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**BORGES/DERRIDA/FOUCAULT: PHARMAKEUS/HETEROTOPIA  
OR BEYOND LITERATURE ('hors-littérature'): WRITING,  
PHANTOMS, SIMULACRA, MASKS, THE CARNIVAL AND ...  
ATLÖN/TLÖN, YKVA/UQBAR, HLAER, JANGR, HRÖN(N)/  
HRÖNIR, UR AND OTHER FIGURES**

Desvarío laborioso y empobrecedor el de componer vastos libros; el de exhibir en quinientas páginas una idea cuya perfecta exposición oral cabe en pocos minutos. Mejor procedimiento es simular que esos libros ya existen y ofrecer un resumen, un comentario. [...] *Más razonable, más inepto, más haragán, he preferido la escritura de notas sobre libros imaginarios. Estas son* TLön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius *y el Examen de la Obra de Herbert Quain.* ("TLön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", OC, I: 429)<sup>1</sup>

*Los espejos y la paternidad son abominables* (mirrors and fatherhood are hateful) *porque lo multiplican y lo divulgan.* (ibid: 432)

En sus remotas páginas está escrito que los animales se dividen en (a) pertenecientes al Emperador, (b) embalsamados, (c) amaestrados, (d) lechones, (e) sirenas, (f) fabulosos, (g) perros sueltos, (h) incluidos en esta clasificación, (i) que se agitan como locos, (j) innumerables, (k) dibujados con un pincel finísimo de pelo de camello, (l) etcétera, (m) que acaban de romper el jarrón, (n) que de lejos parecen moscas. ("El idioma analítico de John Wilkins", OC, I: 708)

Las dos teologías, sin embargo no coinciden íntegramente; la del griego [Homero/*La Odisea*] corresponde a la época de la palabra oral, y la del francés [Mallarmé], a una época de la palabra escrita. En una se habla de contar y en otra de libros.

[...]

[...] y en el *Fedro* narró [Platón] una fábula egipcia contra la escritura (cuyo hábito hace que la gente descuide el ejercicio de la memoria y dependa de símbolos), y dijo que los libros son como las figuras pintadas, "que parecen vivas, pero no contestan una palabra y las preguntas que les hacen".

[...]

1 "Prólogo" to "El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan", in: *Ficciones*. All citations are from *Obras Completas* (= OC).

Lo más prudente es no escribir sino aprender y enseñar de viva voz, porque lo escrito queda. ("Del culto de los libros", OC, I: 713)

Me dijo que su libro se llamaba el Libro de Arena porque ni el libro ni la arena tienen ni principio ni fin.

[...]

- No puede ser, pero es. El número de páginas de este libro es exactamente infinito. Ninguna es la primera; ninguna, la última. No sé por qué están numeradas de ese modo arbitrario. Acaso para dar a entender que los términos de una serie infinita admiten cualquier número. ("El Libro de Arena", OC, II: 69)

*Son el irresponsable juego de un tímido que no se animó a escribir cuentos y que se distrajo en falsear y tergiversar (sin justificación estética alguna vez) ajenas historias [...] Los doctores del Gran Vehículo enseñan que lo esencial del universo es la vacuidad. Tienen razón en lo referente a esa mínima parte del universo que es este libro. Patibulos y piratas lo pueblan y la palabra infamia aturde en el título, pero bajo los tumultos no hay nada. No es otra cosa que apariencia, que una superficie de imágenes; por eso mismo puede acaso agradar. El hombre que lo ejecutó era asaz desdichado, pero se entretuvo escribiéndolo; ojalá algún reflejo de aquel placer alcance a los lectores.* ("Prólogo" to the edition of 1954 of *Historia universal de una infamia*, OC, I: 291)

*La gêne qui fait rire quand on lit Borges est apparentée sans doute au profond malaise de ceux dont le langage est ruiné: avoir perdu le "commun" du lieu et du nom. Atopie, aphasie.* (Foucault 1966: 10)

Nous savons, disions-nous plus haut. Or nous savons ici quelque chose qui n'est plus rien, et d'un savoir dont la forme ne se laisse plus reconnaître sous ce vieux titre. Le traitement de la paléonymie n'est plus ici une prise de conscience, une reprise de connaissance. (Derrida 1972: 30)

## 0. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This paper originates from two observations I made in another paper entitled "Überlegungen zur Textsorte 'Fantastik' oder Borges und die Negation des Fantastischen. Rhizomatische Simulation, 'dirigierter Zufall' und semiotisches Skandalon" (1998: 11-74). There, when asking about the *arché* (origin), the *eschaton* (final reasons or things) and the *telos* (finality) in Borges' writing, I responded with yet another question: we should ask ourselves why Borges *simulates*. I found the answer at the epistemological level, that is, *beyond* literature, in the field of pure signs with the meaning of *pure* as postulated by Mallarmé, that is, a purity that does not lead to metaphysics, but to the signs' most absolute self-referentiality in a present without time in the world as absolute sign. I added that Borges goes far beyond the literary in as much as he attains the limit of what is thinkable, that is, he formulates the unthinkable. For instance, in "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins", a Chinese Encyclopedia offers a peculiar classification of animals, by liberating the signs from their established signifieds and signifiers



and by assigning them mythical and magical signifiers coupled with a primary vagueness which elicit through the sign a mythical revelation" (this is the case in "Undr" or in "La escritura del dios"). In the same paper, referring to Foucault, I wrote about the "monstrosity of Borges' discourse, about the destruction of the *logos* and of its consequences, about the terror when facing the unintelligibility of writing, when facing the unthinkable", when facing the phantom, the absence where I place the fantastic in Borges' discourse. I say this even though I seriously question the relevance of such a term, since the Borgesian fantastic is radically different from the so called 'fantastic genre'.<sup>2</sup>

These observations, in particular the one regarding the passage of Borges 'beyond writing', "alarmed" one reader who demanded that I should clearly indicate what exactly I meant by this 'beyond'. On that occasion, I admit, I was unable to respond with the required precision. However, what became clear to me was that, since I began writing about Borges' work, I have not really been writing about the mimetic or anti-mimetic problem in Borges, but about the problem of *presence and absence in writing*. This 'beyond' refers precisely to the 'phantom absence' of Borges' writing; it refers to the abyss that I have elsewhere called 'rhizomatic guided randomness' ('azar dirigido rizomático') or 'rhizomatic directed simulation' ('simulación dirigida rizomática'). This is the problem of absence, much discussed by Derrida (1972) in his deconstruction/dissemination theory, related to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic theory (1976) and to Baudrillard's simulation theory (1980). It is the following question that the present paper wishes to grapple with: the question of the description and formulation of Borges' absence in writing *through* writing. As in Derrida's theory of deconstruction,<sup>3</sup> Borges thematizes, problematizes and attempts to perlaborate the problem of Western dualism, the "crisis of the *versus*" (Mallarmé: *Mimique, Igitur*), which includes the oppositions between signifier and signified, language and speech, orality and the writing of logical-hierarchic relations, and also the relation between the referent and mimesis, writing's self-referentiality, the negation of an origin, the proliferation of the trace through insemination and dissemination, the proliferation of rhizo-

2 If one decides to continue using the term 'fantastic' to refer to Borges' literature, then this term, in this case, would refer to the negation of the fantastic, the negation of the duality or opposition between the 'real' and the 'fantastic'. The 'real' would then be a consequence of the imagination, of the perception of self-referential signs. In order to perceive the world, it must first become signs, which do not have the function to confirm or explain the world, but only to make possible its perception. The 'fantastic' could be defined as the *world as sign*. According to Hager, "To achieve the fantastic Borges did not resort to griffins, trolls, and unicorns [...], but turned topoi of metaphysics such as life as a dream, the many and One, and the world as Text" (1985: 231).

3 Derrida's presence in this article is central. I assume that Derrida's work is sufficiently known so that I might avoid quoting him constantly. Those acquainted with Derrida's work will recognize when it is present in my writing and when it is not.

matic writing, re-doubling, the signifier/signified's deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the lack of *arché*, *eschaton* and *telos*, and its recovery as journey, contamination and search.

My engagement with Borges as a reader dates back many years, but my boldness as an academic who studies Borges is relatively recent, and my writing about Borges work is even more recent. In any event, Borges has always intrigued me: his writing endured, like a thorn, like a black hole, as an uncomfortable spot; I went about my academic work with a sense of guilt, with a feeling that I was avoiding a strange figure. My uneasiness, my sense of defeat and anguish increased when, by the mid-1970s, I read, although superficially, some of Derrida's work, specifically *De la grammatologie* (1967) and *La Dissémination* (1972), and, most important, *La pharmacie de Platon*, whose third chapter quotes Borges' "La Esfera de Pascal" and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius". At this time I also came across a great book which became a traveller companion throughout all these years: Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (1966). Both of these authors share a certain density, a cryptic language, and are highly recurrent and deconstructivist. They also share the status of being suspected and 'feared' by many established literary theorists, and perhaps, according to some, for a good reason. In these works, both authors refer to Borges, and the "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins" apparently constitutes the very starting point of the *Les mots et les choses*. Indeed, these connections between Borges and Foucault and Borges and Derrida had an effect on me. Perhaps, Borges would say that with this recognition "I began to understand Borges, I began to understand Foucault and Derrida, and then I began to understand Borges". However, my effort did not go any further. In 1989, ten years later, I entered the debate on Post-Modernity and conducted a seminar at the Universität Kiel in Germany on "Borges' Novellen: Moderne oder Postmoderne?" I finished my book *Von den Ähnlichkeiten und Differenzen*, whose point of departure was Foucault, and I wrote my very first article on Borges for a lecture tour in Latin America in the Fall of 1989. It is from this point that my article "El productor 'rizomórfico' y el lector como 'detective literario': la aventura de los signos o la postmodernidad del discurso borgesiano (intertextualidad-palimpsesto-rizoma-deconstrucción)" originated and it was published in 1992. In 1991 I conducted another seminar at the Universität Hamburg on "La obra narrativa de Jorge Luis Borges", which resulted in my second article on Borges: "Borges y la 'simulación rizomática dirigida': percepción y objetivación de los signos", published in 1994<sup>4</sup>, and in which I developed a close relationship with Baudrillard's (1980) and Deleuze/Guattari's (1976) work. I also had the opportunity to present and discuss this article in Latin America, particularly in Puerto Rico, where a very lively debate developed. The last missing link of this enterprise was constituted by my article "Die Wirklichkeit als Reise durch die Zeichen: Cervantes, Borges und Foucault" (1994). This article was triggered by the following question: What is the relation between Borges and Cervantes, between Foucault and Cervantes, and what was the relation to Borges I had established in my

4 See A. de Toro (1994: 5-32).



book *Von den Ähnlichkeiten und Differenzen?* In these various works I found a language that allowed me to feel comfortable with Borges, dissembling the uneasiness mentioned above. However, still lingering was a disquietude regarding Derrida, and I became even more anxious after conducting a seminar at the university of Leipzig about "Jorge Luis Borges und die Postmoderne", after a lecture on Borges and the fantastic (mentioned above), and after a seminar conducted at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico in September 1995. In this last seminar I became aware for the first time of something I had written in my article on the fantastic and I recalled that this 'something' was not clear to the students at the Universidad Iberoamericana.

I have narrated this experience of my readings of Borges' works not so much to show the process through which I came to write the present article, since this type of experience is shared by many of us, but rather to relate a *Gestalt*, the discovery of Borges' thinking, the epistemological interrelation of what may or may not be Borges' writing; the discovery of a phantom; the possibility to bridge an abyss; the possibility to explore the very foundation of Borges' postmodern thinking and to uncover Borges' contribution to the French *nouveau romanciers* who have extensively 'borrowed' from Borges, but who rarely acknowledge his influence. Derrida's philosophy of dissemination, Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome or Baudrillard's simulation are part and parcel of Borges' thinking. It is not a question of Borges' being a postmodern thinker *avant la lettre*, but rather the first to inhabit, live and executed it at least thirty years before postmodern thought entered the West. After reading Rodríguez Monegal's article entitled "Borges and Derrida" (1985/1990), I was able to confirm a series of coincidences between his experience and mine regarding the relation between Borges and Derrida and the statement that Borges had already dealt with all the issues that Derrida develops in a rather dense and cryptic manner. Rodríguez Monegal asserts:

I could not understand why he took so long in arriving at the same luminous perspectives which Borges had opened up years earlier. His famed "deconstruction" [...] was all too familiar to me: I had experienced it in Borges *avant la lettre*. (1985/1990: 128)

Here, I found confirmation of my suspicion that Derrida's philosophy is intimately related to Borges' thinking and writing, clearly evident in Derrida's *Hors livre* in *Dissémination*, and throughout his work. A question comes to mind immediately: why has Derrida not paid the same close attention to Borges that he has paid, for instance, to Plato, Hegel, Mallarmé or Sollers<sup>5</sup> (this is a question one may also ask to Genette's *Palimpsests*), since he came in contact with him in the mid-1960s?<sup>6</sup>

5 It is sufficient to read Rodríguez Monegal (1985/1990: 129-133) to realize how well Derrida knows Borges' work. Regarding this point, see Barbara Johnson's English translation of *Dissémination* and the articles by Mario Rodríguez and Roberto González Echevarría cited by Rodríguez Monegal.

6 See his article in *L'Herne* (1964: 223-227).

In another article (1994: 15), I pointed out that Borges' discourse shatters the coherence of language, the lexical structures are broken into linguistic atoms that rejoin and disjoin themselves, atoms that lack a name and an identity and are found in discontinuous groups. At the very instant that a given structure is evoked in Borges' work, it disintegrates, it snaps, since it has no foundation to sustain it. This movement is endless and keeps obliterating likeness, disseminating identities, crushing commonalities which barely begin to emerge. And thus it continues an *ad libitum*, *ad regressus* movement towards nothingness; a movement in which all that remains are fascination, vertigo, anxiety, and emptiness.<sup>7</sup> We are up against a type of thinking and writing without space and time: a rhizomatic thinking, *simulacrum ad libitum*:

Estaba tirado en la arena, donde trazaba torpemente y borraba una hilera de signos, que eran como las letras de los sueños, que uno está a punto de entender y luego se juntan. (OC, I: 538-540)

My interest is neither in exposing Derrida's 'debt' to Borges (or for that matter, that of Foucault or De Man), nor in describing a converging thinking (this, in fact, has already been done by authors such as Lemaître 1977; Rodríguez 1979; González Echevarría 1983; Rodríguez Monegal; 1985/1990; Levine 1990; O'Sullivan 1990; Rapaport 1990, and, in this book, F. de Toro in a much better way than I could manage here). Rather, my goal is to describe the absence I detect in my reading of Borges' work. In spite of his writing of some very concrete texts, Borges always unravels them by a radical deconstruction, dissemination and simulation of writing and of Western thought. And this is also part and parcel of Derrida's theory of dissemination. Here I read Borges from/with Derrida, and Derrida from/with Borges: I project/smear/ cover/erase/strike out one with the other and I submerge my own text in their texts. That is to say, I am not engaged in "bibliographical research", either in the "search of sources" or in an "arqueology" which could lead us to an origin and/or to a harmonic unity. My interest is to trace how Borges uses references, how he refers, grafts writing, how he appropriates the tradition in such a manner that the boundary between past and present writing is attenuated. Thus *his* texts are those written by him and by others, and vice-versa.

In this context, Rodríguez Monegal speaks of Borges' writing as a ritual-symbolic related to his father's death. I wonder if this ritual-symbolic relation may be connected to the gnostic sophism which states that "*Los espejos y la paternidad son abominables* [mirrors and fatherhood are abominable] *porque lo multiplican y lo divulgan* [because

7 According to Merrel (1988: 54):

The Work of Borges and other contemporary writers such as John Barth, Beckett, Pirandello and Nabokov, evidence Gödelian qualities: their narrative, in the manner of the liar paradox, is repeatedly *self negating*, it refers self referentially to that of which it is composed, and it often implies *vicious circularity* or *infinite regress*.



they multiply and extend]" ("Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", *OC*, I: 432).<sup>8</sup> What these sophisms suggest to me is the death of mimesis, that is, of intertextuality and the fantastic as mimesis, which is at the same time the resistance to the re-memory. I believe that the starting point of those scholars whose work is inspired by Lacan and Derrida, such as Rodríguez Monegal (1985/1990) and Levine (1990), with respect to memory, has led, on the one hand, to foregrounding of biographical and psychological aspects, and, on the other, to an emphasis on writing and poetological considerations. By this I do not wish to deny the possible relation between the death of Borges' father, Borges' accident in 1938, and the change that his writing experienced, including his devotion to what has been called fantastic literature. However, in my opinion, I believe that it is more appropriate, particularly when dealing with Borges, to consider his writing as a product of his own understanding of literature, of the concept of literature, by not distinguishing between writing, literature, fiction and reality. This is what actually and definitely determines the alleged change, a change already explicit in his work right from the very beginning (see Alazraki 1990: 99-108).

One last observation: My point of departure is a hypothesis about Borges' work and Derrida's work on Plato and Mallarmé regarding their writing practices. However, I think that both Derrida and I are addressing the same question: writing.

## 1. THE ELIMINATION OF THE MIMESIS

My interest in Borges in all my previous work on him since 1989 (1990, 1991, 1991a, 1992/1995, 1992a, 1994, 1994a, 1995, 1995a, 1996, 1996a, 1998) and to date, has hinged in showing that Borges creates a new literary paradigm and a new thinking in the twentieth century, and that he is, at least, one of its major forerunners. This new paradigm is present in two intellectual positions or two literary conceptions: the first one consists in Borges' understanding of literary activity not as a 'mimesis of reality', and this is why his literature has nothing to do with literary realism.<sup>9</sup> Borges apparently postulates 'literary mimesis', understood as a game with literary references, within a network of relations that at first appears as intertextuality. Quoting the topic opposition between 'reality vs fiction' Borges then quotes "'reality of fiction' vs 'mimesis of fiction'", resulting in the opposition "'mimesis of fiction' vs 'pseudo-mimesis of fiction'". In this manner, Borges not only makes reality a sign, but he also gets rid of the ontological category of reality, of the fantastic (which always demands the relation 'reality vs fiction'), of intertextuality. If Borges refers at all, he refers to

<sup>8</sup> See "Los espejos abominables" (*OC*, I: 327), and "Los espejos velados" (*OC*, I: 786).

<sup>9</sup> Obviously I am referring to works such as *Discusión* (1932), *Historia Universal de la Infamia* (1935), *Historia de la eternidad* (1936), *Ficciones* (1944), *El Aleph* (1949), *Otras Inquisiciones* (1952), etc. About this point see also Bioy Casares (1972: 222-230), Rodríguez Monegal (1955: 124-157, 1975: 25-37, 1976: 177-189).

texts, he evokes textual signs which are not intertextual for at least three reasons: a) Borges does not establish a codifying system that can be imitated or used later, and functionally and intentionally utilized (this is the case in *Don Quijote*); b) Borges invents his references, and intertextuality is only internal, self-referential, a phantom, a simulation; c) Borges nullifies the necessary dualism to produce intertextuality, in his case by denying the authors' authority, authorship. To claim that Borges uses intertextuality in a conventional manner negates the fact that he is convinced that his works are notes about books, real or imaginary, and this, as I have indicated elsewhere (1994: 5-32; see also Alazraki 1990: 101f.), is not a mere flirtation by Borges, but a poetics of deconstruction and dissemination. Borges' position is related to what Roland Barthes (1970) (based on the concept of *écriture/trace*, developed by Derrida, and based on the theories of the Tel Quel group regarding the status of writing and reading) describes in *S/Z* as the *scriptible*, that is, a practice, activity where both reading and writing are placed in a relation of equivalence by transforming the reading into a *re-writing*. This leads to a "eternal present":

[...] c'est *nous en train d'écrire*, avant que le jeu infini du monde (le monde comme jeu) ne soit traversé, coupé, arrêté, plastifié par quelque système singulier (Idéologie, *Genre*, Critique) qui en rebatte sur la pluralité des entrées, l'ouverture des réseaux, l'infini des langages. (*S/Z*: 11)

This statement is clearly reflected in Borges' "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote", where the exact reproduction, considered as the "mejor imitación" (the best imitation), consists of the original's destruction and the creation of a self-referential text (this is also the case in "El rigor de la ciencia").

The opposition "'mimesis of fiction' vs. 'pseudo-mimesis of fiction'" experiences in Borges yet another transformation which provides both a question and an answer: why does Borges simulate and what does his writing reveal by its phantom absence with respect to the exterior? Following my thesis, Borges attempts to express, through literature, perceptions which we could call *semiotic dreams*, that is, dreams which are transformed into signs. From here a new opposition is produced from the tension between the "'pseudo-mimesis of fiction' vs. 'mystic perception/dream/experience'".<sup>10</sup> Thus we have signifiers that no longer search for signifieds, and instead become figures, perceptions of symbols, and finally *traces* which foster *différance*. These transformations are clearly expressed by Borges when he states that dreams precede literature and writing (Borges: 1985). This rhizomatic tension or opposition between perception and dreams (which are non-hierarchical, unconscious, open, always in movement [*chance/trace*], the signic organization, and the linearity and non-intentionality of writing) is not resolved in a dialectic which leads to a metaphysic of a primal ultimate purity (*Aufhebung*) where the idea of the idea is found, but it remains there in all its ambiguity. This is precisely the place where we can declare that Borges goes

<sup>10</sup> See Giskin (1990: 71f.).



'beyond' literature, where signs, the simple signs, swarm without any purpose, attempting to capture a given perception, as in "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins" or "Undr".

The simulation of intertextuality is Borges' ritual-symbolic parricide against a type of literature. On the one hand, it is against mimetic or realistic literature, predicated on Aristotle, the father, the literary tradition initiated by the father; on the other, it is against an absolutization of the orality of the father, Plato the father, that is, against the innocence of the word, against the supposed contamination of writing. Borges' parricide resides in the abolition of the speech/language, orality/writing, reading/writing dichotomies. Borges commits parricide each time he evokes or paraphrases an author. The insertion of books are the abhorred mirrors which propagate and multiply. Parricide attempts to avoid multiplication through disseminal deconstruction; repetition marks difference and similarity as it is expressed in "Pierre Menard", in "Libro de arena", and then the parricide is lost in an infinite *trace*. In "El Otro", in the *Libro de arena*, Borges tells us that: "Mi deber era conseguir que los interlocutores fueran lo bastante distintos para ser dos y lo bastante parecidos para ser uno". (OC, II: 72). During reading, in a given moment, this duplication ceases to be the duplication or reproduction of an *Urtext* in order to become its destruction. In "Nota sobre (hacia) Bernard Shaw" Borges confirms this interpretation when he asserts that "una literatura difiere de otra, ulterior o anterior, menos por el texto que por la manera de ser leída: si me fuera otorgado leer cualquier página actual - ésta, por ejemplo - como la leerán en el año dos mil, yo sabría cómo será la literatura del año dos mil" (OC, I: 747). Thus each reading is an *Urtext*, an origin, and consequently there exist endless origins, and at the same time none. Texts leave behind a rhizomatic trace, supplanting, simulating, imposing themselves as a textual hyperreality. Borges institutes what Mallarmé theorized: the Great Book. This is the same theory of literary practice, both regarding production and reception, put forward by Barthes in *S/Z* (1970: 12).

Dans ce texte idéal, les réseaux sont multiples et jouent entre eux, sans qu'aucun puisse coiffer les autres; ce texte est une galaxie de signifiants, non une structure de signifiés; il n'a pas de commencement; il est réversible; on y accède par plusieurs entrées dont aucune ne peut être à coup sûr déclarée principale; les codes qu'il mobilise se profilent à perte de vue ils sont indécidables [...]; de ce texte absolument pluriel, les systèmes de sens peuvent s'emparer, mais leur nombre n'est jamais clos, ayant pour mesure l'infini du langage.

However, in Borges we are not dealing with an "ideal text" but with a concrete literary practice.

What Borges contends in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (OC, I: 431-432) regarding literature and writing when he asserts that "*Copulation and mirrors are abominable. [...] Para uno de esos gnósticos, el visible universo era una ilusión o (más precisamente) un sofisma. Los espejos y la paternidad son abominables [...] porque*

*lo multiplican y lo divulgan*" is confirmed by another quotation in "Los espejos abominables" (OC, I: 327):

La tierra que habitamos es un error, una incompetente parodia, Los espejos y la paternidad son abominables, porque la multiplican y afirman. El asco es la virtud fundamental. Dos disciplinas [...] pueden conducirnos a ella: la abstinencia y el desenfreno, el ejercicio de la carne o su castidad.

Here, the difference is obvious: whereas in "Los espejos abominables" the narrator really refers to copulation as reproductive activity, in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", it is only a metaphor used to address the problem of mimesis, the resistance to and the negation of the mimesis.

## 2. READING AS RE-WRITING AND WRITING AS RE-READING; DESTRUCTION OF THE ORIGIN, THE RHIZOMATIC TRACE, SIMULATION AND ABSENCE "BEYOND WRITING"

Borges is not a metaphysical writer as Plato was. On the contrary, he does not exhort against writing and favour pure orality, which is supposedly closer to the idea. Furthermore, he does not advocate either in favour of orality or writing. Borges, before Derrida, thematizes the opposition between 'speech and writing' in order to demonstrate that both entities depend on each other, and that both are impure. Borges establishes an equivalence, a homology between reading, the *Encyclopaedia/pharmakon* (microcosm) and writing, the Library (macrocosm). Reading is, in this context, a per-laboration (*Verwindung*) of the reading, and writing is the disseminal deconstructionist re-writing equivalent to the labyrinth, where each book, each sign, acquires the form of a mirror in whose reproductive trajectory loses the trace in the depth of its projection. The superposition of infinite images and masks, erase and attenuate the previous ones by becoming a single one. In "El libro de arena" we read: "Me dijo que su libro se llamaba el Libro de Arena porque ni el libro ni la arena tienen ni principio ni fin" (OC, II: 69). The term 'sand' is a metaphor for the Derridaian *trace* or for the Barthesian *scriptible*, used to perpetuate the evocation of endless signs, and is equivalent to the term '*hönnir*' which in Icelandic is the plural of '*hönnir*' which means "pile of matter that changes with the action of the wind, water, etc., such as a pile of seaweed, a dune". We are dealing with structures that are never fixed, always altered by the reading, by the re-writing, in such a way that it can never be fixed in its signifier or in its signified, and thus its referents cannot be determined. This produces a total absence of signification, of structure, a structure that is constantly *leading away*, and from here the meaning of '*Ykvar*' (Uqbar), a form of the verb '*Ykva*'. Tlön, in Icelandic, means '*Altön*', which means map, plan, atlas, a literary atlas, an atlas of thinking, an atlas of knowledge, that, in its attempt to reproduce everything, obliterates its referent and its referentiality. It becomes useless, as the map in "Del rigor de la



ciencia" which is an exact replica of the empire's topography does, and, due to the saturation of meaning and to its exact duplication and simulation, becomes worthless. Thus Borges clearly states that there is no mimesis and origin, but only an infinity of traces. Each inserted book or text is dissolved in another, as the sand in the sand, leaving no trace except sand. Borges builds a labyrinth which undermines authorship and its authority, THE TRUTH, in order to construct a disseminating rhizomatic writing, so that the *search* becomes the ultimate meaning, the search as such, without *telos*. Writing, according to Borges/Derrida, is something dead, since it is not capable of reproducing *life*, and, in the best of cases, may produce *texts*, but even this is doubtful.

L'écriture n'est pas un ordre de signification indépendant, c'est une parole affaiblie, point tout à fait une chose morte: un mort-vivant, un mort en sursis, une vie différée, un semblant de souffle; le fantôme, le phantasme, le simulacre (*eidolon* [...]) du discours vivant n'est pas inanimé, il n'est pas insignifiant, simplement il signifie peu et toujours identiquement. Ce signifiant de peu, ce discours sans grand répondant est comme tous les fantômes: errant. Il roule (*kulindeitai*) ici et là comme quelqu'un qui ne sait pas où il va, ayant la voi droite, la bonne direction, la règle de rectitude, la norme; [...]. Courant les rues, il ne sait même pas qui il est, quelle est son identité, s'il en a une, et un nom, celui de son père. Il répète la même chose lorsqu'on l'interroge à tous les coins de rue, mais il ne sait plus répéter son origine. (Derrida 1972: 179)

An example from painting will make this point even clearer. Painting is an "imitation in third degree" (*edios* → object → painting) while writing aspires to be imitation, but it becomes so when it is of a fourth degree (*edios* → object → painting → description deformed by painting [cfr. Derrida 1972: 172-173]). 'Third degree' means that writing is not even capable of producing a phantom such as the painter, that is, it "produces a copy of a copy", a simulation of something that does not exist. Writing, and its alphabet, is not capable of producing a simulation neither in its pictorial level nor in the sense of being able to "reproduce orality":

Sans doute aussi parce qu'il imite, en un sens, parfaitement. Il a plus de chance de reproduire la voix puisque l'écriture phonétique la décompose mieux et la transforme en éléments abstraits et spatiaux. Cette *dé-composition* de la voix est ici à la fois ce qui la conserve et ce qui la corrompt le mieux. L'imite parfaitement parce qu'elle ne l'imite plus du tout. Car l'imitation affirme et aiguise son essence en s'effaçant. Son essence et sa non-essence. Et aucune dialectique ne peut résumer cette inadéquation à soi. Une imitation parfaite n'est plus une imitation. En supprimant la petite différence qui, le séparant de l'imité, y renvoie par là même, on rend l'imitant absolument différent: un autre étant ne faisant plus référence à l'imité. L'imitation ne répond à son essence, n'est ce qu'elle est - imitation - qu'en étant en quelque point fautive ou plutôt en défaut. Elle est mauvaise par essence. Elle n'est bonne qu'en étant mauvaise. La faillite y étant inscrite, elle n'a pas de nature, elle n'a rien en propre. Ambivalente, jouant avec soi, s'échappant à elle-même, ne s'accomplissant qu'en se creusant, bien et mal à la fois, indécidablement la *mimesis* s'apparente au *pharmakon*. (Derrida, 1972: 173-174)

This is why there is an identical cartography, an identical sand, and the Quixote of Pierre Menard is identical to that of Cervantes: they are perfect imitations which destroy themselves by eliminating the difference, by not allowing another signification or signified.

Thus Borges' writing becomes an "écriture en dehors", that is, we know that we have a *something*, which is no longer *something*, which represents a knowledge, a writing that it is not recognized or readable under normal conditions: it is not a writing that makes us aware of a given tradition; it is not a significant re-writing in the sense of providing us with a new knowledge or actualized knowledge; it is a text, a writing at the "fourth level". This "fourth level" is the product of the absence of a non-referential writing, non-mimetic and bearing no relation to reality, to literature, to a structure, or to the traditional function of writing. The duality that presupposes intertextuality does not lead, in Borges, to a conflict which could be resolved within a given hierarchical field; it is not reducible to a simple unity or to a dialectic, which, at the third level (the Hegelian '*Aufhebung*'), could offer a solution as an "ideal speculative solution". Rather, the third term underlines the "absolute alterity" of the reference, it marks the *différance*. The evocation of other texts underscores the crisis of Western dualism, of *logocentrism*, of *ethocentrism*, of *phonocentrism*, and of the *signified*. Duality is no longer posited as an opposition that may be resolved in one way or another, or as a third term. On the contrary, what is destroyed is the "trinitary horizon":

Le détruisant textuellement: ce sont les marques de la dissémination (et non de la polysémie) parce qu'elles ne se laissent en aucun point épinglez par le concept ou la teneur d'un signifié. (Derrida 1972: 35)

Borges' texts cannot be reduced to a unity, to an origin or to a dialectical level of the third term in order to attribute to them, at the end, a fixed signified, that is, an identity, re-inscribing them in the context of difference (*différance*) and thus constructing a presence, restating the signification of representability. The reference points out or suggests what the text was and to its actual and absolute *alterity* (*absolute Andersheit*, see: Derrida 1972: 35).

Borges adds a fourth term to the semiotic or metaphysical triad in order to disarticulate it and to bring to an end the "*metaphysical trinity*". To disarticulate means to delimit/open, re-write, re-quote, and it does not belong inside or outside the semiotic triad. However, as Derrida has warned (1972: 36), what has not been taken into account are the consequences of such an operation: the *absence*. The absence is what inscribes the search as search and it is concretized in each evoked but not utilized text.<sup>11</sup>

11 Borges himself understands his writing as a search and not as a message. Borges' (1984: 25) answer to the symbolic meaning of the labyrinth is the following:

Quizá el fin del laberinto - si es que el laberinto tiene un fin - sea el de estimular nuestra inteligencia, el de hacernos pensar en el misterio, y no en la solución. Es muy raro entender la solución, somos seres humanos, nada



The *absence* is expressed in the "Prólogo" to the 1954 edition of the *Historia universal de una infamia*:

*Son el irresponsable juego de un tímido que no se animó a escribir cuentos y que se distrajo en falsear y tergiversar (sin justificación estética alguna vez) ajenas historias [...] Los doctores del Gran Vehículo enseñan que lo esencial del universo es la vacuidad. Tienen razón en lo referente a esa mínima parte del universo que es este libro. Patibulos y piratas lo pueblan y la palabra infamia aturde en el título, pero bajo los tumultos no hay nada. No es otra cosa que apariencia, que una superficie de imágenes; por eso mismo puede acaso agradar. El hombre que lo ejecutó era asaz desdichado, pero se entretuvo escribiéndolo; ojalá algún reflejo de aquel placer alcance a los lectores. (OC, I: 291)*

And he added that books are like painting figures, "que parecen vivas, pero no contestan una palabra y las preguntas que les hacen", or in "Del culto de los libros": "Lo más prudente es no escribir sino aprender y enseñar de viva voz, porque lo escrito queda" (OC, I: 713).

The trace, the mark, the imprint is attenuated in a simulacrum in that Borges *gestures as if he was turning and looking back, as if he was going back*, but, on the contrary (the trace), adds a new text, making the operation more complex at the same time that it indicates the impossibility of any return to an origin, formulating a labyrinth in which his text becomes a *supplementary digression*, a *fake* and a *blind mirror*, imitating an infinite speculation. Borges calls this '*Jangr*', the Spanish pronunciation of '*hong*', which represents "a knot difficult to undo, a great problem, a puzzle". The books evoked are inserted in Borges' text; they are familiar to him, but at the same time his text cannot be simply reduced to them. Borges' texts attest to the reference, and at the same time they inscribe the limit of the speculative operation; they deconstruct and reduce all the effects to the terms by means of which the speculation itself appropriates the references. This operation is a great laughter ('*Hlaer*, a form of the verb '*hlæja*' which means "to laugh"); it is the buffoonish mask of the carnival, a carnival of signs; a police story that attempts to respond to the question of the origin: Who invented Tlön? From where does this collective book come? And, further, what does the origin mean, and what is the mystery to discover?: Borges *et alii* attempt, without success, in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", to "reconstruct" the missing book.

If we follow the traces of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", and we keep in mind that its "origin" is located in a mirror which motivates the judgement of a heresiarch of Uqbar to state that "los espejos y la cópula son abominables, porque multiplican el número de los hombres", or "porque multiplican y divulgan", and this declaration is found in *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia*, which in turn is Borges' invention (explicitly stated as *fallacious* and *sluggish*), then we have the following:

más. Pero buscar esa solución y saber que no la encontramos es algo hermoso, desde luego. Quizá, los enigmas sean más importantes que las soluciones [...].

1. A mirror (that leads to) and a quotation from an invented book (which claims to be a reprint of another, a real one: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*); this leads to the *discovery* of Uqbar. It is significant that Borges does not state what Uqbar is, whether it is a planet, a region, or a country.
2. The invented encyclopaedia speaks, obviously, about imaginary objects, fakes. Uqbar is a product of the imagination since it is present in an invented book and because it does not show up either in the atlases of Justus Perthes or in the *Erdkunde* of Ritter (both real works and scholars). Let us remember that, in the *regular* volumes, four pages are missing, and, in the *special* one, Uqbar only exists in the pages that are missing in the regular volumes. This bit of information is important and we will return to it later.
3. In Uqbar, within this laughter, in the section about "*language and literature*", that is, about '*writing*' and '*fiction*', we read that literature is fantastic in nature (a puzzle), and this is why it never refers to reality. However, this is in direct opposition to the previous statement of the heresiarch: "El resto parecía muy verosímil, muy ajustado al tono general de la obra y [...] un poco aburrido". This statement is in turn relativized by the following observation: "descubrimos bajo su rigurosa escritura una fundamental vaguedad" (we will return to this statement later on).
4. The literature of Uqbar speaks about two imaginary regions: Mlejnas and Tlön.
5. One of the various bibliographies that refer to works written about Uqbar mentions one attributed to Johannes Valentinus Andreae, whose name Borges found in a work by De Quincey within the context of the Masons and the Rosae Crucis.
6. All the attempts made by Borges and Bioy Casares, and others to find a reference regarding the existence of Uqbar failed: the reference is reduced to those four additional pages of one volume of the encyclopaedia.
7. In 1937, after Herbert Ashe's death, Borges discovered a package containing a book, *A first Encyclopaedia of Tlön. Vol XI. Hlaer to Jangr*, with an emblem: *Orbis Tertius*. Two pieces of information are significant. The first is "Islam" and "The Night of Nights" where the secret gates of the sky open and waters taste sweeter. The passage also speaks of a text of 1001 pages, allowing Borges not only to refer to the *One thousand and One Nights*, but also foregrounding the absolutely imaginary character and the lack of referentiality of the text in question. Furthermore, this volume does not speak any longer about Uqbar, but about Tlön. Thus far we have an encyclopaedia referring to an imaginary region, branded by Borges as a "false country"; the article from *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* speaks of Uqbar, and this place becomes Tlön, apparently invented by "una sociedad secreta de astrónomos, de biólogos [...] dirigido por un oscuro hombre de genio". Borges describes, summarizes, and reproduces some sections of the encyclopaedia.
8. The 1947 postscript is a "reproduction" of the previous reproduction adding sarcastic and superficial comments. The origin of Tlön is revealed (here we have



not a single mention of Uqbar) by a letter from Gunnar Erfjord found by Borges in a book by Hinton which belonged to Herbert Ashe. The letter refers to a benevolent secret society from the 17th century to which Berkeley belonged, and it is at this time that Johannes Valentinus Andreae's (1586-1654) book is published (obviously the book written by Andreae is not *Lesbare und lesenswerthe Bemerkungen über das Land Ukkbar in Klein-Asien* (1641), but *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz anno 1459*, published in Strasbourg in 1616 [see A. de Toro 1992]). The endeavour continues in the United States of America in the 19th century, in 1824, in Memphis. The objective now is to invent a planet (Tlön), and by 1914 the First Encyclopaedia of Tlön has been completed. This first edition will provide the basis for the next one, and it will "revise the illusory world" called "Orbis Tertius", and it is in this revision that Herbert Ashe took part.

9. With the publication of this new, revised encyclopedia Tlön becomes part of empirical reality: the princess of Faucigny Lucigne discovers: a) a compass with the inscription of Tlön's alphabet; and, b) the presence of an unusually heavy small cone (*hrönir*) which represents the "imagen de la divinidad de ciertas religiones de Tlön".
10. In 1944 a journalist in Nashville, Tennessee discovers in Memphis the forty volumes of the encyclopaedia of Tlön. The discovery generates many publications: manuals, anthologies, summaries, literal versions, authorized reprints and pirated reprints of the "Obra Mayor de los Hombres abarrotaron y siguen abarrotando la tierra". This work transformed reality.

We have, then, at least ten traces emerging from the reading, plus the traces produced with the many publications. The detective work resides in the discovery of the origin that was the main goal for the 17th and 18th century societies, but this trace is lost by the disclosure of the encyclopaedia and its confusion with the real world. The limits of dualism (reality/fiction, imaginary/empirical, mine/yours, I/he, author/reader) vanish, and the secret perlaboration of the encyclopaedia *Orbis Tertius* will impose itself in the future, and this encyclopaedia will become the Great Book. The trace of the origin is lost in the infinite proliferation of 'supplementary texts' as products of readings.

The summaries present the antithesis to the cartographic science in "Del rigor de la ciencia" since they do not equate "exactly" with the original. To "reproduce" the encyclopaedia of Tlön would amount to re-writing its 1001 pages, an unnecessary task since its identical copy would acquire another meaning, as is demonstrated in "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote", which obliterates the origin, and it imposes itself as the first text, and so on. The notes, the "supplements" about other texts, provide the only possibility of meaning. However, Borges does not want either to "multiply" or "reveal", neither to reproduce reflections nor produce a metaphysics that will resolve the duality in a third term. Instead, he creates a fourth book (the text '*BEYOND*', where all the versions exist simultaneously with their contradictions, such as the

presence of objects from the imaginary world, that is, from an imaginary book, the encyclopaedia, in the real world). The *absence* of reference is total: the reality is that of the books and of imaginary books; it is a writing of radical self-referentiality and of a *regressus ad infinitum*. Borges' literary activity is equivalent to that of Tlön, a heterogeneous series of independent (rhizomatic) readings and writings. It is a writing that always refers to itself, and inevitably refers to others. Hence, the thinking and the organization of the language in Tlön is similar to classification of mammals in the Chinese encyclopaedia in "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins". This language is determined by the simultaneity of a world where time is negated, where the past and the future exist only in an infinite present, in a planet where, in spite of being monist and idealist, and as such undercutting science, there exist innumerable sciences. Philosophy is considered as "dialectical game" and as part of fantastic literature. By fantastic, Borges understands '*art/artifice*' (see A. de Toro 1992; 1994; 1994a; 1995; 1997), and this is equivalent to fictionality and literarity (Borges 1985: 18): "Se podría decir que la literatura fantástica es casi una tautológica, porque toda la literatura es fantástica".<sup>12</sup> This is clearly expressed when Borges declares that: "La segunda parte del *Quijote* es deliberadamente fantástica; ya el hecho de que los personajes de la segunda parte hayan leído la primera es algo mágico [...]". (*Ibid*). If the fantastic *genre* can be understood as a dialogue between textual signs, and reality as a dialogue between a literature, that defines itself as fantastic, and the tradition of that *genre*, which is based on the principle of an external referential mimesis, then Borges' writing can hardly be conceived as fantastic, since his writing always refers to other texts, and also because he invents textual references. This is why Borges *simulates: he writes as if he was writing in the fantastic genre*, that is, he reveals something as existing, but behind which there is nothing.<sup>13</sup>

Borges deconstructs writing through writing and inseminates and disseminates textual evocations; he makes us believe that he is intertextualizing, reproducing a model. In Uqbar, Borges states that: "El resto parecía muy verosímil, muy ajustado al tono general de la obra y [...] un poco aburrido", and this is, in turn, relativized by the following statement: "descubrimos bajo su rigurosa escritura una fundamental vaguedad". Borges simulates the probable, but behind it is nothingness, the purely imaginary and self-referential: he *simulates* a coherent and systematic discourse, but behind it there is only the vagueness of a fourth text, of a text outside the semiotic triad. This game with the simulation of presence which reveals an absence, this discursive mark, is topologized in the volumes of those encyclopaedias that I have named *regular* (the father, the tradition) by four missing pages. However, in the

12 Such a position is supported by Borges in a lecture delivered in Montevideo in 1945, entitled *La literatura fantástica*. For further details see Rodríguez Monegal (1976: 185ff.). We encounter this conception in "La Flor de Coleridge" and in "Magias Parciales del 'Quijote'".

13 According to Hager, "For Borges, however, behind illusion is other illusion; there is no ground of being: reality is dissolved not by one but by an infinity of mirrors" (1985: 233). Cfr. A. de Toro (1998: 11-74, especially: 34-54).



*special* volume, in Bioy Casares' volume, Uqbar exists only in those four pages, that is, Borges' writing is nowhere to be found, except in the text that he inscribes. The article in *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* is equivalent to "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and with *A first Encyclopaedia of Tlön*, and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" is equivalent to *A first Encyclopaedia of Tlön*. At the end is "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", the text that injects life to this encyclopaedia and to that imaginary planet: it is Borges who inscribes "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", the place where all the preceding encyclopaedias are to be found. Thus the autonomous text is self-sufficient. This literary and epistemological posture is clearly explained in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" in the passage of the lost and found coins, which deals with the problem of sameness and identity, where a heresiarch stated that the coins lost one day and found by different people, in different days and places, existed in each and every moment. This posture is refuted as a fallacy because the terms 'to find' and 'to lose' presuppose that the lost and then found coins possess one single origin and identity, and therefore it demands a continuity of identity/signification. What has been confused here is the difference between 'sameness' and 'identity' in order to postulate *being* and its continuity. Borges later adds that if 'sameness' includes 'identity', then it exists only one indivisible subject where all beings are to be located, and these are the organs, the masks of divinity. If we bring this argumentation to Borges' textual practice, we will observe that he is negating the origin and stressing the multiplication of traces, the surface where the tradition is submerged, but he does not reproduce this tradition as the cartographers of "Del rigor de la ciencia" pretend.

This system is rhizomatic in as much as it does not allow dualism, in as much as the rhizome 'deterritorializes'/'disseminates' an incipient term from culture and 'reterritorializes'/'reinseminates' it within the rhizomorphic system. The imitation and similarity do not exist. Instead we have an explosion of two or more heterogeneous series in lines which are constituted by a single rhizome and that are not subordinated to a superior system, but instead lack a genetic axis, a deep structure, an objectivity of unities. Borges' writing is a 'map'/'surface' with multiple entries and exits (see above Barthes 1970), and not a "copy of". It is open to all dimensions, it is productive and not reproductive, it is about performance and not competence:

Aujourd'hui l'abstraction n'est plus celle de la carte, du double, du miroir ou du concept. La simulation n'est plus celle d'un territoire, d'un être référentiel, d'une substance. Elle est la génération par les modèles d'un réel sans origine ni réalité: hyperréel. Le territoire ne précède plus la carte, ni ne lui survit. C'est désormais la carte qui précède le territoire - précession des simulacres -, c'est elle qui engendre le territoire [...]. (Baudrillard 1980: 10)

Derrida's concepts of deconstruction, dissemination and of a fourth space are equivalent to the concept of rhizome of Deleuze and Guattari and to the simulation of Baudrillard, in as much as they describe the operation that eliminates reference, particularly when we are dealing with texts which are highly combinative (or apparently intertextual), since they replace reference, whether this be real or textual: what we

have is *une dissuasion du réel et une dissuasion du textuel*. Dissemination, the rhizome, and simulation offer all the signs of reality or textuality, but are *de facto* phantoms, pharmakons.

This phenomenon is relatively simple in literature: some texts use signs that want to cover up something that exists, while others simulate that something does not exist. Whereas the majority of works of the literary tradition belong to the first type, Borges' writing belongs to the second. Writing itself, its syntactic organization, and its floating signifier, replace the signified. In this manner, Borges' writing (*medium*) as such *swallows, gobbles* the signification (*message*), and the mastication of signifiers reduces its content to the zero degree. Since signs are "*pregnant*", saturated with signification, Borges has to re-inscribe them; he must commit parricide, and therefore he produces semiotic monstrosities whose objective is to reach the limits of what is thinkable, to formulate the unthinkable. Borges achieves this objective in as much as "la monstrosité ici n'altère aucun corps réel, ne le modifie en rien le bestiaire de l'imagination; elle ne se cache dans la profondeur d'aucun pouvoir étrange" (Foucault 1966: 7).

The monstrosity of Borges' discourse does not lie as much in the juxtaposition and on the proximity of terms as in the place they occupied in one space: the written page. The terms refuse a pragmatic-semantic (context) coherence with which the traditional practice of reading and writing is destroyed. This is the site of fascination and terror that produces Borges' writing, the site of the non-order, of incomprehension, where Borges creates

[...] désordre qui fait scintiller les fragments d'un grand nombre d'ordres possibles dans la dimension, sans loi ni géométrie, de l'hétéroclite; et il faut entendre ce mot au plus près de son étymologie: les choses y sont «couchées», «posées», «disposées» dans des sites à ce point différents qu'il est impossible de trouver pour eux un espace d'accueil, de définir au-dessous des uns et des autres un *lieu commun*. (Foucault, 166: 9)

The monstrosity reveals itself in the world of *virtual signs* that display themselves in a world without space and time, in the field of perception, of dreams, without producing signification. Thus we read in "El Inmortal":

Estaba tirado en la arena, donde trazaba torpemente y borraba una hilera de signos, que eran como las letras de los sueños, que uno está a punto de entender y luego se juntan. Al principio, creí que se trataba de una escritura bárbara; después vi que es absurdo imaginar que hombres que no llegaron a la palabra lleguen a la escritura. Además, ninguna de las formas era igual a otra, lo cual excluía o alejaba la posibilidad de que fueran simbólicas. El hombre las trazaba, las miraba y las corregía. De golpe, como si le fastidiara ese juego, las borró con la palma y el antebrazo. Me miró, no pareció conocerme. [...] esa noche concebí el propósito de enseñarle a reconocer, y acaso a repetir, algunas palabras.

[...]

Inmóvil, con los ojos inertes, no parecía percibir los sonidos que yo procuraba inculcarle. A unos pasos de mí, era como si estuviera muy lejos. Echado en la arena, como una pequeña y ruinosa esfinge de lava, dejaba que sobre él giraran los cielos, desde el crepúsculo del día hasta el de la noche.



[...]

Pensé que Argos y yo participábamos de universos distintos; pensé que nuestras percepciones eran iguales, pero que Argos las combinaba de otra manera y construía con ellas otros objetos; pensé que acaso no había objetos para él, sino un vertiginoso y continuo juego de impresiones brevísimas. Pensé en un mundo sin memoria, sin tiempo; consideré la posibilidad de un lenguaje que ignoraba los sustantivos, un lenguaje de verbos impersonales o de indeclinables epítetos.

[...]

Todo me fue delucidado, aquel día. Los trogloditas eran los Inmortales; [...] Con las reliquias de su ruina erigieron, en el mismo lugar, la desatinada ciudad que yo recorrí: suerte de parodia o reverso y también templo de los dioses irracionales que manejan el mundo y de los que nada sabemos, salvo que no se parecen al hombre. Aquella fundación fue el último símbolo a que condescendieron los Inmortales; marca una etapa en que, juzgando que toda empresa es vana, determinaron vivir en el pensamiento, en la pura especulación. Erigieron la fábrica, la olvidaron y fueron a morar en las cuevas. Absortos, casi no percibían el mundo físico. (OC, I: 538-540)

Once again, this passage places the absence, the *dehors-livre*, at centre stage, and hence Borges opens the possibility to think anew, there where the common place has been eliminated, contaminated from the start since the terms, among themselves, are combinables; the syntax is disarticulated, the terms lose their origin and, in this manner, Borges relieves writing of its semantic and mythological baggage, he removes from writing, from language, the weight of tradition.

The category "game" occupies a central place in the type of writing that is not determined by a single knowledge or thinking, in as much as this category functions as a "random unity", as a program, as a principle that transforms writing into literature. Through the perlaboration, Borges *abandons* the tradition, literature, the book. We recognize traces of this, but only as *fake/false mirror/reflection*, as *mask*: Borges' literature is a *supplement* ("notes") to books, imaginary books, and a sample "*l'au-delà du tout*". Such a writing of addition and supplement introduces for the first time a literary game where, and as a consequence, the original and authorship are lost. The absence of tradition (the "*hors-livre*") is accomplished through the muteness of the past writing, of another epoch, its death, and also because its past signification cannot be retrieved. Through the perlaboration, that is, through each attempt to evoke, to allude to the "*reanimation*", muteness is articulated: death becomes the signification, the "*parricide*". By only simulating intertextuality, Borges commits the parricide of a simulacrum, making possible a labyrinth of infinite traces that lead to a new text, a text without past, without origin, but inscribed in an extended present, as it is expressed in "La esfera de Pascal",

Quizás la historia universal es la historia de unas cuantas metáforas [...]. En el tiempo, porque si el futuro y el pasado son infinitos, no habrá realmente un cuándo; en el espacio, porque si todo ser equidista de lo infinito y de lo infinitesimal, tampoco habrá un dónde. Nadie está en algún día, en algún lugar [...]. Quizás la historia universal es la historia de la diversa entonación de algunas metáforas. (OC, I: 636, 637, 638)

or in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius": "Otra escuela declara que ha transcurrido ya *todo el tiempo* y que nuestra vida es apenas el recuerdo o reflejo crepuscular, y sin duda falseado y mutilado, de un proceso irrecuperable" (OC, I: 436).

The substitutions, the additions, the supplements, in short, the perlaboration, is a game and a simulacrum of traces at the level of the signifier, of the syntax which is neither circumscribed nor limited by a given reality, reference, or by a transcendental signified. Such a text, which lives off the "*heterotopia*", off the substitution of substitution, off the permutation of the permutation, *ad libitum*, may be characterized as carnivalesque, as *folle* (Derrida 1972: 111), as *monstreux* (Foucault 1966: 8f.). In Borges, this is possible because he writes in a "world without memory": "Pensé en un mundo sin memoria, sin tiempo; consideré la posibilidad de un lenguaje que ignoraba los sustantivos, un lenguaje de verbos impersonales o de indeclinables epítetos". ("El Inmortal", OC, I: 539; see also "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"). The opposition between *mnēmē* (memory) and *hypomnēsis* (supplement) governs Borges writing, and the limit between both operations are imperceptible:

Ce qui se répète, c'est le répétant, l'imitant, le signifiant, le représentant, à l'occasion en l'absence de *la chose même* qu'ils paraissent rééditer, et sans l'animation psychique ou mnésique, sans la tension vivante de la dialectique. (Derrida 1972: 138)

In "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote", *Don Quijote* by Cervantes is repeated, reproduced, but it is absent since it has not been reanimated: not to be reanimated means that a dialogicity in the signified, from yesterday and today, is not established because there is no mimesis in the sense of transformation or reactualization: Pierre Menard *simulates* it, that is, replaces it, obliterates it, commits parricide, does away with the origin. Furthermore, Pierre Menard commits parricide to his own work. The starting point of Borges' writing is memory, and there are few traces (fragments) that survived the destruction. There is no draft, neither a sketch nor a plan left behind: the text is dissolved, spread out; it becomes dust:

¿Confesaré que suelo imaginar que la terminó y que leo el Quijote - todo el Quijote - como si lo hubiera pensado Menard? Noches pasadas, al hojear el capítulo XXVI - no ensayado nunca por él - reconocí el estilo de nuestro amigo y como su voz en esta frase excepcional [...] me trajo a la memoria Shakespeare [...]. (Borges, OC, I: 447)

This example clearly shows what I have been attempting to show in this paper: the problem of *absence*. Through a perfect reproduction we obtain a *mimic* that does not imitate anything; it faces a double that does not duplicate anything at all. We are faced with an allusion to nothing, and, since it does not refer to an exterior, it can only offer effects, simulacra of reality (of textual reality). The only difference to emphasize in this *speculum without reality* is the one between the phantom (*Don Quixote* by Cervantes) and the mime (Borges/Pierre Menard):



Mais c'est une différence sans référence, ou plutôt une référence sans référent, sans unité première ou dernière, fantôme qui n'est le fantôme d'aucune chair, errant, sans passé, sans mort, sans naissance ni présence. (Derrida 1972: 255)

Borges keeps the differential structure of the mimic or of mimesis, but without concerning himself with what that literature meant in its time: Borges uproots its ontology. What we have is a simulacrum of Cervantes. Between Borges/Menard and Cervantes, a veil is displayed (*hymen*), an imperceptible pragmatic surface which inscribes the *différance*, which removes the metaphysics of signification due to the absence of an *archē*, an *eschaton*, and a *telos*:

Le Mime joue dès lors qu'il ne se règle sur aucune action affective, et ne tend à aucune vraisemblance. Le jeu joue toujours la différence sans référence, ou plutôt sans référent, sans extériorité absolue, c'est-à-dire aussi bien sans dedans. Le mime mime la référence. Ce n'est pas un imitateur, il mime l'imitation. L'hymen s'interpose entre la *mimesis* et la *mimesis*. Copie de copie, simulacre qui simule le simulacre [...] la copie de copie [...], qui ont ici perdu le leur du référent présent et se trouvent alors perdus pour la dialectique et pour l'ontologie, perdus pour le savoir absolu. (Derrida 1972: 270)

Borges' writing may be understood as the product of a great simulacrum that functions without a script in the very act of writing, but at the same time borrows from an endless number of scripts that are contained as mirrors, one inside the other, inter-traced in allusions, versions, reproductions, quotations, digressions, etc. Through this endless writing, literature is erased. If writing seeks to tell us something, to communicate through Borges' writing, it is to tell us that literature is no longer; at the most, there is a bit, but it is definitely without substance, truth or an ontology of literature: there are only floating signs.

Borges' writing is the result of his readings, and this is why it is also a re-writing. Borges as subject-reader is *in* the act of reading contaminated by endless readings, keeping the same relation as that of one text to other texts (re-writings and re-readings). Thus, "Ce 'moi' [...] est déjà lui-même une pluralité d' autres textes, de codes infinis, ou plus exactement: perdus (dont l'origine se perd)" (Barthes 1970: 16), we have a rhizomatic, disseminal reading:

[...] le ré-écrire ne pourrait consister qu'à le disséminer, à le disperser dans le champ de la différence infinie. [...] Lire, c'est trouver des sens, et trouver des sens, c'est les nommer; mais ces sens nommés sont emportés vers d'autres noms; les noms s'appellent, se rassemblent et leur groupement veut de nouveau se faire nommer: je nomme, je dénomme, je renomme: ainsi passe le texte: c'est une nomination en devenir, une approximation inlassable, un travail métonymique. (Barthes 1970: 17-18)

### 3. VISION, DREAM AND PURE WRITING

To summarize, Borges' writing abandons mimesis and hence obliterates reference and authorship, opting for simulation and rhizome. In his writing, truth does not exist, or if it does, is a floating, empty signified. *Truth* and the world can only be perceived in special instants, in atoms of time, in the vision, in the dream, in trance. These experiences are not reducible to signs that can easily be communicated.

It is possible that Borges' literary motivation may exist in his attempt to semiotize special moments, and then to make them signs that can be communicated: this is what I have called "guided rhizomatic perception" as it is superbly expressed in "El Inmortal" or in "La escritura del Dios":

Entonces ocurrió lo que no puedo olvidar ni comunicar. Ocurrió la unión con la divinidad, con el universo (no sé si estas palabras difieren). El éxtasis no repite sus símbolos; hay quien ha visto a Dios en un resplandor, hay quien lo ha percibido en una espada o en los círculos de una rosa. Yo vi una Rueda altísima, que no estaba delante de mis ojos ni detrás, ni a los lados, sino en todas partes, a un tiempo. Esa rueda estaba hecha de agua, pero también de fuego y era [...] infinita. [...] Ahí estaban las causas y los efectos y me bastaba ver esa Rueda para entenderlo todo, sin fin. ¡Oh dicha de entender, mayor que la de imaginar o la de sentir! [...] alcancé también a entender la escritura del tigre. (OC, I: 598-599)

Perhaps Borges' writing is a metaphor to express the desperate attempt to retrieve nostalgic significations, visions or dreams full of significations and the attempt to communicate them. However, this attempt fails, it crumbles facing a canonized literary system since the signifiers for communicating become copies of a copy, remaining only an endless trace, autism, atopia, and an epistemological relativism and incertitude. This incertitude, this absence, allows Borges to overcome what he deconstructs and annihilates by committing parricide. In another context, John Barth (1967: 32) accurately states:

[...] by doing so he transcends what had appeared to be his refutation, in the same way that the mystic who transcends finitude is said to be enabled to live, spiritually and physically, in the finite world [...].

Thus, all that remains is the writing of the vision, of the mimic without mimesis, of verisimilitude without truth and without falsehood, the mask without a hidden reality.

The disseminal deconstruction carried out by Borges, along the long road we have followed and partially walked with him, does not bring us any closer either to the ultimate meaning, truth, or to the interpretation of his work: a message is not sent, it is dispersed. This is the meaning of dissemination: avoid the return to a unity, to a coherent totality of signification:

La dissémination est-elle pour autant la *perte* d'une telle vérité, l'interdiction *négative* d'accéder à un tel signifié? Loin de laisser ainsi supposer qu'une substance vierge la pré-



cède ou la surveillance, se dispersant ou s'interdisant dans une négative seconde, la dissémination affirme la génération toujours déjà divisée du sens. Elle - le laisse d'avance tomber. (Derrida 1972: 326)

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