a woman, a man and a goddess, a film in tandem with another film, a memory and a record.

Memories remain _par coeur_, by heart, passions and a recollection: a _re-cord_. If the spectator recognises the quotation, the absences of colour takes on the function of quotation marks; if the spectator has never seen the sequence of the night-club and the one of the fountain before, he makes do without the cinematographic referent, he obliterates the diegesis and he notices in the citation, the _cita_, only one encounter: the pointing gesture which does not refer to _La dolce vita_ but to a ball or the Fountain of Trevi. He lingers in the contemplation of a fountain which bears in itself a potential return to the origin or to a remote youth. Even when it is recorded, the memory only _makes things appear_, they are "apparitions" in which the diegetic contrast is exacerbated. The broken voices, an aged, sleepy Marcello, a plump Anita, Fellini who is a bit older, a bit heavier, _più pesante_: "In other films I used to fly to liberate myself", but now he says that he finds it difficult to "rise from the ground", to free himself from his own history, and there he stays, _intervening_ with all the artistic means at his disposal: an actor, but still the director, a character turned spectator, Anita, Marcello, Maurizio, Rubini or the Japanese. Like Marcel, who is going to write,89 Fellini is going to film _America_, or, by doing _L'Intervista_, to return to _La dolce vita_. Hoping to reach Utopia, he leaps backward as if to gather impulse, and in doing so he discovers the fountain — his origin, his youth — in the memory of cinema. Could not Fellini's originality consist in showing repetition as original, not as an extravagance but as a return to cinema? Is _retourner_ perhaps to film again?

The Cinecittà represented by Fellini is like Borges' _aleph_, the point of the universe where, like in the mind of the reader or the spectator, all times and spaces coincide. _America_ was postponed several times, Kafka left it unfinished, Fellini did not even start, a continent to be made. Neither linear time nor the limits of space. Amongst references to times long gone, to far-away continents, several interviews take place: conducted by the Japanese reporters, Rubini, Fellini and by others hinted at or half-viewed.

Had Plato foresaw this universe of Fellini's, he probably would not have considered his imagination all that outrageous,88 because in order not to tread on _terra incognita_, Fellini always sticks to the art of film-making. Therefore, his superposed metaephes — director, narrator, actor, character, spectator — are rather familiar to the spectators facing this paradoxical form or realism: by accumulating fictions, Fellini finds reality. Like Quixote, whose faith in literature is unshakeable, Fellini blindly trusts the reality of cinema, his own movies. Because his is an honest craft, he has no reason to hide it: every film is a fictional film, and that fiction, if repeated enough times, is a truth in full view.

Apropos of Mallarmé and the tendency of verbal expressions to expand their meaning, Barthes (1972) foresaw that the writer's brother and keeper would be not so much the rhetorician as the linguist, who is not concerned with the figures of speech but with the fundamental categories of language. Perhaps the anaphora is the key to that borderland where both meet.

By displaying a double movement the anaphora establishes a borderline relationship, it places itself halfway, oscillating between discourse and history, between indication and representation, between signal and sign, between gesture and word, between silence and repetition, between the linguistic and the extralinguistic fact. The anaphora crisscrosses different spaces and times, between an already finished film and the next one, a return which is an un-certain way of continuing between metaphorical and metonymic imagination, between perception and memory, both individual and shared, between interviews, between _citas_. Between different media, a verbal medium or a visual medium, half-word half-gesture. Surrounded by oppositions, continuously dealing with the problematic relationships...
between reality and fiction, between one vision and other visions, the anaphoric imagination gives rise to a new realism, one that becomes more and more suspicious, an inter-realism where it is not surprising that the director wishes or chooses to stay in the middle, among movie actors and among journalists, who by conducting an interview or intervista, fulfill their intermediary role between two languages. In this intersection reason wavers, because this Zwischenwelt is the interval space that remains in suspense, surrounded by the dreams of the cinema, where with mixed success these dreams are told, analysed, or made.

Everybody is there; the film-maker and his crew, moving from the margins towards the center, sharing that place of privilege from where, like "all-seeing" spectators, they can see everything, or at least half-see it, they can be viewed or interviewed. It is true, as Metz says, that cinema embraces the signifier of other arts: painting, music, photography, other films, but all these signifiers remain half-seen: the imaginary signifier shows it and, at the same time, does not show it. In this half-double-vision, reality or fiction remain half-seen, inter-viewed in the moving medium where the researcher — one spectator among all others — tries to come close to this inter-medium of encounters through theory, an affinity that brings them closer and closer.

Symbols as pass-words between spaces and species

...the general answer to the question what is man? is that he is a symbol.
Charles S. Peirce

The very notion of planetary homeostasis critically implies an active process of continuous criss-cross communication: semiosis is, in fact, the instrument which assures the maintenance of the steady state of any living entity, whether in Lilliputian microspace, dealt with by molecular geneticists and virologists; the Gulliver-sized world of our daily existence; or the (as far as I know) unique "Gaia", the biosphere viewed as a Brobdingnagian macrostructure that subsists upon a splendid blue marble.
Thomas A. Sebeok: Communication, language and speech

I would like to begin this essay by recalling the story of two statues which once upon a time were together. Enrique Amorim, a Uruguayan writer, came across them in a junkyard in Buenos Aires, in the backroom of one of those open-air stores which buy and sell discarded objects from demolished houses and villas. They were two identical and beautiful female figures. One of them was given by Amorim as a present to Silvina Ocampo, Adolfo Bioy Casares' wife, who kept it in her house in Buenos Aires, facing a mirror. Amorim kept the other statue for himself, and it can be found today in the garden of the estate "Las Nubes", facing a fountain. Several days ago, we invited Bioy Casares to Salto to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius, a story by Borges (1974a), in which Bioy himself is the protagonist. The commemorative event was held
in the very house where Borges claimed to have written it, in the province of “Salto Oriental”.93

Long ago, Biwy had promised both Borges and Amorim that he would one day visit Salto, and he came for the first time on the occasion of this celebration. However, in addition to this expected encounter, there took place other, surprising symbolic encounters in which theory, imagination and friendship were freely exchanged, in much the same way as the intellectual gratitude and friendship which has brought this group of scholars together to Budapest to celebrate the 70th birthday of Hungarian-born Thomas Sebeok, in honour of his outstanding contribution to the “Doctrine of Signs”.

It is by now almost common usage in modern history and in current literary criticism to speak of Borges, a nickname and third entity which results from the fusion of Borges and Biwy. A superposition of names first coined by Emir Rodriguez Monegàl with reference to the double name-image Gisèle Freund had photographically amalgamated into one picture. The name bears witness to the close association between both writers, which is the product of their intimate literary work together. One of their joint works, Seis problemas para Don Isidro Parodi under the name of Honorio Bustos Domecq (1942) has been the basis of one of Eco’s (1984) witty essays on the subject of abduction. In La abduccion en Uqbar, Eco examines the type of conjectural reasoning which Peirce (1931) called “abduction”, and which, in Borges’s story, begins with a parody of the classical literary detective-story, signed by H. Bustos Domecq. The latter is one of the famous names Borges and Biwy adopted for their joint texts, hiding behind a pseudonym constructed out of their two names and which is a parody of their dualities, biographic and literary. The name was coined by Rodriguez Monegàl (1970:178) a long time ago. This combination of proper names in a third, new figure, is more transparent, yet no less legitimate than the individual pseudonyms behind which both authors attempted to conceal themselves, at least partially. Borges gives their literary partnership a third identity.94

However, bi-nominal pseudonyms are more than a product of the onomastic haplology which theory, criticism and semiotics extol. This third hombre-nombre ("man-name") is a hypothesis on the coincidences between Borges and Biwy, coincidences which are not explicitly formulated in their literary work, but which the reader, who makes his own interpretive choices, must discover or invent for himself, making conjectures which connect both worlds, imaginary and/or real.

In venturing these conjectures, I elaborate here on the instructive points made some years ago by Sebeok (1986a:77–78) when, in his much-quoted essay on Vital signs, he characterized semiotics as a mode of extending mankind’s perception of the world, and depicted its subject matter as “the exchange of any messages whatever and of the systems of signs which underlie them. I now have impressive progress to report: the central preoccupation of semiotics is an illimitable array of concordant illusions; its main mission to mediate between reality and illusion — to reveal the substratal illusion underlying reality and to search for the reality that may, after all, lurk behind that illusion”.

In this essay I shall undertake such a “mission to mediate”, and I shall try to answer the semiotic questions raised above, by addressing some of the “illimitable array of concordant illusions”. This will be done by focusing on the relationship between two masterful narratives of 1940, Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius by Borges (1974a) and La invención de Morel by Biwy Casares (1940). My aim is to read these texts in a symbolic key, and subsequently to propose an interpretative hypothesis which will reveal the convention, the original union and the concordance of these works, their “pass-word” something the term “symbol” would have once shown: the original semantic coincidences that an accumulation of meanings has worn out, through the exhaustion and replenishment of signifying and symbolizing.

“Admittedly, ‘symbol’ is the most abused term of those under consideration here. In consequence, it has either tended to be grotesquely overburdened, or, to the contrary, reduced to more general kinds of behavioural phenomena, or even to absurd nullity”, remarks Sebeok (1976:134).

Whilst strolling through the garden of “Las Nubes”, Biwy Casares explained to me how Borges would frequently propose that they would search for an original, distinctive meaning for a common word. By this was meant the primary meaning of the word, its primary meaning which — through overuse — had fallen into disuse.

Though he was convinced that Borges had read everything, Eco suspected that Borges had not read Peirce; and it is my own suspicion that neither had Biwy. As I did not wish to remove this doubt, I chose not to ask him.

Nevertheless, following the ideas formulated by Umiker-Sebeok and Sebeok (1981:17–52) on Sebeok’s (1979:183–186) French-Swiss connection, I hope to strategically establish, in this and adjacent paragraphs, a kind of “Argentinean-American connection”. Just as Sebeok
(1979:185) speculates that Saussure (1857–1937) could hypothetically have known of Peirce’s existence, when he states that: “It is not all implausible that members of the Peirce family got acquainted with Henri (de Saussure, 1829–1905, Ferdinand’s father) while he was here (Switzerland), but, … there is no evidence to prove this”.

Neither does it seem implausible to me that Borges, who, as Sebeok (1966:92) remarks, had been brought up in an environment «ou la plus haute culture intellectuelle est depuis longtemps une tradition» might have heard of Peirce from his own father, Jorge Guillerme, who was a professor of psychology, an anarchist and an enthusiastic follower of William James’. Indeed, after James’ first name he may have proudly called himself Guillerme (William) just as Peirce, after the philosopher’s surname, had adopted the name of Sanders. The Borgeses’ enthusiasm for the ideas of William James is well known and can be further supported by the fact that Macedonio Fernández, the mysterious anarchist and writer, was not only a close friend of the family (who had, through his philosophical speculations, a strong influence on Borges), but also one of the few persons in Buenos Aires who actually corresponded with William James.

It is perhaps in order to add here that we can be certain that both Borges and Bioy had read Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805–1881). We also know that Walter Benjamin, once acquainted with Blanqui’s writings, soon became a passionate devotee of his thought and ideas.55

It is still unclear to me whether Peirce knew Blanqui, although considering Peirce’s trip to France in the 1870s as “Observer of the Harvard College Observatory” to carry out astronomical research, remaining in Paris for extended periods so as to observe and formulate his theories on the oscillation of the pendulum, meeting and later marrying Madame Juliette Pourtalés, I assume that Peirce could not have failed to have become acquainted with the “Astronomical hypothesis” formulated by Blanqui in Paris during those same years.96

Those were the years of Paris Commune, during which Blanqui was in custody, serving one of his numerous sentences. From his prison he would organize his political conspiracies and insurrections. An indefatigable writer and politician, he was too well-known in Paris during those years as a socialist, conspirator, instigator of insurrections (1870–1878) and founder of secret societies, for Peirce not to have known of his existence, nor of his extraordinary speculations on the strange plurality of the stars and parallel worlds which wander through an infinite or indefinite space, the chemical constitution of the spheres, their composition and distribution according to their material density, the force of gravity, the dimensions of stars and planets. Even from his prison cell,97 Blanqui kept himself well informed on astronomical research, past and present, and could quote the experiments that were carried out and confirm or correct their results. Therefore, it would have been difficult for the outside world to remain unaware of his own work.

Not unlike Peirce, Blanqui assumed the existence of a plurality of different coexistent universes in which the same objects can have, as in Peirce, different parallel existence. An inner reality of Ideas and outer reality, made of Things and Facts, are brought into a cooperative relationship in a symbolical reality, which unites inner and outer reality through a dynamic process, a symbolic activity of representation and mediation. Thus, there is an interior medium, an exterior medium, and, between both, another, third medium. In reference to this, it is instructive to exploit the polysemic of the Spanish word medio (Lat. medius) and establish relations between fractions and units: Dos medios entre dos medios (1990) gives three units or three times one peculiar unit: 2/2×2/2=1, or 1/1×1=1.

Sebeok (1981:2) reminds us that:

...proceeded to identify three Universes as being familiar to us: “The first comprises all mere Ideas, those airy notions to which the mind of the poet, pure mathematician, or another might give local habitation and a name within that mind” (6455). The second Universe is “that of the Brute Actuality of things and facts”. The third Universe is, as already noted, the semiotic one, which comprises everything whose being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different Universes.

Rather than repeating that the style is the man (or as Todorov [1981] claimed, that style was two men), I would say that in this case, the symbol may be viewed as three men. With no intention to replicate, copy, or reject Peirce’s passion for the number three, the most sacred of all triads is, for me as for Peirce (1982:503), the Holy Trinity:

In many respects, this trinity agrees with the Christian trinity; indeed I am not aware that there are any points of disagreement. The interpretant is evidently the Divine Logos or word; and if our former guess that a Reference to an interpretant is Paternity be right, this would be also the Son of God. The ground, being that partaking of which is requisite to any communication with the Symbol, corresponds in its function to the Holy Spirit. I will not, however, carry this speculation any further, as it may be offensive to the prejudices of some who are present.
Nevertheless, even if the constituent terms of the triad are different, the transposition appears to me to be logically sound. Consequently, the association of Borges and Bioy creates a third entity: *Biorges*, which is as much *tiers-arbître* as *tiere-personne.* Borge cannot be identified with Borges or Bioy, nor with the two of them together: it is a *third person* (with a name, a photograph, a profession) who, starting from an informal agreement between friends develops into a powerful symbolic entity which crosses frontiers between spaces and species, kingdoms both real and fictional, which are sanctioned through one and the same nominal statute.

Sebeok (1981:36) points out that Peirce considered crime “particularly suited to the application of Musement”, and following Peirce and Sebeok, I believe that the elements which are common to both pursuits, and the ways to logically describe them — discovering the pass-words which are exchanged — constitute another form of what Sebeok (1981:35) calls “Pure Play ... with no rules except this very law of liberty [Peirce] names Musement, and defines it as a process by which the mind searches for some connection between two of the three Universes of Experience”. As Peirce (1989, 2:502) himself points out in the Lowell Lecture XI which he delivered in 1866: “Tell me a man’s name, his story, and his matter of character, and I know about all there is to know of him.”

By studying narratives written by two different authors, I intend to hypothetically describe some aspects of the “third dimension” which, according to Sebeok (1981), any full-fledged semiotic study requires. Beyond this, it is hoped that my analysis will shed some additional light upon the interferences inherent to this symbolic relationship, a friendship between two writers which continues to unite statues far beyond and behind, in this type of hinterland, neither poor nor sad, but which belongs to a *third world*, *Orbis Tertius*, like the Earth, albeit third only in name and position (Tlön and Uqbar being the first two). Each of us then is but the token of a human being, sliced like a flatfish, to form one; each then ever seek his matching token.

In Plato’s (1991:132), a translator’s footnote points out that:

Symbolon — corresponding to pieces of a knucklebone or other object which contracting parties broke between them, each party keeping one piece to match in order to have proof of the identity of the recorder of the other. The indenture, at common law, originally an irregularly torn parchment, had an equivalent use.

It is surprising that, in order to maintain strict rules on the semantics of philosophical concepts, this Platonian translator/scholar should have thought fit to replace precisely the term *symbol*. The philosophical, philological, linguistic, semiotic and hermeneutic perspectives opened up through symbolic definition are interminable.]

Exactly fifty years ago, Borges (1974a) published a story about the existence of parallel worlds, with strange names which through contact or custom finally penetrate and disintegrate, the “real” world. The threefold title of the story is *Tlön, Uqbar, Orchis Tertius*. As today, this parallel existence of words and worlds has been recorded in full detail in complete bibliographies, manuals, atlases — replicas of reality, copies of it, used to analyse it and in the final analysis causing its destruction.

In the same year, fifty years ago, Bioy Casares (1940) published *La invención de Morel*, a novel in which the eponymous novelist character invents a machine which can produce perfect copies. Exact replicas of these images are shown in the cinema, and these movies fascinate Morel as much as they fascinate Bioy. He draws up a project which, as Morel, the principal character in the novel explains, aims at copying all existent objects. The copies would be so realistic that they would get confused with the objects they were meant to represent, thereby giving “perpetual reality to (his) sentimental fantasy”. The points of correspondence between the objects and their representations are so minute, that one is led to think of a device which does not invent but preserves. Such preservation, as opposed to invention, may then introduce an aesthetics of disappearance, in many senses contradictory, which, having been “invented” by the media, continues to be professed and propagated by/through them. Disappearance through multiplication would be the first contradiction. Furthermore, the aim of mechanical preservation is total preservation, so exact, that for this accuracy it destroys what it preserves. Thus representation loses the more-sided complexity, both dyadic and triadic, which is its nature. By confusing the representation with the object represented, the representation no longer represents — it ceases to be what it is — it has become something else and as such it can be any object or it can simply not be at all.

The preservation attempted in the past through the introduction of writing followed a similar procedure, and although it marked the beginning of history, writing was the first invention to become lost between the gods and the mythology woven around them. While the old legends used to refer, in one and the same breath, to “the sword and the pen”, these recording instruments have now become technical and mechanical, and continue to make our image of reality increasingly complex. In our modern society, where recording is swift and unproblematic, and archives take up all of our time but virtually no space, the dilemma of the dis-
appearance of recorded material causes ever-increasing alarm. Paradoxically, modern technology has become as sophisticated and perfect as it is accident-prone, and susceptible to losing information.

Technical recording has a double efficacy; through mechanization it both preserves and destroys. By a mechanical overproduction of images, with ever increasing fidelity, machines perform better than human perception; thus the real thing becomes redundant, even disposable. As stated by the narrator of La invención de Morel, “the copies survive, incorruptible” (1940:113). The same thing occurs in Tlön where “even in memories, a fictitious past occupied the place of another, so that we can know nothing for sure — not even if it is false.”

In spite of their differences, both narratives partake of a common character: a kind of biographic, literary hybrid which brings back, in the process of reading, the origin of symbolic imagination. This hybrid names a story which is both literal and material, and a fable, where authors, narrators, characters and/or readers introduce an element of fiction which goes beyond its verbal limits, and overflows it. There is a fair dose of hybris in each hybrid. This coincidence is not etymologically motivated, but is a reflection on a literary proximity which in this case confirms the double rule of the hybrid: a merging of species on one hand and on the other, overflowing the limits, it violates the norms and displays all the excesses and forms of deviant behaviour which so irritate the gods. Zeus would not tolerate these transgressions and chose to punish them by his own form of violence. In Plato’s (1991:131)

C’étaient en conséquence des êtres d’une force et d’une vigueur prodigieuses; leur orgueil était immense: ils allèrent jusqu’à s’en prendre aux dieux. L’histoire que raconte Homère d’Ephialtes et d’Otus, leur tentative d’escalader le ciel, c’est les hommes d’alors qu’elle concerne; ils voulaient en effet s’attaquer aux dieux.

[They were spherical both in themselves and in their gait because they were like their parents. Well, they were terrible in strength and force, and they had high thoughts and conspired against the gods, and what Homer told of Ephialtes and Otus is told also of them: they tried to storm heaven in order to displace the gods.]

Androgynous hubs or Babelic pride, the Gods will not tolerate being challenged by arrogant mortals. Their divine (pre)potency breaks objects into symbols. Wholes break into fragments, perhaps because if they did not, it would not be possible to put them back together. The Babylonian Breaking of the vessels, the confusion of tongues and peoples has given an anthropological linguistic definition to the symbolic separation and subsequent reparation. Plato (1991:131) continues saying:

Si je ne me trompe, je tiens, dit-il un moyen pour qu’à la fois il puisse y avoir des hommes, et que ceux-ci mettent un terme à leur idiscipline, du fait qu’ils auront été faibles, je m’en vais en effet, poursuit-il, couper par la moitié chacun d’eux: et de la sorte, en même temps qu’ils seront plus faibles, ils nous rapporteront en même temps davantage, parce que leur nombre se sera accru. Ainsi, ils marcheront tout droit sur deux jambes.

[I think I’ve got a device by which men may continue to exist and yet stop their intermperance, namely, by becoming weaker. I’ll now cut each of them in two, he said, and they’ll be weaker and at the same time more useful to us by having increased in number, and they’ll walk upright on two legs, but if they still seem to act so outrageously and are unwilling to keep quiet, he said, I’ll cut them in two again, so that they’ll have to get around on one leg, hopping.]

Long before the real laboratory experiments took place, different biological species were crossed in the imagination, where dreams, myths and legends combined with whole entities, parts and halves were transformed into astonishing hybrids. In the hybrid, dreams, awareness or awareness are mixed together, generating a criss-cross “reality” of truth and fiction which creates a third medium, a symbolic space where these differences are reunited in a new shape which cannot be alien to semiotics.

The chimera, the fabulous dreamlike animal resulting from a combination of characteristic components of the lion, the dragon and the goat, was not an exclusively Gothic creature. Nor is naganual — an indigenous belief in an animal which identifies itself with a person, not being separated from him — only found in our American continent.

Despite of the differences between these fabulous beasts, they come from the same realm of human imagination, capable of creative life and opposed to species and genres. They are the point of departure, the eternal mythological quest to restore their primeval unity, prior to a metamorphosis which may be latent or dormant, but which is ever-present.

This confusion of diverse species embodied in the hybrid, also exhibits the similarities and differences between the two particularly distinct and distinguished individuals whose work we have chosen as our object of investigation. Thus, on examining their fiction in the light of the concerns that unite and separate them, Borges’ preference for hybrids is pitted against Bioy’s dislike of them. Except for references to the Minotaur, hybrids are not frequently found in his imagery; yet Borges (1967) has made an extensive inventory of all kinds of “imaginary beings”. On the other hand, such
transgressions of zoological classifications as products of the imagination occur constantly in Bioy’s bestiary (Plan de evasión 1945; Dormir al sol 1973; Diario de la guerra del cerdo 1969). Indeed, Bioy does not eschew zoanthropomorphic experiments in faraway countries, nor doctors, machines and hospitals where strange transplanters and other medical marvels take place.

However, Borges’ (1974a) *La secta del Fénix*, first published in 1944, a story about a fabulous animal, gives another emblematic example of fantastic mutations, far removed from nature. The interest of this story lies in the fact that it suggests a second difference between both authors. Whereas *Historias de amor* is not only the title of one of Bioy’s (1972) books but also includes material from sexual adventures, both fictional and real-life, Borges omits all such personal references, or at least he includes them in secret, in the same way that the men who form secret sects perpetuate it by concealing their (sexual/textual) ceremonies. Without the reference to the romantic details with which Bioy’s work abounds, Borges’ allusions to women and love would make up, without doubt, the most numerous entries in any thematic catalogue of his works, a catalogue which has indeed, already been compiled.

For a variety of reasons, one must attribute to Borges rather than Bioy, the memorable sentence which appears at the beginning of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* (1974a:431) and which is the principle of the story, its initiation as well as its origin and foundation: “One of the heresiarchs of Uqbar had declared mirrors and copulation to be abominable because they both multiply the number of men”. Neither mirror nor fatherhood are abominable to Bioy, who would often recall with delight the triple mirror in the dressing room in which, as though she were immortal, the image of his mother Marta (Marta, like Bioy’s own daughter) was repeated to infinity.

Yet in precisely the same way as the hero of *La invención de Morel* who, sliding between two images, becomes an image that moves away from real life and towards fiction, Bioy as a character in this story, quotes this sentence, thereby placing the whole story in a specific fictional setting — a space which is also an origin. And that should suffice.

Thus Borges begins a monumental story with an apocryphal quotation. In the story, Borges attributes it to Bioy, but outside the story, Bioy does not claim it as his own. Nevertheless, and in spite of the “auto-de-authorization”, the narrator of *La invención de Morel* states “Man and copulation cannot bear long intensities” (1940:67), thereby echoing though in fewer words and with a difference, Borges’ idea.

With one quotation they copyright — also an inventor’s privilege — the invention of a “real” world. Though it may not be a real quotation, nor deserve repetition, the quotation serves its purpose insofar as it provokes the encounter of both characters, the real one and the fictitious one. This is certainly not the first intrusion of a world of fantasy in the real world, although the union brought about by the quotation serves as a mot-de-passe; a pass-word which gives access to a clandestine encounter outside the limits of the text, an almost secret passage, a safe passage and an alibi through which the narrator of Tlön ushers his peers and those of us who are not.

One could say that this quotation, in its literal and its modified version, prefigures a beginning and a plot, it functions as a password to enter and leave the text that discovered and invented territoriality, populated by beings from different regions, planes and planets without annulling the fictional pact sealed by both narrators — a pact between themselves and also with the silent majority of the readership.

In the course of the night in which the story takes place, the narrator discovers that mirrors are monstrous devices, while at the same time normalizing the phenomenon of inversion. Here there is both an inversion and an investment: an object, when turned upside down is inverted, but it also invests, because it multiplies. In like manner, the inversion of biological and grammatical roles or literary genres, the exchange of one name for another and similar procedures, is always an investment insofar as it speculates and increases. By the figures (numerical and well as pictorial figures), placed in front of them, objects are both inverted and multiplied.

The narrator of Tlön (1974a:437) remarks that “While we are sleeping here, we are awake in some other place and thus each man is two men.” Symmetrical reasoning is directed towards the proportional reduction of this duality to one single subject, towards which the story tilts unidirectionally. This means that if one may be two, two may also, a fortiori, be one. In the Diccionario de la Real Academia Española, the first definition of the word monstruo (“monster”) is “something which contradicts the regular order of nature”. However, the mirror-image is monstrous not only because of its hybrid condition, not only because it multiplies itself, but also because it (de)monstrates (from the Latin monstrare come the Spanish muestras ['samples'] and monstrous). A monstrosity is more often than not a motive of dreams and stories, in which it is vividly shown. This ‘show’ cannot be put in words, because ‘to show’ (mostrar) is ‘to make visible’, and it is, above all, ‘not to tell’. Since antiquity, ‘to tell’ and
‘to show’ (Spanish contar vs. mostrar) appear as opposite actions, rooted in two figures, one agonistic, the other imitative — diégesis and mimesis — which have ever since been rivals. As with other antagonisms which inspire so many universes, both figures appear at the beginning of Borges’ (1974a:431) story, as its contradictory yet equal cooperative principle. “I owe the discovery of Uqbar to the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopaedia”.

The confabulation, then, begins with the union of these objects — the mirror and the encyclopaedia — a duality representing, emblematically, both the image and the word. The mirror exposes, shows and risks: by not showing, the book contains and conceals. Both are imperfect imitations, ambivalent reproductions. They present an absence, which means that they re-present, they present something anew. Once shown, described and told — like the figure in a mirror, the article in an encyclopaedia, one reflection determines the appearance of the image and another, its disappearance.

Each representation remains weary of the object it represents, ready to attempt against it. The duality — image or word — is fused into a suspicious unity, the origin of the anthropological fracture, of the fragmentation which is characteristic of the symbol-symbolon, even when referring to other designata (in Greek, the term means ‘sign’, ‘signal’, ‘mark’, ‘emblem’, ‘insignia’, etc.). Yet the way these meanings have commonly been used has not been able to fit together the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, the scattered fragments of a shared unit which would be to the final satisfaction of all those who wanted to restore, by this token, an old friendship. As Borges’ (1974a:431) narrator says:

Bioy Casares had dined with me that evening and we pondered a long time on the vast polemic concerning the execution of a novel, in the first person, whose narrator would omit or disfigure facts, or incur in diverse contradictions which would allow just a few readers — indeed, very few readers — to intuit an atrocious or banal reality.

Many critics, like Rodríguez Monegal (1978), consider that if the narrator of Tiôn, instead of saying “novel” had said “story”, this passage would have referred to Tiôn, Uqbar; Orbis Tertius; in other words, to the same story from which it is taken in the first place. But even this narratologic difference would not have been necessary, because self-referentiality is not the only way to construct fiction-within-the-fiction. In the story there are several other planks on “interreality” which question fiction itself (that is, increasing or diminishing its own fictional content).103 The imaginary world allows us to observe the ambiguities which are common in the imaginary world of stories, as well as in the other world we usually call “reality”.

“Who invented Tiôn?” One does not have to reduce this universe of fiction to a mere version of the Earth. «La terre est très terre à terre», said Laforgue about the invention of a country by means of a friendly cita104 with another writer, a cita which at times is located in an inconstant encyclopaedia. Just as the world, a region, a planet, a poet, come into existence through a cita and end up — an end which is also a finality — sub specie encyclopaediae.

However, it is still possible that the novel Borges refers to — a narrative in the first person singular — is La invención de Morel. The publication date of the story, 1940, coincides with that of the novel. In this short novel, the narrator also speaks in the first person singular, leaving out data, twisting the facts and contradicting himself. The reality which emerges from this novella — neither story nor novel — is nonetheless atrocious and banal. The coincidences between both texts are, however, insufficient and I wish to be prudent in this matter and not to make the same mistake which the indiscrimet editor of Morel’s diary constantly notes. Instead, I would identify the novel and the story not with one but with (at least) two narratives. Tiôn, Uqbar; Orbis Tertius and La invención de Morel. A duality between works illustrate and justify this philological leap. In fact, both texts may even be identical: “I searched in my pocket, took out the book and compared them. They were not two copies of the same book, but rather two examples of the same copy.” (1940:76)105

Neither Bioy’s texts, nor Borges’ story about Tiôn — where one of the schools denies times, and another affirms bi-localization, speak about a parallelism between world and words. As with the universal multiplications which abound in various passages of Blanqui, both authors aim at elaborating a rhetorical, biological and/or cosmological law of gemination. Like the French visionary, they do not deny the existence of various other universes, or rather “multiverses”.106

Hundreds of millions repeat the stupidity and crimes of humanity! Besides, there are also thousands of millions who repeat their own individual fantasies. Each one of our moods, be they good or bad, should bring into orbit one personal globe out of a whole collection! All the connected heavens would then be brimmed with our counter-figures! Blanqui (1983:V).
One could continue to point out, and compare, points of agreement, individual responsibilities and credits of two author-readers who defend their personal and shared (individual) dualities as from their fictional personae. In the course of years of collaboration, dates and topics have come to converge in the spontaneous and fabricated ambiguities and figures of thought and imagination, which mark a joint procedure which also implies a return. Two books need each other so as to repeat or contradict one another. This is how they fulfill themselves: their duplications and compensations are an application of the economical mechanism of replication, as conceived by Blanqui (1983: V).

Borges and Biyo exchange roles, according to the various stages in the text. Biyo dedicates his novel to Borges, Borges writes the prologue. Borges uses Biyo as a character of his story, and moreover, attributes to him a secret cita which he invents or discovers in constant editions and re-editions of books which appear and disappear like figures in a mirror. Whoever this cita may be from, whoever it may be with, it is an encounter during which imagination and thought, reason and unreason, are reconciled.

Strangely enough, the same contradictory principle — that is, multiplication of a figure in a mirror or in species — gives birth to something that already exists; something which has begun before its own beginning, involving imagination and species, or the imagination of the species. Reproduction does not start with the image, nor with the mirror; it existed prior to both, in the mind where time and space are blurred. Through reproduction — textual as well as sexual reproduction — the existent species is saved from extinction.

The question of reproduction is omnipresent in the writings of Borges and Biyo. Perhaps it all began with the transcription of certain texts which, according to Rodríguez Monegal, both writers (1979) collected during the 1930s and a selection of which was later published in the Anales de Buenos Aires with the title of Museo, under the pseudonym “B. Lynch Davies”. It is a curious enough title for a literary text, yet the museum is a recurrent site in the work of Biyo: “Museum” is the name with which Borges (1974a) headed one of his most significant texts, Del rigor en las ciencias. The museum and the library are both spaces which collect, index and exhibit all kinds of relics in a parallel world of originals and copies, metaphors of displacement, metaphors of transport, that is, metaphors of metaphor, movements of the imagination, which decontextualized objects on the move, that seek refuge in a museum, the utopian place outside time where, paradoxically, history is preserved: a preservation of human imagination in the margins of history.

While mentioning migratory phenomena, copies, reproductions, metaphors and symbols which are fragments, imaginary museums sheltering isolated objects, it may be remembered that in those same years Walter Benjamin (1971) was elaborating one of the most quoted essays of modern times.

Through different approaches, the three scholars, Benjamin, Borges and Biyo, speculate, from different points in time and space, on the nature of originals and copies, on the static nature of objects in the museum, of displaced objects, moving objects and moving images. La invención de Morel y Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius were both published in 1940. Also in 1940, Benjamin, persecuted and threatened by the French police or the Gestapo, committed suicide. The advance of Nazism in those same years appears interwoven with his writings, while also permeating the topic of mechanical reproduction, of perfect reproduction. “For ten years any symmetry involving an apparent order — dialectical materialism, anti-Semitism, Nazism — has been sufficient to fascinate men”, Borges (1974a:442) remarks in a postscript to this story. Neither Borges’ story, nor Biyo’s novel are detached from the tragedy of a century which could not stall the advance of totalitarianism, the obsessive problem of a Trawerspiel, a mourning for which memory cannot revive and which mechanical reproduction killed in a final game. A Faustian pact, inside out: the narrator falls in love with Faustine, a Faust turned woman, but above all a false Faust, an “unfaustian” Faust. Significantly, the first syllable of Faustine is pronounced Fausse in French.

In the novel, Morel explains his invention which, anticipating death, will afford immortality: “Now I will explain to you about my invention”, says the character, and the peremptory tone of this announcement is reminiscent of Peirce’s (1982, I:502) address in 1866: “Gentlemen and ladies, I announce to you this theory of immortality for the first time. It is poorly said, poorly thought; but its foundation is the rock of truth.”

The world and totalitarianism were already there, in 1940, and both had already started to expand. “The world will be Tlön”, the narrator repeatedly says. Like the cosmos, so Tlön is a well-ordered, all articulated, coherent planet. Spelling out the sequence of capital letters in the title, as cardinal points in an old atlas, gives T.U.O.T., which is tout in French but in reverse order. Everything is referred, like the image in the mirror, like le monde renversé, the upside-down world ruined by the machines invented by Morel to reproduce life but which ended up immobilizing it. Thus, an invention intended to avoid or postpone death, really brings death closer. In the inverted world of Tlön, each text needs to find completion
with its complementary opposite. According to Bioy (1989:215),
primitive language, the language of Tlön resembles the panlingua
invented by Xul Solar, and to confirm this similarity, Borges translates,
word-by-word, an example of this "neocreole" in his story. Besides having
a mania for pangames, Xul Solar considered La invención de Morel to be one of the panbooks, a total book.

As did both Borges and Bioy, Benjamin pointed to identify the
mechanical efficiency of the media, the seductive force of the media which
is one step away from the temptation of totalitarianism. "The loss of aura",
as Benjamin — cited in Cozarinsky (1974:92) — called it, an aura which
earlier marked the individuality of each work of art, led to individual loss,
mass murder, the concentration camp, and Benjamin's own suicide.
Instead of a person, comes the image: instead of the work, its reproduction:
man is exposed to a mechanical temptation which blinds memory and
destroys immortality, by upholding a replica which is both weaker and
stronger than its original. Neither Dr. Caligari, nor Mephisto, neither
Moreau nor Morel, not the Doctors Faust could prevent the advent of
Hitler.

Political activity is aestheticised in photographically multiplied images
and in the moving images of the cinema. They are counterfeit images
imitating real life — contrefaire is "to imitate" in French. The original,
when folded or doubled, becomes counterfeit. The copies destroy the
original and take it to pieces. The loss of originality is a distinctive feature
of the individual artifact and its creative source, and is one cause of its
fragmentation of political totalitarianism. A present time which through
representation becomes absent; a fact which through images, has passed.

La invención de Morel is concerned with the major concerns of today:
the relation between material and immaterial memory, the relative nature
of truth, the impossibility of a history which is equally tolerant of both
memory and profanity. Toute la mémoire du monde is a film by Alain
Resnais (1956) which portrays Paris' Bibliothèque Nationale engaged in
an endless debate between memory and oblivion. There in the "BN", as it
is called by the French, one can hear a reader mumbling almost unidentifiable
words through the telephone: one of them is Tlön. In that same year,
Nuit et brouillard (1956) also by Resnais, shows a collage of outrageous
film clippings from Auschwitz, which show piles of accumulated human
bodies, the remains of humanity. The same director also made L'année passé à Marienbad (1961), a film which addresses the illusions of
memory in which figures have discussions, trying, between shadows and
mirrors, to deal with the fluctuations and ambivalence of human emotions

and perception. Like the figures that act as the narrator's shadows in La
invención de Morel, there is a gathering of spectres which run through the
rooms and gardens of a theatre, a museum or a brain, a ghostly projection
which could equally have taken place in Los Teques or in Marienbad.109

Marked by the fragmentation of photographs, by faithful copies cut and
mounted by the cinema, moving copies of reality, which observe the
Correspondences across unfathomable universes in Benjamin, Borges,
Bioy, which cross and interconnect at a historical intersection where an
Encyclopaedia can anticipate a revolution and films, informative or
fantastic, more than just reproducing history, can produce, double and
originate it at the same time. These mechanical versions multiply worlds
which are not exactly the same or parallel, because they mutually imitate
and modify each other. Here the story exceeds the strictly documentary.
The fictional component can be strictly reduced to the realities of a police
record — an identity card, a cell (cédula and celda are almost the same
word in Spanish), a square piece of official paper resembling the four walls
which keep a man in confinement, like those which kept Louis-Auguste
Blanqui in prison for the greater part of his life, a prison in which he
nevertheless invented galaxies and revolutions, both astral and historical,
the same universes, both real and fictional, which many years later, from
different utopias, were to be (re)discovered by Benjamin, Borges and
Bioy.110 It can hardly be coincidental that all three of these writers invoke
profusely and simultaneously, the visions of Blanqui and his celestial
speculations.111

In the same way that Isidro Parodi resolved criminal enigmas from
inside a cell, it is truly amazing to see how Blanqui, from his prison,
continued to be the stubborn conspirator, who never ceased to create, as
did the Tlönist, secret societies in diverse worlds; nor did he cease to
concoct, from his solitary confinement, revolutionary plans which did not
interfere with the revolutionary process, its missing to return to the beginning,
an apocatastasis which needs to be continuously enacted, over and
over again.
Narration under discussion: a question of angels, men, nouns and pronouns

A veces hay ángeles que no tienen cara de buenos, ¿verdad? Además ... no sé el nombre de usted.
Manuel Puig: Pubs angelica

Thus he says that the name Nothing signifies the ineffable, incomprehensible, and inaccessible brightness of the Divine nature which is unknown to every understanding of man or of Angel, which “dum per se ipsam cogitatur” neither is nor was nor will be.
Charles S. Peirce: Early nominalism and realism

Two years ago, when I presented a paper on Las metamorfosis narrativas y las confabulaciones teóricas, I had the opportunity to meet Manuel Puig personally. I presume — and I am aware of the twofold nature of this — that I owe to this circumstance the invitation extended by World Literature Today to collaborate in the volume dedicated to Puig. With the aim of attenuating the circumstantial fugacity of that encounter and, moreover, attempting to follow closely (and to remain close to) the theoretical imagination of his novels, I will try to deal with some aspects of a narrative which, on one level (the most visible one), imitates the discourses and recourses of the mass-media, and on another, deeper level, approaches those forms of academic reflection as elaborated in recent years by a criticism and an academia which limit them with theoretical formulations, which are too recent and barely consolidated with scholarship for Manuel Puig to have been aware of their existence.

1. Imitations and limitations

Although there has been sufficient talk on the mechanisms of imitation and generic diversity which Manuel Puig’s narrative procedures assimilate, I wish to address them anew, albeit bearing in mind the conciliation of these two notions which, though distinct and independent in current usage, converge in his novels towards a principle of affinity, which the homophony of language confirms. This principle may serve as the point of departure of an interest in underscoring the “different coincidences” to be found in profusion in Puig’s work.

It is a well-known fact that Puig’s narrative makes frequent use of discourses which imitate other discourses: they are imitations which, first and foremost, underscore the conventions of an imitation-oriented culture, albeit by means of mechanisms of different iconicity since, unlike the semiotic notion of iconicity, this one is verbal or, rather than verbal, literal. Letter-for-letter, word-for-word. There are passages in which such abundant and perfect imitations jeopardize the duality which is its very nature, reducing it, confounding identities, blurring limits. Puig’s discursive mimesis may have contributed, narratively, to the anticipation of a crisis of representation. Indeed, representation by several means and media is firmly anchored in this age in which too accurate a technology has begun to obliterate reference and referent in one and the same mediatic confusion, thus becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish.

The distinction between forms of communication: soi disant “fiction” and soi disant “documentary” have become attenuated. Shared by the (mass) media, reality remains in the middle. Mediatized and multiplied, the mass media show an unlikely reality, scattering or fragmenting veracity in one (and no more than one) version.

Instead of taking “civil” reality as his point of departure, Puig begins from a mediatic realism which is, as Proust (1966:887) wrote about realist literature «la plus éloignée de la réalité, celle qui nous appauvrit et nous attriste le plus, car elle coupe brusquement toute communication de notre «moi» présent avec le passé, dont les choses gardaient l’essence, et l’avenir, où elles nous incitent à la goûter de nouveau» [the furthest from reality, that one which impoverishes and saddens us the most, since it abruptly cuts all communication between our present “I” with the past, of which things have kept their essence and the future, where they incite us to enjoy them again.] Yet, in spite of this, new media permanently impugnate literature.

Critics have frequently underscored the stereotypes of dialogue, the triviality of descriptions, the commonplaces of sensibility, magnified and multiplied by this mediated realism and the utopias limited by advertisements and commercial publicity. At the same time, they have insisted on the fidelity of Puig’s novels, which imitate other novels, preferably mediocre ones, which do not on the whole resort to the highest models of literature or to the teachings of the canon provided by consecrated works. From the space violently unfolded by the mutual confrontation of the
power of saying and the power of hearing, Puig's works do not eschew the vulgarities which abound in the popular genres, with a frontal approach which is all the more peridious coming from the very precincts of what Blanchot (1955: 9) calls the "literary space".

Proust would have rejected as ridiculous, had it not been too dangerous, the idea of both popular art and patriotic art.

Puig chooses to use well-known examples of acknowledged marginality: a Beispiel, an example, a word which in German means 'marginal game', a game 'on the side': a marginal placement like that reserved, in its origins, for parody.

In Spanish, what we speak (of), we use the word "cursi" (etymologically related to the English "coarse")¹¹ for this caricature of modern "kitsch" or camp. Proust's (1966, 3:888) charge into the territory of popular art, which contradictorily regards as "high" something that is not "deep", which appreciates vulgarity as a sophisticated form of creativity, which shows off its repetitions, which considers distinguished what cannot be distinguished from the commonplace, and which (mis)takes for "art" (first mistake) and for "popular" (second mistake) «un art populaire par la forme eût été destiné plutôt à des membres du Jockey qu’à ceux de la Confédération Générale du Travail» [a popular art because of its form would have been destined to the members of the Jockey club] rather than the members of the General Confederation of Workers. The literary space, however, relevates the difference: it highlights it and it abrogates it.

In a letter from Buenos Aires addressed to Emir Rodríguez Monegal and dated December 12, 1967, Puig explains: "Para mí es un experimento muy interesante, quiero combinar vanguardia con popular appeal. Esto último es muy, muy importante para mí — quiero mandarte algo pronto para saber tu opinión."¹² [For me it is a very interesting experiment, I want to combine vanguard with popular appeal. The latter is very, very important for me — I want to send you something soon, to know your opinion.]

Parody does not avoid repetitions, since it is defined by them, nor does it repudiate so called "lesser" models: such choices and techniques should not be considered surprising: the fate of the novel began by parodying other novels, and the best writers were precisely those who preferred not to follow the best precedents.

2. «Copier, c’est ne rien faire»¹¹²

Inventing characters-readers and characters-writers, Flaubert himself sets out to copy and copy. The insolenge of the copy is more shocking than the insolenge of the novelty. Bouvard and Pécuchet, Flaubert's (1964) eponymous characters, confound resource and recurrence in one single task: to write unceasingly; and in one single renunciation: to copy. For them, for so many others, writing and copying are indistinguishable. As characters in a novel when they decide to become writers, they do not detach themselves from an encyclopaedic reality. Like beasts of burden, without any distractions from the task at hand, they are dying (se des-viven), like Emma Bovary, for literary realism: a kind of flight into the insides of the novel, which even the most literal reading usually propitiates. Borges (1974a) was one of the first writers to attempt a Vindication of Bouvard and Pécuchet, a double precedent which consecrated both Borges' (1974a) own Pierre Menard, and the work of the so-called ready-made writers (read and made), whose ambivalent fidelity has been in recent years the object of critical speculation, tending towards softening, by a theoretical rescue, the scorn for the imitation of those readers who did not bother to disguise their literal repetitions. "There's nothing left to us but quotations" remarks a character of Borges (1975: 129), adding that he still hoped that the stuff art was made of was not life but rather another work of art, or any work which would look like art — such as Puig's work.

Parody highlights the fatality of language: when dealing with words, repetition is inevitable, and resignation, as the prefix "re" suggests, is that conformity with the sign, which cannot but repeat itself. Each sign refers twice: it has a non-verbal reference (the object designated) and a verbal reference: although it is not always noticed, the sign always designates itself.

This displacement of the trivial stereotypes found in novels and dictionaries gives way to "kitsch", it is a way of accepting and even elevating it, including the degree of paroxysm which all access implies. Before embarking on his adventures and intrepid exploits, Don Quixote had read about them. Before falling in love, Mme. Bovary yearned to live the romances she had read about (in Spanish, romance means both an 'affair' and a 'romantic novel') which provoked — they both preceded and determined — her adventures. La traición de Rita Hayworth (1965) and Puig's later novels must be included in this series.

One writes because one reads or because one has read. However, while text theories require the participation of a reader to actualize it, fiction
requires a character-reader for it to exist, to the extent that both fiction and literary theory, in their latest formulations, have multiplied him. Puig’s characters dream with the adventures and misadventures of heroes and heroines, as well-known as the models which shaped their predecessors, but their feelings, ideals and vicissitudes only inscribe them in a transistorized epic; in order to reduce history to its minimal dimensions, neither Raymond Queneau nor Julio Cortázar would have failed to notice in that reductionism, the fall of the “h”, [la belle H, inutile, heraldique] [the beautiful, useless, heraldic] as felt by Marcel, Proust’s (1966, 3:37) narrator.

Consequently, Puig’s transgression does not consist in having focused his literary attention on characters and themes of popular nature, because since classical antiquity — which has inscribed and described them in its inventory — there have been many successive attempts at realism accounting for their vices and virtues, their dialogues and aspirations, their thoughts and sorrows. The novels of chivalry, to which we owe that great masterpiece which shares the ironic mode of Puig’s novels, are not necessarily superior to the adventure novel, itself an object of parody.

Foucault (1983) used the expression “le phénomène de la bibliothèque” to name this imaginaire, glimpsed between signs, between book and book, and between the book and the lamp, in the folds of texts and commentaries from where, in these times of technical reproduction, they multiply in Puig’s books. For Foucault (1983:107) «Après le livre de Mallarmé deviendra possible, puis Joyce, Roussel, Kafka, Pound, Borges. La bibliothèque est en feu [After Mallarmé’s book becomes possible, after Joyce, Roussel, Kafka, Pound, Borges. The library is on fire], and neither the radio-photo-télé-“soap operas” nor those dreams fabricated and distributed by the film industry can be saved from the flames. They rapidly become so many unexpected moeurs de province, albeit urbanized, a Bildungsroman settled in the centre of the city, and, at the same time, elsewhere: in the heart of the cinema.»

3. «Lire beacoup, lire encore, lire toujours»
Gaston Bachelard

The writer is in charge of the vicissitudes of a character-reader, be it Don Quixote, Mme. Bovary, or any other character who experiences reality vicariously, and who, because of writing (their reason of sufficient reality) cannot differentiate them from those which are practical and routinely, which take place in a textual reality. The written page, always previous, dispels the horror of the white page but the page in black and white is no less scary. A synthesis of all colours, white unites them and makes them fade; black absorbs them. The redundancy and the uniformity of the media, the monotony, the end of differences for the sake of a common denominator: the sign, the writing, the text. There are only lines and letters, which change, even when they are repeated; they are distinct, different, yet always the same.

Critics and writers have so often been heard captiously asking how to know Puig’s writing, that the question echoes with the censorship of illegitimate fidelities, with bemusement at the kitsch, in incorporating it without reserves. We face a similar instance to that which gave place to l’affaire Flaubert, the scandal which, under the name of atteinte moral was indeed a transgression, but only a literary one, in which the conventional narrative structures were altered and challenged by different techniques belonging to the indirect speech, such as the style indirect libre and the dis-concert of polyphonic scenes. They even reach what Rodríguez Mongal (1974:376) calls the “gallery of voices”, which flow in Puig’s novels, reaching the identities in conflict more than ever confused by an age in which the recording and the preservation of sound achieve a superior degree of high fidelity while, at the same time, the phono-logo-centrism of truth questioned by writing is underestimated.

It was undoubtedly Derrida (1979) who elevated a statute which, since the times of the old myths, writing has unwillingly shared with memory. Who speaks in writing? a character? a narrator? an author? a reader? No one responds, nor does anyone accept responsibility for this contradiction: only in theory can the “categories of the text” be defined or defended. Following various honourable demises, after becoming immortal, the author is still dead. It is the reader’s turn to take his place, but from this place he just keeps silent. When Barthes (1975) passed judgment on «la mort du grand écrivain» [the death of the great writer], the notion of “author” had already begun to crumble. Commenting on this in Sangre de amor correspondido, Rodríguez Mongal (1982:34–35) says that “Puig’s narrative text is the perfect medium for the voice of the bricklayer... There is no original or definitive text, nor ultimate authority. There are just versions. ...Everything is ambiguous. We will never know who really speaks, where the voice which is speaking is situated, to whom this voice is speaking and (especially) who is asking the questions”.

Despite the fact that, in the case of Flaubert, the outrage of the court of law was directed to the impossibility of distinguishing between narrator
and author — a superposition of voices according to which the writer was
largely responsible for what was said — the accusation has not been
significantly displaced.

Puig's narrator hides his own function between the gaps of the text.
What interests us, in this case, is the lack of a narrator. Repetition is a
quotation, a discourse which stems from another, known discourse.
Because it is familiar, it is not strange, yet it still is exterior, and this
origin is sufficient to loosen the *cord(ons)*, to let in what was outside, to
question the statute of ambivalent characters, precariously installed next to
the border, between what is and what is not considered fiction. Settled
neither inside nor outside, the narrator finds himself in a frontier which he
must delimit. If his borderline position was already "unreliable" in the
classical novel, repeated discourse de-*author*-izes it even more, he no
longer counts, he vanishes amid dialogues between fictional characters
who are able to dispense with his intermediation because the readers,
being undemanding, keep repeating stereotypes.

The quotation, moved and removed, remains out of place or, at least,
settles into a discourse which runs parallel to another discourse,
appointed, within a text, since the only places left are texts, a greater text
which leaves nothing out; if, philosophically, the coincidences between the
limits of language and the limits of the world are no longer discussed,
much less is the question raised when we are dealing with literature.

From semiotics to deconstruction, Puig's repetitions confirm, via
fiction, that the world — at least the literary world — does not exist
beyond the limits of language and, if it only fits between texts, the
existence of the *hors-texte* is of little interest. Sebeok (1986:73) quotes
Peirce thus: "The true reality ...is revealed through signs"; this is how
Peirce understood and solved this problem, but perhaps this is just the
biased opinion of a semiotician, for whom signs are the only true reality
and the rules and laws to which these signs are subject, together with the
sign process, are the only true laws of nature.

With all the more reason will signs be viewed, studied and interpreted
as such by whoever concerns himself with literary processes and rules of
literary discourse. «La vraie vie, la vie enfin découverte et éclaircie, la
seule vie par conséquent réellement vécue, c'est la littérature; cette vie qui,
en un sens, habite à chaque instant chez tous les hommes aussi bien que
and illuminated, in consequence the only really lived life, is literature; that
life which in some sense inhabits on every moment, men as well as artists.]
In the article quoted above, Rodríguez Monegal (1982:34) says that "Puig
knew too well that the only space of the text is the text itself, that the only
voice is the voice of that plural and many-voiced dialogistic narrative
which transforms the monologue of the protagonist into the inner theatre
of a psychodrama. Actor and narrator, speaker and analyst of his own
madness, the bricklayer tells and retells an adventure which maybe has
never happened."

4. «Devenir immortel et puis mourir»

J.-Luc Godard

To ensure his immortality in the near future is the ambition of the writer,
because, as Bloy Casares (1970:11) says, we continue to believe, against
all logical reasoning, in immortality by the book. Between the possible
worlds the writer imagines and describes, rather than between the
contingencies imposed on fiction by reality, he invents scientific
experiences; hybrids of men and animals, of men and machines, of aged
youths; strange journeys, photographic and cinematographic images,
machines and prostheses which sharpen the senses and, beyond the
fugacity of events, preserve what has never existed. Writing was the first
technological invention, but it was not the first conflict between the
beginning of history and the challenge of historicity.

For Derrida (1991:51), all writing begins by expressing «Je suis mort»,
between the lines, but an ambivalence is also implied here: once dead, the
author is safe from the hazards of mortality. Another interpretation would
trace Derrida's utterance back to "It is not necessary for me to be dead for
you to read me, but it is necessary that you are able to read me even though
I may be dead". If Puig suppressed his own narrative voice, this suppression
is in fact an anticipation. Like a man sentenced to death who writes and
sends a letter that will survive him, showing (rather than writing) that
certainty could well be a challenge to another age of the writer, a way of
surviving by not showing vital signs, to attain immortality by not letting
life in. Someone who does not exist enjoys the absurd privilege of not
losing his non-existence.

The point, however, is not to proclaim the death of the author only after
the death of a king, of more than one god, of only one god, father or son:
immortality does not seem to be an attribute of entities created by fiction.
Concomitantly, and to a similar extent, after seeking in successive
grammatical transformations his paradigmatic form (third, first and
second person singular), the theoretical analyses have been so many and
so thorough that the narrator, rigorously examined, becomes depleted, an extinct species. From an authoritarian narrator who knew more than he humanly could or should know, to a severely suspicious narrator, until his recent disappearance, the crises of a literary statute as conflictive as his was only foreseeable.

This becomes clear mainly when, as in some of Puig’s novels, it becomes evident that these conflicts arose in tandem with the emergence of the cinema and they do not discard its models, adventures, and cinematographic effects and defects. And if even the absences become visible in cinema where all can be seen and all becomes narrative, the obvious absence of the narrator must remain out of sight. More than the metamorphoses of voices, more than the dazzling flashes of colour, the cinematographic procedures employed from the very beginning still add excitement and intrigue to a narrativity which can afford to omit the narrator and to play games with him.

5. From one diegesis to another

A technical factor incides in this question: the rhetorical alternatives of “diegesis”, a term used in classical poetics in the sense given to it by Plato (1981), namely that of “pure narration” without dialogue, as opposed to the classic “mimesis” as found in the dramatic performance. Although this term has been recovered for film analysis by Etienne Souriau, it has been narratologically confused with another diegesis (diégese, in French), the universe of time and space, in which a narration, cinematographic or otherwise, is developed. This confusion is explained by homonyms (Fr. diégese and Sp. diégesis), yet it is also legitimate to explain it by the slipping of one notion into the other.

Metz (1991: 187) remarks that «Quand un film est narratif, tout en lui devient narratif, même le grain de la pellicule ou le timbre des voix» [When a film is narrative, everything in it becomes narrative, even the grain of the film or the pitch of the voices]. Hence, cinematographically, one notion easily slides and embeds itself into the other. From the spatio-temporal universe posed in films, to global narratization, in narrative cinema all becomes narrative. In literary narration, however, what the narrator verbalizes is precisely the circumstances of that spatio-temporal universe, without dialogue, as pure relation from the outset.

6. Loss of prestige

Some years ago, just before the outbreak of World War II, when radio listeners were unable to distinguish between a narrative and a news bulletin, this caused generalized alarm. Yet there was almost no alarm when, capitalizing on his prestigious cinematographic precedents, an actor became President or, in another hemisphere, when the literary talents of a writer lent credit to his political platform, or when another President appointed a pop singer and a soccer player to high political positions. The mediatic common denominator smoothes over the differences: the image assimilates them in one medium. Facing similar sounds of alarm, Benjamin (1971) had announced the loss of the “aura” as a result of mechanical repetition. Between the lines, he anticipated the dangerous aestheticisation of politics: yet the aura was not lost, it was only transferred: from the work of art to the mass media.

Not only in the novels of Puig are spaces confused, spaces where the centre is ill-defined and the contradictory priority of the margins advances. Disorientating the question of the origins, disarticulating basic oppositions, there exists no longer the question of the author, alive or dead, or of university canons, approved or otherwise, but rather of a reality which is indistinguishable from a diffuse fictionality, because the little credit merited by representation affects both equally.

7. Theory of fiction

While Sartre wrote novels and theatrical works in addition to his philosophical treatises, it should not be surprising that a theoretician like Eco (1980), a philosopher and semiotician, should have ventured, with mixed success, into the fictional genre. Even in the theatre, the presence of theory is felt. Only a handful of poets, playwrights and novelists have not, in recent times, been tempted by theory. From Borges’(1975) _Inquisiciones_, the plot and suspense of his essays, or the theoretical expectations of the intellectual imagination of his _Ficcions_, generic demands are annulled which at this point appear to be no less scandalous than racial discrimination.

Perhaps this caused Borges to try and relieve the literary genres of the _sambenitos y humaredas_ with which the victims of the Inquisition were punished. Cortázar (1969), in a chapter of _Rayuela_, the novel he conceived as a game, did not eschew the theoretical assaults upon his _Capitulos_
prescindibles. Even though Proust (1966:882) indulged in theoretical reflections upon his own novel, and finding in the end, in his reflections upon his own writing, the time lost in fiction, he also said: «Une oeuvre où il y a des théories est comme un objet sur lequel on laisse la marque du prix.» [A work in which there are theories is like an object on which one leaves the price tag.] In Puig’s (1976) El beso de la mujer araña there are theories which he neither conceals nor disguises: they are the basis of his fiction.

This is doubly ironic: a wink of complicity at whoever knows or shares theories which the works of fiction half-conceal and against the «bon goût» of the double exhibition which is able to «épater le bourgeois» — as well as «l’intellectuel» — both committed to canons and prejudices.

8. «Soeurs siamoises, séparées par la tête: la pensée et la poésie»¹²³

Plato (1981), who radicalized the antagonism between philosophy and poetry, posed it as a dialogue, like in the theatre; when Aristotle (1964) spoke about the opposition between poetry and history, he reduced or relativized it; in this philosophical contemporaneity, which could have begun with Nietzsche and continues until Derrida, this opposition no longer counts, or counts less and less.

It is not a question of abstracting and comparing, by means of illustrious antecedents, an archetype whose canon could be established by El beso de la mujer araña, but rather of attenuating the eccentricity on the same page where we find contextualized such different texts as a dialogue between two characters and a transcription of scientific or philosophical treatises, which appear as footnotes.

Placed at the foot of the page, and not at the end of the book, the theoretical speculations provide justifications or foundations, supporting the fictional text. Somehow, this foundation justifies and continues the fiction, transvested in erudite inquiries (inquisitions), in exercises of intellectual margination (the games in Rayuela, the quests in Proust), which accord ambivalent rules of a literary nature to literary characters. From a presumed diegesis, these characters speculate on the liability of their functions or content themselves with transgressing it. Plotted by the discourse, plotted it, they are characters-narrators or characters-writers with attributions in reciprocal barter, who articulate a writing-reading (an author who adopts the voices of his eventual readers: reader-critics, reader-writers or voiceless readers) in fiction and in reflections of fiction: a discourse in various voices and silences registers a critical modulation which, supposes, substitutes or suppresses.

The work in trance argues with itself or cunningly makes notes on the margins, comments upon a work which does not exist. It underscores variants of an obliteration as literal as it is literary: the words suspend the thing or, if the thing is a name, then the name of a name is named twice, in two voices, a literal revocation which the name repeats or annuls. Like the Palace of the Yellow Emperor which, on being described by the poet, vanishes, struck down by the last syllable; likewise, in Borges’ (1974a) La parábola del palacio, there is a parable (a word) of the word: a word about another word conjectures a critical su(per)pos(s)ition, a relief, or rather two, both of which extol and exclude, stress or destroy.

9. Repetition with a difference

While working on the margins of their work, contextualizing them with other form of his imagination, Puig, who in interviews and correspondence often expressed his “resistance to theory”, introduces the oretical reflections into his novel, but as an alien voice; he does not appropriate the quotation as if it were his own text, yet those very voices which remain foreign textual elements cause the most discomfort. We are dealing again with repetition, with displacement from a text into another, but mainly with a foreign register which remains so. The canons of the genre still stand: a natural and necessary element in theory and/or criticism, they are still surprising in fiction. Puig¹²⁴ writes in a letter to Rodríguez Monegal:

Rio, 17th May ...I will tell you of my plans. Being aware of my limits (I am not a theoretician nor do I possess a great facility with words, neither is it helpful for me to analyze too much what I do!) I don't wish to be drawn into the ambush of literary circles, radio interviews, TV and other types of journalism. When I was in Buenos Aires in February, I was asked to give two interviews on TV and two on the radio which I turned down, even though I enjoy the glamour. I believe that in this case, oh rainbow-hued feather of the bird of paradise, the most sensible thing to do is to disappear behind the work and let it speak for itself...

At the foot of the page there is a postscript: “I shall leave this type of ridiculous behaviour exclusively for T. Capote.”
By means of a common sort of layout, the footnote, Puig introduces the trick of an explanation contextualized by the topic while transgressing the nature of the discourse:

No es verdad. Creo que para comprenderle necesito saber qué es lo que te pasa. Si estamos en esta celda juntos mejor es que nos comprendamos, ¡yo de gente de tus inclinaciones sé muy poco...*

* El investigador inglés D.J. West considera que son tres los tres textos sobre el origen físico de la homosexualidad, y refuta a las tres (1976:65). [And the quotation continues.]

[It's not true, I believe that in order to understand you I need to know what's the matter with you. If we are together in this cell we'd better understand each other, and I know very little about people of your inclinations...*

* The English researcher D.J. West considers that there are three main theories on the physical order of homosexuality, and refutes all three.]

Nevertheless, Puig's layout strategies have significant points in common with Derrida's (1974) textual practices when the latter contextualized, on the same page, a text by Hegel alongside a text by Jean Genet. This procedure — spatial, literal coexistence between a philosophical and a narrative discourse — enables Derrida to discover mutual affinities which would otherwise have escaped the attention. Printed on the same page and thus inviting to a parallel writing-reading, the disciplinary impertinence which has been considered so scandalous should not be a source of irritation, since the heterogeneity of texts, all differences, coexist under one overwhelming press, and nobody cares, or at least it is no longer questioned. Theory is scarce in newspapers, yet the same space and the same treatment is shared by texts of all kinds, and all their differences are assimilated by the indifferentiation of writing.

The contact with theory is repeated in quotes from Freud, Lorenz and Marcuse. The foot of the page supports the fiction and gives it an inward dimension into the intimacy of dreams and imagination. The two prisoners in El beso de la mujer araña (1976:66) say to each other: "— Hasta mañana, — Hasta mañana" [See you tomorrow, — See you tomorrow]. Two dotted lines break up the discourse and mark it with silence.

Another footnote, introduced by an asterisk, endorses a different fiction, about the arrival of Léni Lamaison, a foreign vedette, to the capital of the Reich: "En efecto, acostumbrada ya al sol que resplandece en los rostros de la Patria Nacional Socialista, le disgusta ver su Francia así envilecida como está por las contaminaciones racistas. Su Francia le parece inmensamente negrificada y judía." [Indeed, used to the sun shining on the faces of the National Socialist homeland, she loathes to see her France so reviled as it is due to racial contamination. Her France seems to her undoubtedly blackened and Jewish.]

All discriminations, whether generic (theory/fiction), sexual (Molina/Valentin), disciplinary (literature/science/philosophy), racial and/or religious (blacks/Jews/Aryans/Christians), in style (direct/indirect), between states of mind (dreams/wakefulness), ideological (nazi/socialist) — do not resist being assimilated by the same fiction; the impression is the same. What Puig does here is more than simply transcribe various theories on homosexuality, some of which stem from psychoanalysis, others which are reflections on power, or even sequences from non-existent Nazi films, outside the novel, but a genre which definitely exists; it transcribes the discourse of modern science and philosophy, and its very transcription transforms them. Ever since Borges, a quotation is no longer automatically regarded as a literal repetition.

All quotations involve a transportation. However, in this case, it is not transported beyond its time and space. Beyond its circumstances, its nature changes, as do its conventions and register. The serious field of science is introduced through a pass-word — through the word — in a fictional frame of ironic reading which questions the entire conventional framework — from the authority of the quotation to the use of punctuation marks. The asterisk introducing the footnote stems from a farewell greeting, from movements of exteriorization which deny their inner direction or suspension points which do not suspend anything: "— …… "]

The entire text is brought into play, but also, above all, the literary event, literature as letters, or its typography, its most concrete material: the printed letter. Thus the narrative adventure of punctuation marks and typographical signs, perhaps emblematic of literature, do not correspond to any particular mention. There are probably no marks more emblematic of writing than the full stop, the semicolon, the suspension points: they are the exclusive property of writing, caricatured through gesture or imitated by the voice, a voice imitating writing, charging it with gestures which imitate writing (or do not).

Discourse of fiction and discourse of reasoning are contracted contextually in a common space, questioning the rigors of a segmentation between two literary functions which require solidarity. Poetry and theory, poetry and history, visions and critique — all coincide in a textual solidarity. Poetry and theory, poetry and history, cohabit in a textual
proximity; the text assimilates them into an affinity which is both proximity and similarity. The text is the place where differences are resumed or resolved: a crisis between pairs or peers which does not offer clear, exclusive and distinct alternatives but rather associates and comprehends them.

Consequently, the (op)positive mechanics of a contented rationalism undergo a crisis. Scientific certainties, objective methods, easy polarisations subside and binary equilibria (outside/inside, subject/object, body/spirit, surface/depth, identity/difference, North/South, centre/periphery, signifier/signified, reality/imagination, history/literature, theory/literature, truth/fiction, nature/culture, man/woman) acquire the status of "human beliefs", even of "children's games" for Heraclitus (1986: 63), just as the problem of knowledge and creation arose through faithful imitation or by the rules of faith.

And if the problems of imitation through limitation were to be resolved? And if those problems were only problems of limits? Sneaking past the douane (from Ar. diwan: 'frontier, 'government', 'control', 'customs'), a poetical-philosophical diwan, is a more ambitious version of the "East-West diwan". In one hemisphere, a philosophical work opens the door to fiction — as is the case of Derrida's (1974) _Glas_ — while in another, a novel opens the door to theory, to various theories (the case of _El beso de la mujer araña_), in such a way that the polarization thought-fiction maintains the tension perhaps just to defend a totality: to protect it or to prohibit it.

This aesthetic (re)turn should be unsurprising, since through regression and at a turning point, the (re)turn is completed: by a narrative routine, theory recovers the duality of meanings which should never have been reduced: contemplation (spectacle) and meditation (speculation), theatre and theory. 

10. Angels, hybrids, androgynous

From Antiquity to Kafka, and from Kafka to this day, narrative metamorphosis continues to refer to, and to prefer, fictions about identity and its transformations. Perhaps a study of metamorphoses in literature has already been undertaken: a study of the phenomenon in itself, and of the works in which, from times immemorial until the present, metamorphosis is _meta y tema_ [goal and theme], something akin to a _metametamorphosis_, which does not disguise the validity of a prefix which continues to modify forms and languages.

A study on literary metamorphosis would deal with the literary transformations of a bestiary in which the different specimens were ordered and classified within the textual corpus of those fables — of all times — which have been close to the human hearts. The notion of con-fabulation, of narrative complicity, is rooted in a totemic belief, namely the revelation of a hybrid identity, the kind of double and simultaneous existence called nagualism (the belief in an animal which is the inseparable companion of a human being), and the continuing belief in transformation through an intermediary beast. For example, the crystallized metamorphosis of an axolotl of Cortázár's (1964) story derives its name and the assimilation of all oppositions inside a prison-cell in _El beso de la mujer araña_. These composite creatures question the (super)natural power of the hybrid and compromise a rescue which may be both salvation (the spider-woman) and ruin (the screaming of the sirens, «des femmes-poissons»). The hybrid nature of man/god, man/animal, man/woman, man/child, man/Indian, and other hybrid creatures, of different shapes, forms and genres reveals precisely the unnatural arbitrary nature of these polarizations, discovers in the need, the conventional and the fanciful.

Narrative is a favourable space for metamorphoses: a subject plots two polar terms, identity/alterity, and they can no longer be distinguished.

Mi señora, los ángeles son niños
que han muerto antes de perder la inocencia. Es siempre tan triste que muera un ser sin culpa, y más aún a tan tierna edad. Y me pregunto yo
¿no habrá ángeles niños?
Manuel Puig: _Pubis angelical_
A subject knows an object, presents it, represents it, and identifies it (namely with himself). Words can draw subject and object closer together, and through this physical proximity they become similar. Since the times of the New Testament the "kiss" is a form of (re)cognition, of that identification prójimo/próximo [neighbour/next] who discover their affinity in the textual relation.

Each time the topic of identity is used in literature, what matters is not identity but rather identification. To recognize and to confuse are aspects of the same epistemological fiction and such (cf)usions, which are not only of an intellectual nature, have existed since the dawn of knowledge. Until quite recently, literary studies, continuing a rigorous linguistic tradition, insisted upon the distinction of opposites, on discovering or describing oppositions, on systematically defining and classifying them. Perhaps as a reaction, critical reflections on these studies are now directed towards bridging the differences between fictional discourse and other types of discourse and, in this ambiguous manner, they are finally beginning to know them.

In El beso de la mujer araña, identity is questioned by a closed window facing inwards. Was ist das? In French ‘a narrow window’ (Fr. vasistas), in German: ‘What is that?’. Is it French or is it German-in-French? A strange, foreign expression, seeks an identity in another language yet, by means of a window, a privileged topos for the contemplation and the imagination, from within. Similar to the framed surface of an aquarium, the imaginary screen half opens the confinement of the cell, multiplying the crossings of the infinite hybrids of El beso de la mujer araña. Also in this narration, observation in detained, between bars. In the prison, there is just one window but it opens on to another place of confinement, and to a narrator who attempts to escape through another rectangle, an evasion through the window screen where the films of an imaginary space are projected twice: he sees a film where there is not one, he tells it. On telling it he ceases to see it and ceases to be. A zero signifies emptiness as much as plenitude, more or less one, the cipher of the androgynous, a symbol of supreme identity, an ideal or a renunciation of identity. In the act of knowing something, something is lost and something is gained. Levinas (1991:36) states that when he becomes known, the other is no longer the other, being known strips the other of his strangeness and turns him into something interior, something I belong, my own. Through knowledge, one and the other open themselves to investigation and remain without secrets, ready to fit knowing into being.
pronoun, or against the narrative and grammatical convention, repeating a noun “una mujer [a woman] ... una mujer ... una mujer” and then: “un muchacho [a boy] ... un muchacho ... un muchacho…” and then: “un padre [a father] ... un padre ... un padre ...”. In El beso de la mujer araña there is an accumulation of successive nouns.

Going one step beyond Barthes, beyond the quest of time, Proust’s (1971: 160) quest is haunted by the Noun: “Aussi, l’événement (poétique) qui a ‘lancé’ la Recherche, c’est la découverte des Noms. ... ce système trouvé, l’oeuvre c’est écrite immédiatement” [Also the (poetic) event which the Recherche launched is the discovery of names. ... Once this system was found, the work was written immediately]. Something similar occurs in Puig’s novels except that instead of nouns, there are pronouns, and the rules of grammar are unresistant to this procedure. When MP (the initials of one or of two) discovers that pronouns may replace nouns, the narrative begins a new instance, which poses the relationship between the idiomatic and the literary in different terms. Contrary to general opinion and grammatical codification, Peirce (1931–1958) rightly stated that names substitute pronouns and not the other way round.

Whereas in El beso de la mujer araña, the narrator — which appears incognito in the novel — insists on mimicking the continuity of the film image by repeating a noun, in Pubis angelical (1979), he emphatically accumulates pronouns:

*Ella también tenía una hija. Él por su parte ... Ella suspiró ... Él le reprochó ... Él testimonió ... dedicarle algún requiebro a él. Él dijo ... y ella recordando el desborde emocional de él ... ella notó ... Él no las vio, ella prefirió ... Él se levantó ... Poniéndonos en manos de él ... Yo sabría todo, absolutamente todo, de ti y tú de mí. ... Él seguramente quería ponerla ... Y si ella se resistía ... Él la premió ... Ella fingió placer ... Ella antes de expirar, confirmó su temor. Él no la había traicionado. Él la había amado de verdad.*

*[She also had a daughter. He, for his part ... She sighed ... He blamed her ... He testified to dedicate him a compliment. He said ... and she, remembering his emotional overflowing ... she noticed ... he didn’t see them, she preferred ... He stood up ... putting us in his hands ... I would know everything, absolutely everything about you and you about me ... he surely wanted to put it ... and if she resisted ... he praised her ... she faked pleasure ... before dying, she confirmed her fear ... he had not betrayed her ... he was innocent. He had truly loved her.]*

In a novel, the repetition of a noun does not give a character relevance. On the contrary, it states and restates the obvious, which is tolerated by the visual image but not by the word which requires viva voce the use of the pronoun. Perhaps both bear witness, each in its own way, to the nostalgia for the “first name”, “pre-nom” alluding to the need of a previous link, an angelic language, the union, its quest.

It would be interesting to examine more closely the image of “Los Angeles” in cinema. Only recently, in Der Himmel über Berlin (1987), Wim Wenders — mindful of the angelic saga of angels in black and white, in blue, or fallen angels — establishes a link between the setting, actors playing film characters, or characters from other film or TV series, and that angelic condition of those who, like Puig’s (1979:213) “la bruja de la lectura del pensamiento” [the witch of mind-reading], can read other people’s thoughts through words spoken without sound, a sort of language spoken by angels, prior to the Fall, flying over a painted Berlin wall separating two different worlds.

Molina tells Valentin the stories of the films which he invents, which neither of them sees. The contact is not only through image: it is also established through the word which inscribes itself in a sexual context. For Manuel Puig contact happens through context. In prison, the characters are confined to the “prisonhouse of language”. In the enclosed time/space, without beginning and without end, discourse does not obstruct and language circulates freely. Though coming from different worlds, both men become part of a totemic montage which takes place in an inner space reserved for “divine weddings”, where the different textual genres are allowed free play and end up married: dialogues become monologues, told as films, as thoughts, telephone calls, police bulletins, legal procedures, newsreels, interminable story-telling by one of the characters, a scarcity of narrative interspersed with long silences by a narrator explaining different theories on homosexuality (D. J. West, T. Gibbons, O. Fenichel) and changes the point of view as much as the point of theory. Puig (1984) commented in an interview: “My taste for fiction has become hypertrophied. I do not know how to explain this to you, but my reading is always criticism.” The prose which becomes more and more poetic and slides towards the *jouissance*, the bliss of language, the pure and undivided pleasure of the text. A third type of discourse has appeared, unknown to Plato and Aristotle and which is neither diegesis nor mimesis but theory as theory — within — fiction, a novel meant to be seen. A black-white metamorphosis is seen on the chess-board; in the two curves of Escher’s double-bound letter eight; in the passage from French *cygnes-signes* into Spanish *cisnes-cine*. Black and white, inside and outside exchange roles: this is more than the inversion of sexual roles, an
exercise in all-embracing narrative inversion, which despite its happening in the margins, at the edges — in the act of reading or in Reading Gaol — goes beyond the limits imposed by reading/telling. How can cinema make theory visible? How can it show footnotes?

The imagination resorts to reading and seclusion, it appeals to the noun and the pronoun to present the question of identity, which is another fiction. As happens in Puig’s novel, the identity card (Spanish cédula) and the prison cell (Spanish celda), confine and reduce identity to a piece of paper. With his presence, the narrator sets the limits of the story; consequently, the limits disappear with him. There is neither inside nor outside, in a medium in which the textual/narrative functions are hybrid, concealing even contradicting, in an ambivalent medium consisting only of dialogue and where the characters identify themselves without any intermediation by a narrator. El beso de la mujer araña could be a novel about the disappearance of the narrator and the emergence in its place of the narrator/narratee, of his prison and his mixed identity, a novel which is both heard, seen, and read. It gambles on sight: it is heads or tails (Spanish cara o cruz). Because he reads, he sees; because he sees, he believes; because he believes, he understands. Identity is not defined, the solution to the enigma is still another enigma. The question which the Sphinx asks is about metamorphosis and Oedipus is able to answer it correctly; but “Man” is the real answer to the enigma, and the enigma is thus a double one: the man and his metamorphoses, identity and its transformations.

A myth tells how Thyrsias changed his sex and became the lover of Spider Man (Arachnos); though blind, he had the power to foresee. Another myth tells that Oedipus on the moment of knowing put out his eyes; in another, how Democritus, in order to know, blinded himself in a garden. Because he knew, or so as to know, according to Borges (1980). Blind or see, the narrator exists only to tell or because he tells: “I tell, therefore I exist”. The narratee also exists because the narrator tells. They are confronted in a glance and reconciled by a voice. Stimme-stimmen in German, a plural or an attunement of voices?

Neither subject nor object, both at the same time. Ambiguity doubles the meaning and suspends the oppositions. The Spider-Woman, neither male nor female, neither god nor animal: Molina, with a surname common to both sexes, the proper name of a woman; Valentin, hardly valiant, but an accomplice or a guerrillero, a collaborator or a résistant. The conjunction “or” marks the Mysterium coniunctionis of terms which are assimilated while still mutually opposed. We have seen that though narrative discourse, other oppositions are assimilated, such as word/image, fiction/history, diegesis/mimesis. A crisscross of men, names, nouns and pronouns, an erotic cross between genders, grammar and genres: a cross, the inverted chiasmus, the “x” of unknown identity, the marks of the enigma.

Pronouns have a function of intermediation, a grammatical relationship, without any significance of their own. They establish an unstable position between a verbal means and a non-verbal one. Just as an angel, neither god nor man, recovers a previous state of innocence, previous to the polarities of knowledge, the quest for ingenuity knows no previous distinctions of gender, no conceptual meaning. More than one man, two men or no man at all; more than a name, a noun, a pronoun or a previous name, the primary name, the name prior to the breakage, before the fragmentation and radicalization of knowledge, the conflict between contrary terms. All divisions vanish in the original language, prior to names and categories which serve to separate, not to unite. By reuniting the fragments, it is possible to return to the Unity of the androgynous, prior to the symbol and to the confusion of languages.

The question is repeated once again. Whose voice do we hear in fiction? The author’s? The narrator’s? the character’s? the reader’s? nobody’s? To the queries about “Who?” and “What?”, the answer is a word, a name, a noun, a pronoun. Because of this, whoever begins by questioning very soon stops questioning, whoever wishes to know and interpret, leaves one question for the end: “Mah?”
The paradoxes of paradoxes

Now we do not define each event that starts our song, we cipher it in just one word which is the Word.

Jorge Luis Borges: UNDR

Besides if we do not know that we believe, then from the very nature of the case, we do not believe.

Charles S. Peirce: Questions on reality

It is perhaps in order here to modify, in the title of this essay, the formula of the Hebrew superlative, because it is meant to do more than mark a degree of superiority to exult a King of Kings because he is the greatest king, or a Song of Songs because it is the most beautiful song. Although a superlative is a grammaticalized expression of excellence, it is necessary to point out here that the superlative employed in the title is meant in a different way. Just as Borges (1974b) gives his book Prólogo the superlative subtitle “Prólogo de prólogos” [Prlogue of prologues], indicating a relation of individualization rather than hierarchization, I would like to show through this double plural the paradoxes that multiply both Borges’ work and his author, both the one Borges and the other.

If being unforeseeable is one of the prerequisites of paradox, Borges should by no means be discussed within the framework of a discussion on paradoxes, nor should paradoxes be discussed within the framework of a discussion on Borges (1957): “In the Koran there are no camels; this absence should be enough to prove it is Arab”. This is why these reflections here begin in the key of preterition, a figure which seems to me to be more paradoxical than paradoxes themselves, because it is limited to metadiscursive rhetorical figures, although it is not always remembered that, saying that it does not say what it says, shows in a nutshell all those complex dualities which are inherent to the nature of words. Between paradoxes and preterition, the pitly grace of the former and the perverse redundancy of the latter would be two of the few differences between these two figures, which have in common a self-referential, ambivalent renvoi. Without interrupting the sequential flow of discourse, they throw it back upon itself, affording to it a verbal self-referentiality which is at the same time denied them. The absence of an external reference may be permanent or not, it may come and go, it may be spoken about or taken away, but what is spoken about and what is taken away will still be there.

Paradoxical literature has always existed, but there are works and moments in which there is a genuine explosion of it. Borges is a paradoxical event of such magnitude that its analysis would overflow any description, however detailed, of it, and could never be fitted into a pre-existing classification. Because of this vastness and variety, one of the first problems would be where to start. But once mentioned, the beginning, just like the end, is shifted. There is always a discourse or a witness that gives evidence of the sentence, the judgment, the solution, the catastrophe, just like the messengers who tell Job’s affections to Job and believe, or say that they are only there to tell him about these misfortunes. Through the word, even the most tragic disasters become normal. As soon as someone speaks about them, once they are given a name, their end seems to be endlessly advanced and postponed; and once their beginning is mentioned, verbalized, it is also delayed, starting later than it does in reality. There must be a reason behind the fact that “in the beginning”, the beginning of Genesis (as Bereshit was translated), does not start with aleph but with the next letter. When indexicality is still ambiguous and not yet deictically fixed, the beginning, when put into speech, refers to itself from the beginning: “In the beginning there was the Word”, in the same way as in “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” the self-referentiality at the beginning is part of this problematic circular argument. Perhaps rather than in the Beginning, in the End there was the Word: début is in French a beginning which seems to deny the end from the beginning. Hypollte (1966: 54) remarks that Hegel observed this complex circularity: “The result is the same thing as the beginning because the beginning is the aim” (weil der Anfang Zweck ist). When we speak about the “perfect crime”, we do not take into account that once we speak about it, it is no longer perfect even though it is still a crime. If it were perfect, really perfect, it would forbid all comment; because not only would this make the crime known, but its perfection would be destroyed and it would be just another crime; something unmentioned would be unknown and would not even be a crime.

The emphasis on paradoxical naturalness or paradoxical nature is typically one of the obstacles for the comprehension of Borges’ vision, because his paradoxical imagination comes as natural to him as does his blindness: his vision is intrinsically paradoxical. The precariousness of his genetic, inherited condition and the role it has played in his life have been so often alluded to that to talk about Borges’ blindness would be at this
time to state a truism, when he himself accepts this mixed blessing "de Dios, que con magnifica ironia/Me dió a la vez los libros y la noche" [from God, who with particular magnificent irony/Gave me books and the night at the same time] (1974a:809). He says he accepts his blindness without further thought, without grief, like the days and darkness. He is not resigned to a fate: moving with an unsteady step, he praises the shadows surrounding him, as Oedipus did, thereby seeing a different light. Borges, who would boast about the pages he had read, but never about those he had written,\(^1\) did not hesitate to bring out the virtues of his defect. "Escrever é uma forma de/ver" [Writing is a way of seeing] writes Haroldo de Campos (1987), even though for him, the creator of concrete poetry, seeing does not make truth evident. Lately, there have been numerous theoretical and methodological approaches that insist on the problem of the observer. It is therefore possible to consider Borges as a paradigmatic observer: perspicacious, lucid and blind, the paradoxical observer par excellence.

When Borges (1980b:153) assumed that Oscar Wilde "se dio cuenta de que su poesía era demasiado visual y quiso curarse de este defecto" [realized that his poetry was too visual and he wanted to cure himself of this defect] he did not refer just to himself, Wilde. Surely he was also talking about himself when he reminds us of the fact that Wilde had said to himself: "The Greeks thought that Homer's blindness meant that poetry should not be visual, that it is its duty to be, above all, auditory"; and Borges (1980b:153) goes on to say: "We may think that Homer did not exist, but the Greeks liked to imagine him blind to highlight the fact that poetry is above all music, that poetry is above all a lyre, and that what is visual may or may not exist in a poet. I know fine visual poets and I know fine poets who are not visual, but intellectual poets, mental poets, there is no need to mention names". The irony of his verse, like the discreet confidence of his remarks on his own blindness, simplify a blind obstinacy, as paradoxical as it is literal, because poetry receives these contradictions from the written word. In the first of his latest poems, Octavio Paz (1987:12) said: "La poesía se dice y se oye:/ es real./Y apenas digo es real/se disipa./¿Así es más real?" [Poetry is said and heard: it is real./And as soon as I say it is real, it vanishes./Is it thus more real?].

From the beginning Borges has been marked by contradictions. His literary biography is, unlike most, a truly verbal, nominal, adventure: "His adventure is having been named". In this case it is Hartman (1982:111) who, inspired by "French reflections", quotes Sartre,\(^2\) and his hypothesis is valid insofar as the literary work is the elaboration of a mirror-like name, the proper name. Barthes (1971:160) rightly believed that Proust's decision or disposition towards writing his novel begins the moment he finds, or invents, the names: "Once he had found the system, the work was written immediately." This would mean that the "constitutive power" of the proper name could well have shaped Jorge Luis Borges' — Georgie to his friends — great literary adventure, in which are implied more than the prolepsis of an oxymoron, which is contradictorily reminiscent of Georgica and work on the land, the barbaric victories of the gauchos on the grassland and the street journeys through urban neighbourhoods and slums.

By this onomastic cipher of both country and city, the extremes which his texts never lean to conciliate, Borges used to be gleefully mindful of the literary consequences of this specular two-sided, mirror-like, expansion of that proper name, his own name, which he considered a natural phenomenon, part of a naming agreement which "slides between the yes and the no",\(^3\) the polar extremes between which both poetry and daily language maneuver.

If "le sententie fuori del comun parere" are paradoxical, one can permanently question the legitimacy of rescuing the paradoxical constants of Borges' texts, or of his person. The study of these constants are, of course, a commonplace in the kind of criticism that dwells this and similar topics, and which immutably registering mirrors and doubles, deciphering enigmatic writings, relapsing in a cosmos which is assimilated to paradise seen as sub-species of a library. The same tigers abridge a limited bestiary, threatening infinite labyrinths, controlling the violence framed in sly adventures of chess, half-opened cells in the gaols etched by Piranesi or hidden with spatial humour by Escher in fixed corridors and useless staircases. It is a difficult task to weed so buoyed a way, to discover the undiscovered, to invent outside the inventory. As if the genii loci that Borges seemed so eager to avoid, the poor spirits who protect my country, the scarce intellectual ascending drives of the Indians who were confused from the beginning, men or Indians, Indians or beasts, Indians with or without a soul, even Indians with an "h", as Francis Drake\(^4\) spelled their name; so many ab-original confusions determined by the paradoxes of an accidental occidental discovery, a literal disorientation. America still remains the utopia, an ever-elusive id-entity.

As regards Borges, the greatest paradox is precisely that paradoxes and topoi koinoi cannot be told apart. In the past, as well as in more recent times, critics pointed out the frequency of paradox and the dubious
eccentricity of his persona and work. Not long ago, the French *Magazine Littéraire* (1968 No. 259), in one of several issues dedicated to Borges, offered a large number of articles, in each and every one of which the variants in Borges' paradoxical imagination are under discussion. Also recently, Ulmer (1988:164), an American critic, while describing the mechanism of puns in Foucault, Derrida, Genette, Barth, Sontag, Blanchot, Eco, Rodríguez Monegal and Said, proposed to “nominate Borges”, by identifying him with Pierre Menard, “as the emblem of the era”. It is hardly surprising that the author of a character-author who is again an author-reader of a character-reader, is this fine author of over-time, the author of the author of a *Don Quixote* which is identical to Cervantes’ yet superior. It is strange, however, that Pierre Menard, one of the most-often quoted authors of recent times, is a mere fictional character, and it is even stranger that his unfinished and unknown work — no-one read or even saw the drafts that he himself destroyed — has given rise to so many comments and so much critical applause. At this point it would even be unsurprising if someone tried to elevate to an emblematic status the perplexing exercise of unreservedly making critical pronouncements on unknown (by the critic) texts, while also pretending not to know texts that he in fact knows.

Borges’ whole imagination hinges upon paradox and paradox alone. How, must the common sense that the paradox avoids, be avoided? How to observe what Fontanier (1968:137) called an “alliance of words, the artifice of language through which ideas and words, usually opposed and contradictory, manage to combine so closely that they surprise the logical mind”, if novelty and surprise, typically lie in the fact that here the common-place and the *genii loci*, *doxa* and *paradoxa* are blended? Once more, paradox is utterly paradoxical and must be viewed ambivalently, yes and no, one utterance against another, reciprocally opposite and supportive. Indeed paradoxes are quite dangerous, because as soon as they are conjured, their “occurrence” can no longer be stopped. Once more what is said contradicts itself, like Plato “accusing writing in writing” — in Derrida (1972a:182) — a less-known version of the paradox of the liar, who all the time contradicts himself. Not coincidentally, Spanish *mentir* (“to lie”) and *mentar* (“to name”) are almost indistinguishable: Who is «L’homme qui ment?»,¹³⁵ Literature accuses itself of making attempts in this direction, a self-accusation which gives evidence for the prosecution and the defence at the same time. Latin is not the only language in which the verb “to accuse” has a built-in “cause” and Borges’ whole work is such a cause of contradictions. I do not know if Borges, like the metaphysicians of Tlön — who “do not seek truth, not even verisimilitude; they seek astonishment” (1974a:436) — seeks only astonishment, because astonishment comes all too naturally to Borges, so much so that he is surprised that astonishment can still surprise. Talking about the admirable perfection of a poem, this narrator happens to call it “The certain, the incredible...” (1974a:801). The incompatibility of the successive term of the oxymoron seems neither suspect nor too striking in such a widely-read author (in both senses of a writer who has read widely and one whom people have widely read). So dazzling is Borges’ display of intellectual knowledge, his numerous references to libraries, books, poems, stories, interspersed with quotes of all kinds, that it seems not unusual that his world is, in many ways, turned upside-down. However, this oversight of the oxymoron goes beyond the techniques of a narrator who is well-rooted in the literary universe. Equally “incredible”, despite their apparent simple truth value, are the comments upon ordinary pieces of daily news, short items which appear in the printed media and in informal spontaneous communications, where it is said of everything: “it’s incredible”. Not just in fiction is “truth stranger than fiction”, but in less literary media — journalism or historical discourse — truth seems even stranger.

There are other oppositions which partake of familiar and established structures in Borges. *Historia de la eternidad* (first published in 1936) or *El otro, el mismo* (of 1964) are twofold, seemingly contradictory titles which nonetheless are adapted to well-known rhetorical standards. Borges is far from being the only writer to use them, in full awareness of their implications. These titles enable an author like Derrida (1986:45) to pronounce a kind of password, a *No pasarán* [They will not pass], ambivalently defining the essential condition of literature, of art which turns into an equivalence the terms of the tragic crossroads, keeping a delicate balance between them. Before Socrates and after Hamlet, in all the strongest moments of philosophy and poetry, to know and not to know, to be and not to be, however opposite, do not exclude each other.

Borges, aware of the inevitable contradictions of antonymic semantics, deconstructs, from his first writings, the conflictive accumulated terms which construct his *undecidable* language: “Let us not be overly amazed; in our language the verb to cleave stands for both ‘to split’ and ‘to adhere’”. Thus he translates, between two languages, the duality of the words of an English-speaking character, a fracture similar to the oxymoron “the public and secret representation” and the irreducible opposition of its two sides. It is an “inversion” of narrative structures, where a narrator uses correct grammatical rules in order to cover under a third person, the folds
in the cloak of his betrayal, using the double edge of the (s)word, the word (re)thought in another language: (s)word(s)word(s)word(s).

Starting from the title of the story La forma de la espada (1974a), the segmentation seems less abusive. It is a story whose main character is an Irishman, whose name is not disclosed until the end, but who is called “the Englishman” on the farm. In the same way the sword cuts with both edges, the word equivocally identifies two different nationalities, it identifies victim and executioner, a confusion which is supported by the narrative and a grammar, with just a little sleight-of-hand, a dash of juggling with pronouns (using third person instead of first person). The whole perspective of the story is changed: a name becomes another name, one man becomes another; the change of places is enough for the foundation of reason to tilt. How can we know if they are identified because they can no longer be told apart? Neither in fictional nor in historical discourse can the confabulations inspired in and through writing, be negotiated; they are simply there.

Derrida (1972a:120) says, about writing, that:

Mais on ne peut dire que son essence la confonde simplement et présentement avec la mort et la non-vérité. Car l'écriture n’a pas d’essence ou de valeur propre, qu'elle soit positive ou négative. Elle se joue dans le simulacre. Elle mime en son type la mémoire, le savoir, la vérité, etc. C’est pourquoi les hommes d'écriture comparaissent, sous l’œil de dieu, non pas comme des savants (sophoi) mais en vérité comme des prétendus ou soi-disant savants (doxo-sophoi).

[But it cannot be said that its essence confounds it simply, and presently, with death and the no-truth. Because writing has no essence or value in itself, be it positive or negative. It is at stake in the simulacrum. It mimes, in its type, memory, knowledge, truth, etc. Because of this the men of letter appear under the eye of God, not as wise men (sophoi), but really as pretenders or self-appointed wise men (doxo-sophoi).]

In Tema del traidor y el héroe (1974a), this game of challenge is contradictorily set between the possibility of seeking truth in the theatrical representation (Julius Caesar, an imperial tragedy set in Ireland) and the hide-and-seek played by that historical research, which discovers the crime yet covers it up. Once more history and poetry are confronted: if a crime comes to light, the historian has the last word — and he may choose to voice it or to keep it for himself — even when the crime happens as part of a fiction as in this case. Both discourses tilt between diegesis and mimesis, between history and poetry, between truth and version. It is, of course, a too well-known fact that also history comes from writing, its first investment.137 Figures are placed in a chiasmatic relation, a criss-crossed, anonymous “x”, the character who destroys particular identity or represents it abstractly and ambiguously in the anonymous signature of the illiterate.

In another story by Borges, Tres versiones de Judas (1974a), access to the mystery of knowledge, to the knowledge of mystery, is even trickier: truth is filtered thrice. In the three versions the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was surpassed by the sacrifice of Judas who betrayed him and who was consequently eternally condemned. Borges’ narrator forwards three versions against the four in the Gospel. Beyond the dubious likelihood of the hypotheses, what counts here is faith in the word itself, not the name or the number (Spanish nombre is French nom and Spanish número is French nombre). Indeed, to God in eternity these may be minor differences — like all differences, even religious ones. In Los teólogos (1974a:556) God’s mind is detached and unscrupulous and “se interesa tan poco en diferencias religiosas” [is so little interested in religious differences] that he mistakes one theologian for another... for the unfathomable divinity, he (Aureliano de Aquilea) and Juan de Panonia (the orthodox and the heretic, the subject and the object of hatred, the accuser and the victim) were one and the same person.”

According to Bloom (1980:3), misreading is inherent to reading (“Reading if strong... is always a misreading”). If this is so, his deconstructive operations, their reversals and reinscriptions can also be applied in writing. This has been repeatedly, almost insistently, pointed among the several notions and doctrines which the 20th century has engendered. However, some decades before Bloom, the intellectual attacks of Lautréamont and the Vipère de lettre in which Laforgue (1979) purportedly wrote, dispersed a type of poetry which was ambiguously inscribed between different texts. When Peirce (1958:332) said that “A sign is something by knowing which we know something more”, he no doubt meant that knowing something implies that something different is known, so that the knowledge of that difference would necessarily carry the variants of an inevitable opposition. In part, this is repeated by Eco (1984:26), when he says that “Starting from the sign, one goes through the whole semiotic process and arrives at the point where the sign becomes capable of contradicting itself (otherwise, those textual mechanisms called ‘literature’ would not be possible)”. Like in the imaginary regions of Tlön, where a book which did not include its counter-book would have been considered incomplete, in that ordered universe of Borges, in that universe ordered by Borges, everything
happens or is explained by contradictory mechanisms: beyond the inward-directedness of the text, a story is contiguous with another story which it opposes (El aleph/El zahir); one letter (aleph) becomes in two opposing signs (yod); one book against another: Otras inquisiciones (1974a) against Inquisiciones (1926). This opens the door for the (as yet unwritten) forbidden books, the book subject to its own censorship, the book which is object of the most severe of interdictions, its author's, despite his intention of writing it just to finally get rid of sambenitos y humaredas (the dishonour and the clouds of smoke with which the victims of the Inquisition were punished), and thus it would be set apart from those more famous and more atrocious Otras inquisiciones. Is this book about words, rhetorical figures, books, religious abuse, criminal nonsense? Colie (1976:517–520) points out that “Paradox exists in order to reject such divisions as those which exist between ‘thought’ and ‘language’, between ‘thought’ and ‘feeling’, between ‘logic’ and ‘rhetoric’, between ‘logic’, ‘rhetoric’, and ‘poetics’, and between all of these and ‘experience’... In paradox, form and content, subject and object are one, conflated, as the ultimate instance of the unity of being”.

Thus Borges discovers conceptual divisions and internal oppositions, in the semasiological reserve of the same word and even though they are the legitimate property of this word, conflating into one, their contextualised meaning, they exhibit the pragmatic reductionism which is of course in the dictionary but which the speaker conveniently chooses to forget. Beyond this, Borges’ language is based on the simultaneous use, in the same context, of different, even opposing meanings. This simultaneity enables the reader to discover eternity in one instant. This reveals “The secret miracle”, which is the topic of a story in which Borges (1974a) makes of the fugitive nature of time a secondary condition for its permanence. It is the moment where the fleetingness of maintainant, of “now”, stops, se maintainant. The diegesis of the story makes it at dawn, when “las blindadas vanguardias del Tercer Reich entraban en Praga” [the armoured cars of the advance guard of the Third Reich entered Prague]. The story was written in 1943.

By this and similar mechanisms, Borges’ textual strategies succeed in camouflaging the many antagonisms — philosophical, religious, political, historical, personal, circumstantial — dividing contextual unity. We could also say of Borges that he considered human beliefs to be children’s games, because for Borges (1974a:745), as for Coleridge, “todos los hombres nacen aristotélicos o platónicos. Los últimos sienten que las clases, los órdenes y los géneros son realidades: los primeros, que son generalizaciones; para estos el lenguaje no es más que un aproximativo juego de símbolos; para aquellos es el mapa del universo.” [all men are born either Aristotelians or Platonists. The latter feel that classes, orders and genders are realities: the former, that they are generalizations. For the latter, language is nothing more than an approximative set of symbols; for the former it is the map of the universe]. One of the most striking uses of this paradoxical reserve is the production of opposite and simultaneous meanings, which form the actual property of the term but which disarticulate it in a literary use that maximises the meaning (“Literature of replenishment”) at the same time as it rejects and questions it (“Literature of exhaustion”). One meaning is pitted against another: do they exclude or support each other?

“Par le mot par commence done ce texte», recalled Derrida (1987a: 57), quoting the fable entitled Fable by Francis Ponge, twice a fable, is a poem about truth. However, the fact that the poem is a cross between irony and allegory — a mixture Derrida ascribes to the intellectual creativity of Paul de Man — is not only visible in the complex overall structure of the poem. Every word, every voice of it, evokes and revokes at the same time. “La acción transcurre en un país oprimido y tenaz: Polonia, Irlanda, la república de Venecia, algún estado sudamericano o balcánico...” [The action is set in an oppressed but unyielding country: Poland, Ireland, the republic of Venice, a South American or Balkan state...] writes Borges (1974a:496). The ambiguity reflected in the conjunction “or” (o in Spanish) is what Jung (1966) called mysterium conjunctionis. Here, the conjunction serves as a conjunctionis oppositorum par excellence, because from an almost inarticulate word, a vocal exclamation is imitated in its emblematic, original and primary, circularity, and its elliptic economy has acquired multiple layers of meanings that attract and repel each other in opposite directions: o is the oval nucleus from which all contradictions proceed. Perhaps in the word “number” lies one of the clues of the word, in its gematic or geometric virtuality, in the representative capability of a word to name a number, in the secret writing of a figure that is number and secret, quantity and silence. O is, in condensed form, each of the numbers and all of them together, the very first number, the part and the whole, the void (in Arabic sifr), nothingness as well as the circle enclosing plenitude, the ultimate zero. O the character, O the figure.

Borges’ preoccupation with the tensions between such opposite meanings, with that ironic two-sidedness which characterizes the meaning — potentiality of the identity — difference paradoxes which people have
always been concerned with, and which still intrigues them, is made clear by Borges. Thus: “They do not know how the discordant is in accordance with itself, an accord with inverse tensions, like the bow and the lyre.” It is typically from a foreigner’s perspective that Plato (1981) states that everything is at the same time one and many, and that hate together with friendship ensure its cohesion. In Funes, el memorioso (1974a), the main character of a master sample of his epistemology-fiction, suffers like «un lector» [a reader] (1981:9) “the passion of language”. The suffering is as strong as the attraction. Funes is a Uruguayan gaucho who “from that afternoon when he was thrown off a horse... lost consciousness... Now his perceptions and his memory are infallible” and, precisely for this reason, he is incapable of thinking, which is remembering and forgetting. He lies in a dark corner of his hut because he cannot tolerate, he cannot conceive the idea that “the dog of three fourteen (viewed from the side) has the same name of the dog of a quarter past three (viewed from the front)”. To Funes, “the generic symbol ‘dog’ is an archetypal exaggeration”. The question is as ancient as the word: despite the fact that in the course of Plato’s (1981) dialogue Parmenides does not show it in such a disturbing manner, I am not sure that both Plato and Parmenides (1980) had not foreseen the occurrence of this Latin-American passion.

The problem is posed poetically when Borges (1974a:718) recognises that the individual is in some way the species, a duality which is disguised under the same name: “Keat’s nightingale is also Ruth’s nightingale”. Because of the fate of one word, time, eternity and an instant, space and the universe coincide in one point, in one word, a word that is also a letter: the aleph, where the conflict begins.

It is necessary to recognise in the homonymic lability of the word one of the decisive reasons of its paradoxical persistence. It is the biased and inevitable confrontation which takes place in the interior of the word, in the word with itself, where the origin of so much contradiction lies. For Heidegger (1984:112):

Language says the opposite of what we propose. We propose the singular and it says the universal. But it does not sustain a different opinion from ours: since it always says the universal, what it says is the truth: it refutes our opinion.... Thus Hegel says precisely in the seminal conclusion of his analysis of the sensible certainty that language has “the divine nature of inverting opinion immediately”. Language is divine because it absolves, because it absolves us from unilaterality and it makes us say the universal, the truth.

In the same way as “The true subject of poetry, however secret and equivocal, is poetry itself”, as Paz (1987:179) remarks, the writings of Borges elaborate the conflict of that dual and contradictory condition, of the paradoxical ambivalence of the word that differentiates and confounds, that rescues and annihilates at the same time, “How to undo things with words” would be a suitable title for a book that would be complementary to some already existing ones.

In Borges’ (1960) Parábola del palacio, for example, the narrator highlights the variants of a literal destruction within the realm of literature: the word suspends the thing or, if the thing is in its turn a name, the name of a name, it names it twice, with two different names, a sort of re-vocation which makes the word vanish like the palace which, once described by the poet, is suspended, that is, is no more there. Without referring to Caedmon’s dream nor to Coleridge’s (1971) poem, Borges tells the story of a Yellow Emperor (his name is not mentioned) who accuses a poet (his name is not mentioned) of having stolen his palace (his name is not mentioned). “The palace itself was in the poem... It was enough for the poet to utter the poem for the palace to disappear as if abolished and fulminated by the last syllable”. Because of this double fault (of the palace, of the poet), the Emperor did not hesitate to have the latter executed. In the same way as the poet of the story, to whom his poem brought immortality as well as death, by the word a palace is destroyed and another one is built, like the successive temples of which Nietzsche (1964:82) spoke, which could place and displace themselves at the same time. By the same word, things begin to exist and cease to exist. The word re-presents them and, by this contradictory prefix, things are no longer present (thus they are represented) but may become present once more, they may be presented twice. But, as the parable tells us, every representation is suspect, because in reality there are in the world no such things as two identical things.

The Parábola del palacio, beyond Borges’ text, is palabra del palacio or parábola de la palabra or paradoja de la palabra, is one anaphora in French, another one in Spanish; when crisscrossed, these repeated particles highlight a kind of Aufhebung, one that extols by derogation, which throws into relief while it suppresses, one that describes and destroys at the same time. It is, of course, a well-known fact that every paradox tends towards self-contradiction and thus towards self-destruction, simply because this is the fate of the word.

Borges (1975:133) does not hesitate between imitating and contradicting; he insists on both procedures, on un-doing. This means that from the moment they are spoken of, all doings become “un-done”.
But let us not discuss facts. No-one cares any longer for facts ... They are mere starting points for discovery and reasoning. At school we are taught to doubt, we are taught the art of forgetting ... The images and the printed word were more real than things. Only what was published was true. ... After walking for fifteen minutes, we turned to the left. In the background I made out a sort of tower, crowned by a dome. It is the crematorium — someone said. Inside lies the death chamber. They say it was invented by a philanthropist whose name, I think, was Adolf Hitler.

Therefore, throughout his writings, from the earliest to the latest, Borges complains that "There is not one single beautiful word, with the dubious exception of testigo [witness], that is not an abstraction" (1981:12). Perhaps Borges hesitated to advance in those terms, what Lyotard (1983:27) «l'état instable et l'instant du langage où quelque chose qui doit pouvoir être mis en phrases ne peut pas l'être encore» [the unstable state and the instant of language where something which must be said in French cannot be so still]. And what would happen if the witness pre- or proffered to be a martyr (Greek for 'witness'), doubtful about the word, believing in the sacrifice? What if, as so often happened, victim and witness were the same person? Which testimony can a victim give? Which words could he find for so many losses, for so much destruction? «Il ne trouve pas ses mots» [he does not find his words] is not just that he cannot find them. What if he did? «Il ne trouve pas ses morts» [he does not find his death]: when there is nothing but loss and pain, there is no use pronouncing the words, although silence would be equally useless. Like the dilemma of the crocodile Falleta (1985:149) mentions, it has no solution.

Lyotard (1983:24) defines the différend as a case where the plaintiff has been deprived of the necessary means of argumentation and is thus victimized. He wonders whether the victim has the means of establishing that he is so. What jury could judge him when no jury nor law foresaw the nature of a crime that disrupts the constitutional state? "There is no other witness than the victim, no other victim other than the one who has died." Witness and victim disappear at the same time and there is no possible defence or mitigating circumstances. If there is still need to persuade, argue, deliberate, verify, only rhetoric would be safe from disaster, because it is one of its origins. Neither theory nor history nor poetry. There is nothing after Auschwitz.

Like Beauvaret's (1955:22): «Les preuves fatiguent la vérité» [proofs tire the truth], they present a probable truth, that is to say, a truth as true as it is uncertain. If it were necessary to prove a crime like that, the means would invalidate themselves. Once more, Hamlet is right in staging a silent show; for someone who is debating with himself in the midst of a tragedy, comedy could well be "the real thing". This is why he puts on a show in order to see the truth on stage, a show that repeats in silence a reality which becomes less and less real, because the words are repeated and become redundant. How can the paradox of the word be resolved? If the crime is not spoken about, it does not become known. But if the crime is spoken about, it is no longer the same. Lyotard (1988:50) said that it would be necessary to examine the means which "are at least of two types: some come from annulment, others from representation; to represent Auschwitz in images, or in words, is a way of making people forget it".

If for Borges (1974a:1017), "oblivion is one of the forms of memory, ... the other secret side of the coin", then the word is its known side. Everything happens by and through the word but in this way nothing happens either. If we cannot speak about something, we must pass it over in silence. It has been said many times. But what does silence rescue? In the book of Genesis, God's interdiction is a command within a contradiction: he who creates by the word, does not provide a word to be named by. According to Levinas (1987:231), "It is necessary, for the love of the unique, to give up the unique". The narrator of Borges' (1974a:802) parable says in the end: "Tales leydents, claro está, no pasan de ser ficciones literarias. El poeta era esclavo del emperador y murió como tal; su composición cayó en el olvido porque merecía el olvido y sus descendientes buscan aún, y no encontrarán, la palabra del universo" [Such legends, of course, are but literary fictions. The poet was a slave of the emperor and he died as such; his composition fell into oblivion because it deserved to be forgotten and his descendants still search, without ever finding it, for the word of the universe.]

So far there has been scant commentary upon Borges' (1975) UNDR, a story not even the author comments upon, although he talks about all the other stories in the epilogue of his El libro de arena (1975). It is about a man who, having learned that the poetry of the Urns consists of one single word, sets out to find it and, unlike the descendants of the poet executed by the emperor, he actually finds it. "He uttered the word undr, meaning 'wonder'. Like his reference, the word is strange, in a language I do not understand; its four letters keep the mystery signified by the word. "Wonder" means both the marvel and the amazement before the paradoxical event of comprehension (undr-under...), that ambivalently partakes of both types of astonishment. The mystery is even greater, because the transcription removes the vowels as if it melded.144
Today there is another word that is pronounced like a foreign word in Hebrew, which is, of course, a better-known language. Almost inarticulate, it asks for a cry for silence. It bewilders. It is uttered in Hebrew but it has become a universal word and it is not translated, but remains mysterious and alien as if its paradoxical universality were warranted by its strangeness. No-one is able to understand an inconceivable event, an event that can only happen once. Destruction, extermination, annihilation. Translated into every conceivable language, it can never be comprehended. Even by this five-letter word reason needs to fail, and every definition falls short: SHOAH.

Notes

1. "Étouffait des choses à dire: enthousiasmes, rancœurs, amours, haines, mépris, rêves, souvenirs... Mais il a formé un jour, comme part surcroît, ce projet de ne rien dire, ce refus de l'expression qui inaugure l'expérience littéraire moderne" (Genette 1966:242).
2. "Ce retourment, ce renvoi du discours à son envers silencieux, qui est pour nous aujourd'hui, la littérature même. Flaubert a été bien évidemment, le premier à l'entreprendre" (Genette 1966:242).
3. This information was provided by Gérard Genette in his Figures, where it appears in a footnote on page 236.
4. "Sprich die Seele, so sprich ach! schon die Seele nicht mehr." F. Schiller, Votivtafeln, Die Sprache.
5. I have maintained the original terms because their etymological affinity would be lost in the English translation.
6. In Spanish, conocimiento means ‘knowledge’, but the phrase perder el conocimiento means ‘to lose consciousness’. However, Borges stresses here that Irenoe had lost his ability to know, that is to say, to conceptualize.
7. When I told Borges that in my opinion Pierre Menard was a reader, rather than the author, of Don Quixote, as proposed in his title, he answered without hesitation: “Reader or writer, it is the same, isn’t it?” (Montevideo, November 1981).
9. The title of the fresco is “Henry III welcome by Federigo Contarini at the entrance of Villa de Mira”.
10. The story dates from 1942 but I am quoting from the edition of the complete works, Obras completas, (1983:67)
11. I have dealt more thoroughly with this problem in an article entitled “los límites del narrador” which appeared in Studi di letteratura ispano-americana, Milan, 1983, by Hugo Verani.
13. In Spanish, “isolated” and “asylum seeker” sound very similar.
15. NB. In Spanish, ver (“to see”) is related to saber (“to know”) and verdad (“the truth”) through a homophony which associates the three terms knowledge, truth and evidence.
16. «Le discours rencontre le discours d’autrui sur tous les chemins qui mènent vers son objet et il ne peut ne pas entrer avec lui en interaction vive et intense» Todorov (1981:95–99)
17. In Spanish, dichas y desdichas can be understood as ‘joys and sorrows’, and also as ‘said and unsaid’

22. It was Mallarmé who surmised in this end the aim of the world.

23. “... The Midrash has registered four levels of reading, as many as Dante. These levels are similar to those which served as foundation to medieval theology and poetry and the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures; from the superficial to the profoundest level. Firstly, there was the literal meaning: pshat; secondly, the figurative meaning: remez; thirdly, the meaning of the Midrash itself, the exegetic: drash (from the word daroosh — 'to search', 'to question', 'to demand') and lastly, the secret, esoteric mythical sense: sod. Completely absent from the text neither void, nor omission nor question, sod would constitute a text in itself, almost another pshat — an interpretative evolution which repeats the infinite (Ein sof), an existence which denies itself (it does not exist or exists as such); and it is precisely the initials of these four terms which form the acronym: pardes. The word is used to call the garden and from it derives — etymologically and imaginatively — the word Paradise” Guggenheim (1982:32).

24. In Spanish, márca means ‘mask’ but it may be segmented as más-cara, that is to say, “moreface”.

25. This is the text of the paper I presented on the opening of the International Semiotics Institute which took place in Imaptra, Finland on July 25, 1988.

26. “There is a constant need to develop conceptual frameworks which help to put together the pieces of the puzzle and provide a general sense of orientation for further research.” Bouissac (1988).

27. The reasoning process... Types of argument... Topics is the art of finding the best possible arguments. The orator asks himself seven master questions (or commonplaces): who acted, against whom, with what goal, affected by what cause, when, where, what did he do. Scheek (1986a, 2:824).

28. “Está hecho de azar. Inmediato o cercano/logo los vaivenes de variables lectores” Borges (1985:49) [He is made of chance. Immediate or close/he is ruled by the swings of variable readers].

29. “He intenado el género policial alguna vez, no estoy demasiado orgulloso de lo que he hecho. Lo he llevado a un terreno simbólico que no sé si cuadra. He escrito La muerte y la brújula” Borges (1980a:87) [I have attempted the detective genre once. I am not quite proud of what I have done. I have taken it to a symbolic field and I do not know whether it is appropriate. I have written Death and the compass].

30. We refer to several scattered mentions and allusions as well as to his book Literaturas germánicas (1951). There is a new edition under the title of Literaturas germánicas medievales (1966).

31. Museo, Del rigor en las ciencias (1954) summarizes in a few lines - representation as the basic problem of his aesthetics. My quotation transforms another of Borges' text. “The Kabbala is not only a museum piece, but a sort of metaphor of thought” (Borges 1980b).

32. “El hecho de que muchos de los cuentos de Borges parecen ejemplificaciones perfectas de aquel arte de la inferencia que Peirce llamaba abducción o hipótesis, y que no es otra cosa que la conjetura... En este universo spinoziano el detective sabrá incluso aquello que el asesino hará mañana. E irá a esperarlo al lugar de su próximo delito... Y todo esto es lo que ocurre en la Muerte y la brújula, y en la práctica en todos los cuentos de Borges, o, por lo menos, en aquellos más inquietantes y convincentes.” La abducción de Ughar, Semanario Jaque, Montevideo, 9/11/84. [The fact that many stories of Borges' seem perfect exemplifications of that art of inference which Peirce called abduction or hypothesis, is nothing else than conjecture... In this spinozian universe the detective will even know what the murderer will to tomorrow. And he will go to the place of the next murder to wait for him... And all this is what happens in Death and the compass, and in practically all of Borges' stories, or, at least, in the most disturbing and convincing ones].

33. “You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin. I had no idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories”. (Dr. Watson is speaking in A study in scarlet [1982]).

34. In El otro, el mismo, Borges (1964) published El golem; the first four verses were the only ones, as he told me once, that he was interested in not losing from all his work. He frequently referred to the novel The golem by Gustav Meyrink (Vienna, 1915). In 1936, commenting another book by the same author, Borges wrote, “it was an extraordinarily visual book, which graciously put together mythology, eroticism, tourism, Prague's local colour, premonitory dreams, dreams of alien or previous lives, and even reality”. Emir Rodríguez Monegal (1978:137) in the same passage affirms that “it was not only the golem legend that attracted his interest but also the fact that Meyrink proved that the legend was another version of the theme of the double”.

35. “…the regressus in infinitum has served to deny; Saint Thomas Aquinus has resorted to it (Summa Theologica 1, 2, 3) to affirm that God exists. He notes that there is nothing in the universe that does not have an efficient cause and this cause, of course, is the effect of a previous cause. The world is an unending chain of causes and each cause is an effect. Each state arises from a previous one and determines the following one…” Borges (1974a:256).

37. The oxymoron: country (George)/city (Borges), by Scoto Erigena, Irish Irish, etc.

38. Insistence on the colour is of relevance. When mentioning A study in Scarlet, Borges says that this title could well be one of Oscar Wilde’s. Although in Sobre Oscar Wilde (Otras Inquisiciones 1952) he mentions the title Symphony in yellow, Borges observes that yellow is not the predominant colour. He says “Wilde can do without those purple patches”, a phrase that already registers the exordium in the Epistle to the Pisons. In the Historia Universal de la Infancia (1935), in the story of El tintorero enmascarado Hokim de Mor Borges uses as a subtitle “La púrpura escalalata”. Sherlock Holmes says: “I must thank you for it all. I might not have gone but for you, and so have missed the finest study I ever came across: a study in scarlet, eh? Why shouldn’t we use a little art jargon. There’s a scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skin of life, and our duty is to unravel it, and isolate it, and expose every inch of it.” (A study in scarlet, Chapter 4).

39. “In The shape of the sword the protagonist tells the story of a betrayal as if he were the victim, not the betrayer. In Theme of the traitor and the hero the first becomes the second in a highly dramatic inversion of roles. In both stories, as in Three versions of Judas, the mythical and ritualistic view of the world, presented through the pair Abel and Cain, reinforces the double vision of reality. Borges suggests that the hero is as much a villain as the villain is a hero. They are two sides of the same character: man” Rodriguez Monegal (1978: 385).

40. «La puissance du sujet lui vient de sa promesse d’accomplissement, alors que la sphère de l’objet, c’est de l’ordre de ce qui est accompli et à quoi, pour cette même raison, on ne saurait échapper. …Ce à quoi on n’acquise pas, ce n’est pas au désir, c’est à la présence ironique de l’objet, c’est à son indifférence et à ses emboîtiments indifférents, à son défi, à sa séduction, c’est à sa désobéissance à l’ordre symbolique (donc aussi à l’inconscient du sujet s’il en avait un), c’est en un mot au principe du Malo (Baudrillard 1983:259). [The power of the subject comes from its promise of accomplishment, whereas the sphere of the object belongs to the order of what has already been accomplished and to what, for this same reason, one could not escape. …What one cannot escape from is not desire, it is the ironical presence of the object, its indifference and its indifferent links, its challenge, its seduction, its disobedience to the symbolic order (therefore also the unconscious of the subject, if it has such a thing). It is, in one word, at the beginning of Evil].

41. The word rhombus has several possible etymologies: the Greek-Latin rhombus ‘geometrical figure’ is the theory endorsed by Webster and Corominas. The old Scandinavian röjm, ‘space’, ‘place’ or Dutch ruim is preferred by Littré and Bloch, from the English word ‘room’. For Cervantes rombo and rumbo are the same, identifying cosmographic rombos with magical rombos to which he attributes mysterious properties. …Rumbo stems from a confusion of two words, the Greek-Latin rhombus ‘rombo’, represented in the spaces of the compass and the nautical term rumbo that is the ‘space’ or ‘room’ in a ship. The first word means ‘an ideal division of the horizon, a cosmographic division’ and later ‘direction taken to reach another place, especially with reference to ships’. Currently means direction in general. In Argentina it is a sheer synonym of ‘to go’. Corominas and Pascual (1983, 5).

42. For over 50 years, the most important paint factory in Argentina has been using a rhombus as its trade-mark.

43. This paper was presented at the “Meeting in Honour of Jorge Luis Borges”, 13th International Book Fair, Buenos Aires, April 3, 1987.

44. Jules Laforgue is well-known among English-speaking readers as a French poet who was born in Uruguay but I would rather say that he was a Uruguayan poet who died in France.

45. NT. Pasado mañana means ‘the day-after-tomorrow’ in Spanish. However, it is possible to read it as ‘past-tomorrow’.

46. Borges’ character, Herbert Quain, also borrows the plot of his story from Borges’ story Las ruinas circulares.

47. Macedonio Fernández was an Argentinean philosopher and writer Borges recognized as his closest friend. He was originally a friend of Borges’ father, and a correspondent of William James’.

48. This is my paper for the round table, with Haroldo de Campos, Boris Schnaiderman and João Alexandre Barbosa in the First Congress of the ABRALIC (Associação Brasilísa de Literatura Comparada), which took place at the Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, June 3rd, 1988.

49. Both scholars write about the discovery by Jacques Lefrère (La visage de Lautréamont, Paris, 1977), of the Illiad translated by José Gómez Hermosilla and the handwritten exlibris by Isidoro Dusasse: Propiedad del señor Isidoro Dusasse nacido en Montevideo (Uruguay). Tengo también “Arte de hablar” del mismo autor. 12 de abril 1863. (The authors have kept Lautréamont’s mistakes).

50. The Diccionario de la Real Academia Española, however, only records this meaning in its 20th edition, of 1984. Among the 20 entries of the 1970 edition the meaning of personalidad, personaje is not included. Other dictionaries, for example the Petit Robert, do include it. NT: for the definition in this translation I have consulted the Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, 1990 edition.


52. This text is entitled “Paul Bourget” (1882): it was published in Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France, juillet-aout, 1872.

53. NT. In Spanish, estar en pañales, literally ‘to be in diapers’ refers to something that is just beginning to develop.
45. Carol Jacobs in “The Monstrosity of Translations”. Modern language notes, (1975, 90:763, note 9), attributes the cabalistic meaning of Benjamin's text by referring to Gershom Scholem who, in his commentary of it links the figure of the angel with the story of Luria's Kabbalah. “Yet at the same time Benjamin has in mind the Kabbalistic concept of the Tikun, the messianic restoration and mending which patches together and restores the original Being of things, shattered and corrupted in the Breaking of the vessels and also the original being of history.” (I have been unable to obtain a copy of Jacob's book and quote from Paul de Man's book which I mention in note N:60).

54. In this book Harold Bloom gives one of his shrewdest approaches to literary theory and criticism, researching the Book of Genesis as well as Freud's theory on the origin of sexuality, which he studies in relation with the poetic event as a question of sources, a quest of origins (a rewording of the topic of his The anxiety of influence).

55. The author is playing here with the homographs estrella (Spanish for 'star') and estrella, the third person singular in the present tense of the verb estrellar, ‘to smash’, ‘to break into pieces’.

56. In Spanish dar a luz means 'to give birth'.

57. Marie, the sister he loved most dearly, married the architect Gustave Labat.

58. «Dans les deux livres, Buenos Aires n'apparaît plus. Génèse est partout» [In both books, Buenos Aires does not appear. Geneve is everywhere]. The double misplacing (historical and geographical) does not rule out the possibility of its aesthetic appreciation. Like Menard for Borges, for the author of the review Borges is a symbolist and “error has already begun to fog his Memory”.

59. “Aufgabe, task, can also mean 'the one who has to give up'” Paul de Man (1986:80).

60. Max Ernst, La femme 100 têtes. Translated into English as The hundred headless woman (1981).

61. Lawrence Durell states that T.S. Eliot had confessed his indebtedness to Jules Laforgue and that he had spent years dreaming of translating him; but, he said, that was an impossible undertaking: his language was too elliptic and impacted.

62. I am indebted for both etymologies of the word Hebrew to the philological knowledge of Mr. Eliezer Palmer, Ambassador of Israel in Uruguay, whom I thank for this information and the interest he has shown in my work.

63. Homonymy: the relation between one or more verbal terms that share the same signifieds but have radically different signifiers. Paronomasia: play on words based on a chance similarity between different terms. Syllipsis: rhetorical figure that consists in employing one word in its literal and figurative senses at the same time. It is a case of antanaclasis, Antanaclasis or dylogy: rhetorical figure based on homonymy and polysemy, which happens when a word is used at different times within the same utterance, each time in a different sense. Diaphora: this is an antanaclasis that only implies a case in a slight difference between the terms.

64. Saussure (1916:126–127) refers to the “simple continuity of acoustic images” and he states in a note: “This last case is rare and can be classed as abnormal, for the mind naturally discards associations that cloud the intelligibility of discourse. But its existence is proved by a lower category of puns based on the ridiculous confusions that can result from pure and simple homonymy”.

65. One century before Saussure, Pierre Fontanier in Les figures du discours (1968) stated that «Quoi qu'il en soit, l'antanaclase n'est employée dans tous ces mêmes exemples que pour la rime, que par manière de plaisanterie, ou que par une sorte de licence poétique, et nous n'avons gardé de l'y considérer comme une beauté. Notre langue, nous ne saurions trop le dire est essentiellement ennemie de toute affectation, de tout jeu de mot puéril. Or, c'est qui le plus souvent caractérise l'antanaclase et ce qui doit en faire singulièrement restreindre l'usage dans les langues même d'un goût moins sévère.» [Antanaclasis is employed in all these examples only in rhyme, as way of pleasantry or by a poetical licen of sorts, and we have made efforts not to consider it a beauty. Our language is the enemy of all affectation, of every puerile play on words. Besides, this is what frequently characterises antanaclasis, and what restricts its use even in languages of a less severe taste].

66. “Chatsong”, by Jacques Prévert, Spectacle (1949) touches upon a procedure which is similar to intranslation and which is reinforced by a global, non-segmented reading of the word. The title contains the intra- and interlingual synonymy which permeates the whole text:

oh yes je t'aime/je t'aime tant/tant temps/tant temps/tant temps/tant et tant et tant et tant.


67. The text of this paper was presented at the Colloquium on Christian Metz et la théorie du cinéma, at the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-la-Salle, France, on June 29, 1989.

68. “…le théoricien ne se réfugie pas dans l’anonymat du discours scientifique, ne se cache plus derrière l’objectivité de ses propositions; au contraire… Il en résulte que, entre observateur et observé, entre théoricien et cinéma, il n’y a plus division de rôles mais une seule direction de marche.” […] the theoretician does not seek refuge in the anonymity of scientific discourse. He does no longer hide behind the objectivity of his propositions; on the contrary… it so happens that between observer and observed, between theoretician and cinema, there is no more role division than a single marching direction.]


70. Hofstadter and Dennett (1981). “The false mirror” is a huge eye which from the center of Magritte's painting highlights the pun in the title on the cover of the book.
72. With this term Metz refers to the relation cinema has with the signifiers of other arts.

73. "To intervene, intervenir, according to the definition exemplified by the Petit Robert: 'ask an influential person to intervene'" Colie (1979:23).

74. «Selon Port-Royal un souci d'elegance (la repetition est fastidieuse) est à l'origine de l'anaphore; les modernes se croient plus scientifiques en parlant d'un souci d'economie.» [According to Port Royal, a care for elegance (repetition is annoying) lies in the origins of anaphora; modern man believes himself to be more scientific and takes care of economy.] Ducrot and Todorov (1972:358).

75. "Besides, what energy and what dignity gives to this phrase the word God repeated four times. This repetition is of the kind called anaphora, or simply, Repetition" Fontanier (1968:329).

76. «Un gros plan de revolver ne signifie pas revolvers (unite lexicalement purement virtuelle) — mais signifie au moins, et sans parler des connotations, «Voici un revolver!» [A closeup of a revolver does not mean "revolver" (purely virtual lexical unity) but it means, at least, and without talking of connotations, "This is a revolver"] Metz (1968:72).


78. «Mélisande ne cache pas, mais elle ne parle pas. Telle est la Photo: elle ne sait dire ce qu'elle donne à voir» Barthes (1981a:156).

79. In German, it means 'perception' though Wahr, 'truth', is its origin.

80. «La crise de la pragmatique en France résulte par contre de cette quête pour le sujet dans le langage qui est partout et nulle part.» [The pragmatic crises in France results from this quest of the subject in language, which is everywhere and nowhere.] Nerlich (1989:111-112).

81. «Tout ce que l'image montre, la parole ne doit pas le dire, le son ne doit pas le suggérer.» [All this the image shows, should not be said with words, the sound should not be hinted at.] Metz rejects the dogmatism of this obligatory a-synchrony. Metz (1968, II:48).

82. According to Metz, not everything that appears in the films is cinematographic: only that which can appear only in cinema and which constitutes specifically the cinematographic language.

83. This supposition or transposition is legitimized in part by the name with which Orlando, the journalist of E la nave va... introduces the captain of the ship: he calls him "Leonardo di Robertis" and, upon the captain's protest, he corrects himself: "Roberto di Leonardis".

84. "...when a narrator takes the listener to the kingdom of what being absent can be recalled or the kingdom of constructive fantasy, and presents him with the same demonstrative (pronouns) for him to see and hear what there is to see and hear... Not with his exterior eyes and ears but with those usually called 'interior or spiritual'..." Bühler (1950:200).

85. Metz (1968:15) considered that the efficacy of "unrealism" in cinema is due to the fact that «à ce que l'irréel y apparaît comme réalisé et s'offre au regard sous les apparences du surgissement événementiel, non de la plausible illustration de quelque processus extraordinaire, qui serait purement conçu [there what is real appears as realized and is offered to our gaze under the appearances of an eventful arising, not as the plausible illustration of an extraordinary process which would be purely conceived.] I take Metz's notion in a broad sense, because films like any other known object support that primary realization on the reality of what «s'est réellement passé». In «L'impression de réalité». More recently, Pierre Bayard has said that «bien que je sache pertinemment que tel personnage cinématographique n'existe pas, encore que...» je serai inévitablement amené, pour en parler, à recourir aux mêmes formulations que celles que je réserve aux êtres vivants, ...il n'y a pas une langue capable de sertir référents imaginaires et référents réels» [although I may know that a certain character does not exist (even when...) to mention it I am forced to resort to the same formulations which I reserve for living beings... There is no language capable of classifying imaginary referents and real referents] (1989:21). In the same volume, Joan Copjec states that «la théorie du cinéma a une nouvelle conception de l'impression de réalité caractéristique du cinéma. N'étant plus conçue comme dépendante d'une relation de vraisemblance entre l'image et le référent réel, cette impression fut attribuée dès lors à une relation d'adéquation entre l'image et le spectateur.» [The theory of cinema has brought a new conception of the "impression of reality" characteristic of the cinema. One does no longer conceive oneself as dependent on a relation of verisimilitude between the images and the real referent, rather this impression is attributed to a relation of adequation between the image and the spectator].

86. Ockham (Ockham's razor) defined movement as the reappearance of the same thing in different places.

87. In Benveniste's (1971) sense opposing "discourse" and insofar as it attempts to counteract the course of time.

88. In a recent article Jeffrey Kittay (1988:205-234) says: "It is logical to see anaphora as a kind of resolution into non-deictic language ... At least for anaphora one would think one has achieved the required 'stillness', the surrounding text is fixed, 'eternally' surrounding the anaphora. But all texts are not still. The last word has certainly not been said on this distinction. We are functioning here in an area of many shades: in fact, the referent of anaphora is shadowy".

89. «Les deux discours, celui du narrateur et celui de Marcel Proust, sont homologues, mais non point analogues. Le narrateur va écrire, et ce futur le maintient dans un ordre de l'existence, non de la parole; il est aux prises avec une psychologie, non avec une technique. Marcel Proust, au contraire, écrit; il lutte avec les catégories du langage, non avec celles du comportement.» [Both discourses, the narrator's and Marcel Proust's, are homologues but not
analogous at all. The narrator will write, and this future keeps him in the order of existence, not of speech; he is linked to a psychology, not a technique. Marcel Proust, on the contrary, writes he fights against the categories of language, not against those of behaviour.] Barthes (1971:160).

90. Plato (1981:89–90). Book X, The Republic. «Maintenant nous ne demandons pas de compter à Homère ni à tout autre poète de mille choses dont ils ont parlé: nous ne demandons pas si tel d’entre eux a été un habile médecin, et non un simple imitateur du langage des médecins, quels malades un poète ancien ou moderne passe pour avoir guéri, comme l’a fait Asclépios, ou quels disciples savants en médecine il a laissé après lui, comme celui-ci a laissé ses descendants. Ne les interrogons pas non plus sur les autres arts: faisons-leur en grâce.» [Let us not expect from Homer, nor from any other poet, that they answer to us for many of the things they spoke to us about, asking them if any of them was a skilled doctor, and not a simple imitator of the language of doctors, or which are the sick whom some poet, be it ancient or modern, is famous for having cured, like Asclepios has cured, or which are the wise disciples of medicine who has left behind him, like the very Asclepios did with his descendants. Let’s concede them the same grace with respect to the other arts, and let’s not talk to them about it any further.] Trans E. Chambry, Ed. Belles-Lettres, (1934:89–90).

91. This is the text of a paper presented on September 28, 1990 in Budapest at the Colloquium on Symbolicity, organised in honour of Professor Thomas A. Sebeok on his 70th anniversary. As I could not attend this Colloquium, I put the presentation of the paper into the hands of the Odin Teatret, from Denmark.

92. The International Cultural Centre was founded in Salto, Uruguay, in August 1990. As the overall topic of its inauguration, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Borges’ story Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius which he claimed to have written in “Salto Oriental”, where this new Cultural Centre is located. Ever since the first edition of this text, in Sur, No. 68, Buenos Aires, these references appear in footnotes to the story. Borges, together with his mother, Leonor Acevedo de Borges, used to frequently visit this Uruguayan province where they had close family connections, as well as a circle of friends. Esther Haedo, the wife of Enrique Amorim, an important Uruguayan writer and owner of the villa “Las Nubes”, where we held our meeting, still preserves memories of the repeated presence of Borges.

93. Salto Oriental. 1940 is the double reference at the end of the story, perhaps to point at the contrast with Borges’ famous, pre-dated Postdata de 1947, published in 1940 together with the rest of the story.

94. In Jorge Luis Borges, a literary biography (Rodríguez Monegal 1978), Emir gives the story of this name which had been constructed by him years before to designate “the author” of much “humorous stuff” which both writers had produced, parodying the grandiloquent expressions of known writers and critics, the inflated rhetoric of traditional River Plate literary criticism, and the procedures of the detective novel, as well as the formalities and customs of literary events in general.

95. The attraction between enthusiastic readers has continued without interruption. Last year I mentioned to Biy the coincidences between his aesthetics and those of Walter Benjamin. Since then, as he remarked in Salto, he has been continuously reading Benjamin’s work.

96. L’eternité par les astres. Hypothèse astronomique par Louis-Auguste Blanqui, Paris, 1872, was a too well-known book at the time for Peirce, the astronomer, to have remained unaware of its existence. Many of his themes touched on those of Blanqui, and his French relations could not have failed to point out to him the existence of the author, his books and his ideas.

97. As was the case with Isidro Parodi, the famous character in Biyorges, whose criminal investigations were most productive to Umberto Eco, of both fiction and theory, Blanqui from his prison could perform feats which belied his seclusion and isolation.

98. In French, the tiers-arbitre is the person changed with settling disputes between two parties, and tierce personne, therefore, by extension, means a stranger, or outsider, foreigner. Dictionnaire Petit Robert, (1982).

99. I prefer not to discuss the current, widely-used meaning of the term “third world”: the feeling of protest, appeal for charity or ambivalent resignation on occupying one of the lowest of positions within an established order, according to criteria which do not appear to me t be valid. Instead my “third world” refers to the Orbis tertius in cartography. The Orbis tertius, old planetary inscription where the Earth figures as the third planet of the solar system in geographical distance from the sun. I do not doubt that the Earth is Orbis Tertius, that is to say, the third world.

100. «Lat. hybrida, -ae, bastard, of mixed blood. It is said of animals and of men. The writing has been doubtlessly influenced by a false literary approximation with ibris.» [Dictionnaire Petit Robert. (1985:302).


102. Genette (1966) quotes Borges thus: “The idea of a single subject is omnipotent. Rarely do books bear a signature. The concept of plagiarism does not exist: it has been established that all works are those of a single author who is timeless and anonymous. Criticism tends to invent authors; it will choose two different works, — let us say, the Two to one and the Thousand-and-one-nights — attribute them to one and the same author and then proceed to determine with honesty the psychology of this interesting homme des lettres.”
This quotation is the basis of _L'utopie littéraire_, which is precisely what is being dealt with here.

103. "An entire week of work with pick and spade could not exhume another bruton, other than a rusty wheel, with antedates to the experiment" (Thón, *Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*). In the same way, the «Postdata del 47» appear already in the first edition of the story in _Sur_ (No. 68, 1940). In relation to the later publication (first Spanish edition: Emecé, 1944) it appears with a modification which is of interest in the same sense: "I reproduce the earlier article exactly as it appeared in the issue No. 68 of _Sur_ — in jade green covers, May 1940 — with no excision except for a few metaphors and a type of burlesque summary which now appears to be frivolous. So many things have happened since that date... I will limit myself in recording them." This reference to the magazine _Sur_ is, of course, an autoreference which had already been published in the same magazine which mentions it. In addition, the reference to the burlesque summary refers to the same postscript where this mention is included.

104. The word cita, in Spanish, means both 'quotation' and 'appointment'.

105. In both the novel and the story, duplication is ubiquitous: "I know something which may be of use to the readers of this report in ascertaining the date of the second appearance of the intruders: The two moons and the two suns were seen on the following day. It could have been just a local apparition; nevertheless it seems more likely to me to be a phenomenon of mirages, caused by the moon or the sun... But I think that the two moons and the two suns don't hold much interest, they would have had to have reached everywhere, either through the sky or through more complete and scholarly information. I am not recording this so as to afford them any poetic or bizarre value, but rather so that my readers, who receive newspapers and have birthdays, may put a date on these pages." This is about a duplication which the narrator, even with the corrections by the editor, had already seen: "We are experiencing the first nights with two moons. But already they have seen two suns." Cicero writes in _De natura deorum_: "Tum sole quot ut e patre audivi Tuditanus et Aquilio Consulibus evenerat." "I don't believe it was a bad quotation" says the narrator. Here appears the editor's footnote which says "He is mistaken. He omits the most important word: geminato (from geminatus — 'geminated', 'duplicated', 'repeated', 'reiterated'). (Bioy Casares 1940: _La invención de Morel_).


107. "They remain unknown and removed in such a way that there is no possibility their warnings can cause us to be more alert: 'So as to save us blunders and pains'. All great events in our globe have their cross entry, especially when they have involved fatality. Perhaps the English have lost the Battle of Waterloo many times over in the globes where their adversaries haven't committed the same stupidities as Grouchy. As a compensation, in another globe, Bonaparte does not always achieve victory in Marengo, which appears to be tough luck" Blanqui (1983: V).

108. In Plan de evasión by Bioy Casares (1945), Bioy gives his characters the names of French collaborators during the Nazi occupation. The plot also establishes connections with other periods, but always orientated into the same direction. "My name is Bordenave. I am called Dreyfus because they say I always speak of Captain Dreyfus".

109. In an interview with Alain Rensais and Robbe-Grillet, the latter tells that after a private screening of the film, he received a call from Claude Ollier, who told him: «Mais c'est L'invention de Morel!» The interviewers then explained some aspects of the book and connected them with aspects of the film and Rensais, who did not know the book, concluded that there was indeed «un rapport... frappant» (Cozarinsky 1974).

110. For example, in a letter to Max Horkheimer (1938) from Paris, W. Benjamin referred to the commotion caused by the discovery of Blanqui's astronomical phantasmagorias. In the little time he had left until 1940, Benjamin was not to omit the lucidity of the numerous speculative messianisms in _L'eternité par les astres_.

111. Borges says in his prologue to _La invención de Morel_: "It is enough for me to say what Bioy in a literary manner a concept which was refuted by St. Augustine and Origenes, which was argued by Louis-Auguste Blanqui and expressed in unforgettable music by Dante Gabriel Rossetti: 'I have been here before, but when or how I cannot tell.'"

112. A different translation of this text was published in _World Literature Today_, a literary quarterly of the University of Oklahoma. Autumn 1991, special issue on _The posthumous career of Manuel Puig._

113. For the purpose of this study particular reference is made to two of Manuel Puig's works, _El beso de la mujer araña_ (1976) and _Pubis angelical_ (1979).

114. I presented this paper at the Colloquium on _Reality and fiction in the Americas_, organized by Professor Richard Morse in The Latin American Program of The Wilson Centre, Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, 21st October, 1988.

115. In spite of being a little known form of iconicity I believe the imitation of a verbal sign by the same verbal sign to be one of the imitative processes, which best fulfills the requirements of similarity which Charles S. Peirce defined, in a not too precise manner, as "icon", in various passages of his _Collected papers_, (1933–1958).

116. Whilst speaking about the idiomatic particularities of this terminology, Borges advised me to translate the Spanish _cursi_ as _bathos_.

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**Notes**

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117. La correspondencia entre Emir Rodríguez Moncada y Manuel Puig es la de la Firestone Library of Princeton University. I would like to thank the Manuscripts and Rare Book Library for its generosity in allowing me to consult the letters and to quote from them. In spite of the numerous studies of Puig's work, I will refer mostly to the analyses and commentaries of Rodríguez Moncada. In one letter to Rodríguez Moncada, dated 6th February, 1969, Puig writes: "Bueno, el boletín Puig se completa con el anuncio de su próxima novela, de corte policíaco, actualmente shooting on location in perverted Buenos Aires. It's a sort of thriller. ¿Te acordás del slogan de la MGM para lanzar 'I'll cry tomorrow' con Susan Hayward? Decías así: 'A film shot on location: inside a woman's soul!' — Bueno, lo mismo se podría aplicar a mi policial. OK Emir, esta vez contéstame por favor. Con Severo en Paris estuvimos de acuerdo en que ambos somos inventos tuyos ¿no se te ocurrió desinventarnos for some mysterious reason?' [Well, the Puig bulletin ends with the announcement of his next novel, a thriller, presently shooting on location in perverted Buenos Aires. It's a sort of thriller. Do you remember MGM's slogan for the launching of 'I'll cry tomorrow' with Susan Hayward? It went 'A film shot on location: inside a woman's soul!'] — Well, the same would apply to my thriller. OK Emir, this time please answer me. In Paris, we agreed with Severo that we both are inventions of yours, wouldn't you happen to uninvent me for some mysterious reason?] Buenos Aires, 6th February 1969.


119. "In Manuel Puig, cinema is an instrument of analysis because he belongs truly to that generation which frequented the popular university of cinema, to the generation which learned to dream and to write in the dark, which adopted the social and romantic models offered by commercial North-American cinema and which was educated, and not just colonized, by celluloid" (Rodríguez Moncada 1972, 2:379).


122. I call cordones ( 'cords') the intermediation marks which limit and distinguish the dialectic conditions of autonomy and reciprocal dependence established between the artistic universe as artificial — and above all, virtual —, and the expectative universe of the spectator, of his expectations —, the historical situation in which this communication takes place, the denomination is justified because in current contexts cordón designates a very particular and contradictory duality: it means as much what unites as what separates: the cordón is applied to the most intimate relation anterior to the serv-nacer (‘to be’ — ‘to be born’), the umbilical cord of origin, the seal of the initial pact, the knot and cut at deliverance. On the other hand, it is also applied to those objects which separate and assure the net cut, the most severe, the most necessary and arbitrary sanitary or police barrier (cordón sanitario, cordón policial). Union and separation, the cordones reconcile two opposing functions in one word. University of Brussels, 1981. Degrés No. 321, 1982.

135. This is Alain Robbe-Grillet’s title for the film based on two stories by Borges, (1968).

136. Your mind must leap from a third person perspective, “he” or “she” — to a first person perspective — “I”. “Comedians have long known how to exaggerate this leap … so that it is a gift to see ourselves as others see us … this dramatic shift is a discovery” Hofstadter and Dennett (1981:20–21). The text with which the editors begin the book is “Borges y yo”. It would have been interesting to study this dramatic shift — in the strongest sense of the word, taking the story we are analysing here, as a point of departure.

137. N.T. in Spanish *inversión* means both ‘inversion’ and ‘investment’.


139. Even though Borges does not explicitly consider this semantic-numerical aspect of the term, he calls one of his last collections of poetry *La cifra*, (1981).

140. «*Harmonie de mouvements opposés comme celle de l’arc et la lyre*» Heraclitus (1959:51).

141. «Qu’après la fait et pour autant qu’il y participe, devient semblable ce qui participe à la ressemblance; dissemblable, ce qui participe à la dissimilitude, l’un et l’autre, ce qui participe à l’une et à l’autre? Si toutes choses prennent part à ces deux formes opposées, que toutes choses aient, à elles mêmes, par cette double participation, à la fois semblables et dissemblables, qu’y a-t-il à cela d’étonnant?» [After the event, and insofar as it participates, it turns those who participate in the likeness similar to it; and dissimilar those who participate in the dissimilitude. One and the other, those who participate in one or the other. If all things participate in these two opposing forms, let all things be for themselves, due to this double participation, at once similar and dissimilar, what is surprising about this?] Plato, *Parménide*, 129a), Ed. Belles Lettres, Paris.

142. The Venerable Beda (672–735), in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, tells about the double poetical revelation that enlightened Caedmon, an illiterate shepherd who received in a dream his first poem and, at the same time, his poetical vocation. Both poem and poet are initiated by “The beginning of the created things”.


144. N.T. in its old sense of ‘announced’, ‘declared’ from Old English meldan and Old High German meldun.

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