

Karl Alfred Blüher / Alfonso de Toro (eds.)

Jorge Luis Borges

*Variaciones interpretativas sobre sus
procedimientos literarios y bases epistemológicas*

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Rhizomicity, or the self as everybody and nobody Perhaps the most forceful pitch for Borges as a prime mover of 'post-modernism' is found in the 'rhizomic' character of his work, chiefly by way of his allusion to labyrinths.

De Toro (JLB: 145-155), most prominent in this regard, remarks on Borges's highlighting: (1) the 'signifier-signified' interaction between 'reality' and fiction, (2) the 'dissolution of the subject', which flattens authors, narrators, and readers to the same level, (3) the use of literary collage, montage, palimpsest, and above all, 'literary' rather than 'reality' mimesis, in the deconstruction of text of all stripes, genres, and disciplines, and (4) discursive plurality (i.e., satire, irony, humor, parody, allegory, metanarrative, historicity, interculturality). This concoction of strategies serves to 'rhizomatize' and 'destabilize' Borges's fictive 'worlds' and their relation to the 'real world', thus creating a labyrinth of semantic relations in the face of which the reader, when properly converted into a Deleuzean 'nomad', can hardly do other than oscillate between the *either* and the *or, ...or, ...or, ...n* in a polylinear chain of multiple undecidability.

Julia Kristeva (1968, 1969) and Gérard Genette (1982) are evoked by de Toro in developing his quite intriguing theory of Borgesian narrative strategies which include a bird's eye toward: (1) intratextuality, (2) intertextuality, (3) hypotextuality (the 'avant-texte' or 'pretext' – relations of the text to interconnections that might come to bear on its production), and (4) hypertextuality (the 'post-text' – all possible intertextual relations that might come to bear on the hypotext) (JLB: 159-161). The intricacies of these relations, implicit within Borges's texts, call for 'palimpsestual' readings in order not merely that the *aporia* lurking behind the texts may be revealed, but also, that the *aporia* Borges himself draws from the texts to which his own text refers may become sufficiently evident. Thus the Borges text places other texts in a *negative* light, drawing out some *inconsistencies* they have hitherto made efforts to conceal, and, given the ensuing *undecidability*, and *infinite regress* becomes the inevitable yield.

In a roundabout way, this reflects on Peirce's own concept of the sign and the sign processor – all caught up in the 'rhizomically' interconnected multidimensional fabric of *semiosis*. In capsule form, for Peirce the self as itself a sign is nothing more than a bundle of errors, of *negation*, which nature submerges in the deep waters of *vagueness*, within which, as sign, it ultimately can do no more than merge with its other self 'always already' in the process of entering the scene in the *semiotic* drama (see Merrell 1995).

Now this is intertextuality with a vengeance! And yet it is, I would submit, an adequate image insofar as: (1) it avoids the problematics of a Saussurean synchronic slice freezing the signifying process, and (2) *indefinite semiosis*, which it implies, is compatible with indeterminacy, all of which surface in *JLB*, especially from the contributions by Pérez, Silvestri, Blüher, de Toro, and Rosa.

It appears that Borges, in the final analysis, is more relevant to the semiotic enterprise than *JLB* reveals, and *JLB* has more to do

with methodological and epistemological freedom than its authors would most likely care to admit.

(Floyd Merrell: *Semiotica* (Review article) 107-1/2 (1995): 179-204 (hier: S. 199 ff.))