

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Ironies of a Blind Seer

What will the indecipherable future dream? It will dream that Alonso Quijano can be Don Quijote without leaving his town and his books. It will dream that a vespers of Ulysses can be more prodigal than the poem that narrates his travails. It will dream human generations who will not recognize the name of Ulysses. It will dream dreams more precise than today's vigil. It will dream that we will be able to do miracles and that we will not do them, because it will be more real to imagine them. It will dream worlds so intense that the voice of just one of its birds could kill you. It will dream that forgetting and memory can be voluntary acts, not aggressions or gifts of chance. It will dream that we can see with our whole body, as Milton wished from the shade of those tender orbs, his eyes. It will dream a world without machines and without that painful machine, the body. Life is not a dream, but it can become a dream, Novalis writes.

—Borges, "Alguien soñará,"

OF MERE TITLES

When dealing with more than one vision, with a divided vision, or with a diffuse blindness, it would not be difficult to allude, despite the passage of several decades since its publication, to a binary that, in its English title enables as much the *acuties* of insight as the limitations of *blindness*. Verified by the facts and the reflections that analyze them, the foresights of Borges, those surprising anticipations of his intellectual imagination, his provocations or prophecies that as much the theories as the histories of his century continue to confirm, ever closer to his poetics,

we would not have to think of Paul de Man nor of the foundations of *Blindness and Insight*, and yet they surge, by way of reductive, almost mechanical associations, from a rereading that neither directs them nor puts them aside.

It follows from this that, reviewing the variations of a literary perspicacity that impede dialectically aesthetic forms articulated by unforeseeable contradictions, paradoxes that resolve into coincidences, I would not avoid getting even with a theoretical position whose controversial critical elaborations continue to mark the well-trodden mystery of conjunctions that do not attenuate opposition but, on the contrary enter into it in order to treat as finished a game that, in reality—or in its allegories—does not end.

Nevertheless, in the first place we would have to resolve a question of terms or, rather, “of mere titles,” as Borges says in “The Blind Man.”¹ In the same way as one of the first books that Borges wrote was titled *Inquisitions*,² a mention that he inscribed as a kind of threshold in order to make way for a new literary space not conditioned by the deviances of history, where he declared from the beginning his intention of unburdening the concept of the violence of conversions, of exiles, and of bonfires, it would be more simple to unburden *blindness and insight*, as much as its adverse combination, of semantic “occupation” (*Besetzung* the Germans would say, as if referring to the occupation of a city by an enemy army or by themselves) that reduces them to the simplifications of one sole authority or one sole author.

In the second place, it would be necessary to make way for a hypothesis. Despite the fact that that he does not usually say or indicate it, it is certain that Paul de Man was well acquainted with Borges’s work. It may even be supposed that he came to know him personally when Borges was invited to Harvard as the Charles Eliot Norton Professor in 1967, a university where de Man was himself professor between 1950 and 1960 and from which he does seem to have distanced himself too much afterward. Furthermore, at Yale University, more than a colleague, de Man had been one of Emir Rodríguez Monegal’s friends (1969–1985). Rodríguez Monegal has been the most fanatic Borgologist, Borgian, Borgist, even in the early days when Borges was only appreciated by a limited group of connoisseurs. So much so that not only was Emir the scholar most knowledgeable concerning the life and work of Borges, as Umberto Eco recognized while Borges was still alive,³ but also some one who, for many reasons, biographical and literary, slipped that third person—the proper noun constant in his dialogue—toward the first, a slippage legitimated by recurrent quotes in a discourse that identified the two men beyond mere grammar. At times his interlocutor could become perturbed by the

impression of a personal, almost pronomial alternation, the gradual metamorphosis of one person into another. In those conversations, Emir was slowly transformed into the prized dummy of a distant ventriloquist: quotes of Borges, anecdotes, but above all the humorous tone that conformed to an unexpected physiognomy, the gestures adequate to another facial features, of a voice that is duplicated, like another face, before one’s eyes.

There is no doubt that for years de Man had known of the existence of Borges’s work. In 1964, in the *New York Review of Books*, de Man had published a brief review on the appearance of *Labyrinths* and *Dreamtigers*, titled, “A Modern Master: Jorge Luis Borges”⁴ which begins with a quote from William Butler Yeats:

Empty eyeballs knew
That Knowledge increases unreality . . .

If indeed it figures as an epigraph to his article, it is only when closing that de Man make a lateral allusion to Borges’s blindness, a mention that does not justify the strength of that epigraph, attenuated by the reference to a suffering from which the critic wrests importance. He mentions the blindness as a natural lack owing to the years of the Argentine writer who, nevertheless, were not so many and, indeed, he would live for many more.

Rereading the article, one finds strange the thematic unbalance in favor of the epigraph and, returning to peruse de Man’s other essays, included in the mentioned book, it is also strange not to find there even one sole reference to Borges or to his blindness. More suggestive still is that in the posthumous publication, *The Resistance to Theory*,⁵ Borges figures only two times in the index of authors, both corresponding merely to mentions, not strictly textual, of their author. One is from Wlad Godzich, who announces from the prologue that de Man had planned to write a book of essays about classic authors like Montaigne or as modern as Borges.⁶ The second mention appears in an interview⁷ (RAI, Italy, 1983) with Stefano Rosso, translated from the Italian and included at the end of the book. When de Man tells him that “I feel perfectly at ease writing on eighteenth- or seventeenth-century authors and don’t feel at all compelled to write on contemporaries,” Rosso reminds him that nevertheless, many years before he had written an article on Borges, to which de Man replies: “Well, it was suggested to me . . . Certainly I would be at any time ready to write on Borges, certainly on the fiction of Blanchot, but if you ask me on what contemporary French authors . . . I could possibly think of myself writing on Calvino.”

It is the only mention, in his entire oeuvre, of an author demanded by his interlocutor and included in an eventual list, as if his interest for Borges had been only accidental, isolated, and distant. He takes his distance: "It has been suggested to me," and, bothered, lets go of the name as of a red hot coal, passing quickly to other authors to whom he had attributed similar possibilities, engaging a barely contingent future.

Anecdote, the omission or postponement should not pass unnoticed. Above all if one keeps in mind that, in the 1964 review, de Man, when trying to define the stories of Borges, considers that it is not possible to compare them to other stories or moralizing fables because, he says, "their world is the representation, not of an actual experience, but of an intellectual proposition."⁸ He formulates a quite similar consideration apropos of the nature of representation, starting point for the ambivalencies of the aesthetic process.⁹

In that review of 1964, de Man, among a few stories, commented on "The Garden of Forking Paths,"¹⁰ a story in which Borges has the narrator say:

I know that of all the problems, none of them worried and worked him like the abysmal problem of time. Indeed, that is the only problem that does not figure in the pages of the *Garden*. He does not even use the word that means *time*. How do you explain that voluntary omission?

I proposed several solutions; all insufficient. We discussed them; in the end, Stephen Albert said to me:

—In a riddle whose theme is chess, what is the only word that is prohibited? I reflected for a moment, and responded:

—The word *chess*.

—Precisely, said Albert. *The Garden of Forking Paths* is an enormous riddle, or parable, whose theme is time; that recondite cause prohibits it from mentioning its name. To *always* omit a word, to recur to inept metaphors and obvious paraphrases, is perhaps the most emphatic way of indicating it. It is the torturous way preferred, in each of the meanderings of his indefatigable novel, by the oblique T'sui Pen. I have confronted hundreds of manuscripts, corrected the errors introduced by the negligence of copyists, I have thought to reestablish the primordial order, I have translated the entire work: it is apparent to me that he does not once use the word *time*.¹¹

And the narrator of the story continues hypothesizing on the meaningful omissions of words, of deeds, of times, in the narration of a story that, ret-

respectively, seems to coincide with other events that were reproduced in those same years, variants of the adverse perception of the *purloined letters*,¹² letters, of the alphabet or missives, as evident to the eyes as they are unnoticed.

Nevertheless, it is not only the omissions of the critic that are so suspicious, but also his repetitions:

In Lukacs's story the villain—time—appears as the hero . . . The reader is given the elements to decipher the real plot hidden behind the pseudo-plot, but the author himself remains deluded.¹³

As much in *Blindness and Insight* as in his review of Borges, the same de Man said that the artist has to put on the mask of the *villain* in order to create a style: time or mask, the villain is present in his texts even though the author dissimulates (himself). However, it does not seem to me necessary to make a minute comparison between overly faithful coincidences that, in this case, do not require the attention of an investigation or inventory. More than the coincidence of a single critical slight of hand, the prolonged and careful attention he dedicates to the story "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero,"¹⁴—one of the least well-known and least commented on of Borges's stories in those years—shows that de Man could not avoid interpreting that the omissions, which are not only decisive for Borges's aesthetic, were also frequent and revelatory for his characters as much as they would be for de Man or for the reader who was capable of deciphering the real plot hidden behind a false plot.

In the first place, Borges's story, which is from 1944, also begins, like the review of 1964, with an epigraph from Yeats.¹⁵ In the story, because of one of those narrative strategies of universality, Borges's narrator prefers not to define the circumstances:

Details, rectifications, adjustments are missing; there are zones of history that had still not been revealed to me; today, January 3, 1944, I make it out like that. [. . .] Let us say (for the sake of narrative comfort) Ireland; let us say 1824. The narrator is called Ryan, he is the great grandson of the young, the heroic, the beautiful, the murdered Fergus Kilpatrick.¹⁶

One tolerates in the intrigues of the story that a narrator is not differentiated from a historian. In "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero," that character, also ambiguous, who is his descendent proposes to investigate the tragic attack that ended the life of an exemplary revolutionary. Never-

theless, he discovers that his ancestor was not the admirable conspirator that the fatherland venerated but rather a traitor discovered in compromising circumstances, who also was not murdered, victim of a terrorist attack, but rather was judged in secret, accused, found guilty, and executed with the same discretion. After long hesitations, the narrator decides to cover up the embarrassment of a past of betrayals and instead of declaring the truth:

He publishes a book dedicated to the glory of the hero; even that, perhaps, was foreseen.¹⁷

Between veracity and its versions, he discovers the theatricalized execution of his ancestors, glimpsing among the different circumstances the dramatic model of *Julius Caesar*, the tragedy perpetuated by the "English enemy," William Shakespeare, but he prefers to remain silent about the discovery. In contrast, faced with a similar situation, Ortwyn de Graef, a student of literature of the University of Lovaina, Belgian like his countryman Paul de Man, did not succumb to the temptation of the complicity of the model and, opposing it, preferred not to remain silent about the revelations of his investigation.

One cannot fail to notice that among Irish writers paradoxes abound, and it is insinuated that Life imitates Art much more than Art imitates life. Borges's narrator does not hesitate to imitate one of the most illustrious of the Irish.¹⁸ Carnivalizing that affirmation, the narrator says: "That history would have copied history was already sufficiently astonishing; that history copies literature is inconceivable."¹⁹ Nevertheless, it would not be surprising if theory copied literature; moreover, it is predictable that fiction be ahead of it. It is only a question of verifying, then, that the coincidences between the fiction of Borges and the theoretical contributions of de Man are numerous and notorious.

It seems disconcerting, on the other hand, that one should omit mentioning Borges as blatantly as one comes to cover up the guilt of a past in collaboration with the enemy. Perhaps this as well Borges foresaw: he anticipated the history of his reticent chronicler, some of the directions of his thought and the ethical fluctuations of an intrigue. Like the historian of the story that he was familiar with, who preferred to omit the betrayal and the scruples, de Man kept secret the violence of his past collaboration with the enemy, his debts to Belgium and Borges. Faced with this silence, his colleagues, his friends (who loved him, who believed him worthy of greater feelings), conjectured, without confirmation, that de Man's secrecies could be due to the discretion observed by one who might have suffered the tribulations of resistance. The ambiguous relations between history and literature, the turbid options that are proposed in "Theme of

the Traitor and the Hero," are multiplied in the biography and reflections of the infamous Belgian critic. When he speaks in general of the blindness of the critic, who "in his blindness, turns the weapon of his language upon himself,"²⁰ perhaps he intended to say that also silence—which is language—can produce that reversal, a low blow that language gives the one who uses it without noticing the uncontrollable derivation of the duplicities it implies.

It is well known that in an epoch in which various transtextualities, carnivalizations, and polyphonies legitimated palimpsest writings, the displacement of themes and texts are all still of importance, and the interest in fragments of writing is a common metaphor. It is not a question then of demanding rights of textual exclusivity or of anachronistic registers, less so now, when the electronic perfection of the media of communication are obliterating the referent, accumulating copies and reducing the complexities of representation to images that, on the screen, present one reality for another, as immediate, as unmediated.

In *The Anxiety of Influence*,²¹ Harold Bloom begins his book by recalling quite summarily that Borges had said that poets create their precursors.²² I do not know if Bloom knew that this is one of the most often quoted sentences of Borges, and if he only mentions Borges in passing in order to make this frequency appear obvious. It is possible that de Man does not mention him for reasons of the same appearance of obviousness, or because he experiences as much the fear as the desire of that anxiety. It is rather significant that de Man and Bloom suppress their reference to Borges. In those same years, Michel Foucault began *Les mots et les choses*²³ affirming that "this book was born from a text of Borges's," and continues elaborating his thought on the basis of "The analytical idiom of John Wilkins."²⁴ Several years ago, Jean Bessière made of "Borges and the Fable of the Sphinx: From the Enigma to the Enigmatic," the title and beginning of the preface to his book on *The Enigmaticity of Literature*.²⁵ Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel Dennet, in 1981, not so far from here, Bloomington, begin *The Mind's I*²⁶ by transcribing the entirety of "Borges and I." That pronoun that, in English, juxtaposes at the same time Borges with an author, with himself, and with an eye—*The Blind's Eye*—adding to the pronominal ambiguity one more semantic twist, necessary to return to blindness and the ambiguity of its visions.

BLINDNESS: A POINT OF VIEW

Despite dealing with Borges, with the foreseeably uncontrollable derivations of whichever of his themes, I tried to concentrate this reflection in depth on one precise point and nothing else. One of the properties

presented by his work, however, one condition that determines the validity of its emerging currency, is precisely that, in its depths, the elements that seem independent cross one another, subjacent, comprehending the universe. One begins to study his blindness and ends with the entire world, or does not end, like the world, another globalization that he did not mention but that, in part, his perspicacity or perspective, a point of view—or two—of his blindness, already foresaw.

Nevertheless, in the same way as one knows that his imagination does not tend to elude the attraction of contraries, the contrariness of his blindness contracts according to its own specious, lucid mechanics. It begins by being a sequestering of logic, a species of abduction—from the Aristotelian to the Peircean—and ends by being intelligibly revelatory. The confrontation would not surprise so much but for the intermediation of a third term, which is not mentioned but implies both—the contraries both are and are not opposed.

This three-point contrariness is the one that substantially determines a thought and a poetic that, in his work, are terms that are also not opposed. If indeed they are aspects of an intimate conviction, its causes are, more than interior, anterior. They proceed from before and, above all, would seem to proceed from outside. In the first place, the contradiction that his name, his *proper name*, formulates, would have been the beginning of his writing:

Who can tell me if in the secret archive
of God are found the letters of my name.²⁷

In the same way that his blindness is not only a genetic and biological condition, personal, particular, his own, proper, name (a property both proper/own and distant), orders his universe according to an onomastically significant key. His name constitutes the formula of the oxymoron that ciphers the entirety of an oeuvre that adopts and articulates it speciously. In the form of an analogy to the contradictory property of the name, his *blindness* was an adoption or an inheritance (another property both proper and alien) that Borges rehabilitated as a proper condition of his vision: "Blindness is a cloistering, but it is also a liberation, a solitude propitious for inventions, a key and an algebra."²⁸

In the contradictory articulation of his proper name, *Jorge*, there is a reference to the countryside. The insistence in being called by his nickname, *Georgie*, not only claims the familiarity of his English origins, but also, in English, is affiliated to Latin. The paradox of the allusion is double; it alludes by way of English—and not Spanish—and by way of a

familiar, informal invocation—and not erudite or classical—to Virgil's oeuvre. In the other nominal extreme, in Borges it is the city that is alluded to (Borges, Burgos, Bürger). In *History of Night*²⁹ one of the poems is titled "G. A. Bürger," "(both of his dates are in the encyclopedia)," says one of Borges's verses in parenthesis; and it is easy to verify: (1747–1794). Curiously, a *lapsus calamae* of Willis Barnstone³⁰ inscribes as his title, in the place of G.A., abbreviation for Gottfried August, the initials G. \L., and the same occurs in the French edition,³¹ as if both authors and languages were confused. The Italian edition,³² in contrast, appears as it does in Spanish, "G.A." The city and country cross one another, ciphered onomastically in his proper name; an inheritance that demands, a *required/loved* (*[re]querido*) atavism, with its greatest affects, filial and etymological. They initiate the play of opposites that are conjugated throughout his oeuvre, uniting two extremes in a third entity, the unity that extends them to the point of comprehending everything, country and city, the common place, the plot that gives it its place.

The oppositions starts out from a personal combination but then distances itself from it, in the same way as, in his blindness, Borges does not recognize a particular biographic circumstance but the presence of his elders, times of other times that make themselves present. He actualizes the past and realizes a vision. The urban space and the rural concentrated in the oxymoron of his name, and all of time, the entire universe, in the eyes and their orbits. *Urbi et orbi*.

They are personal circumstances with which he conceives or pulls together a universality that overflows the particularity of his space and time. The *blindness* is grafted onto a genetic memory and both at the same time, blindness and memory, make of the past the present. I quote two poems—*en pendant* though the years: "A Reader,"³³ where he says: "forgetting / is one of the forms of memory, its vague basement, / the other secret side of the coin," and the other poem, "The Blind Man,"³⁴ says: "Memory, that form of forgetting." It is the same for the reader or the blind man, forgetting and memory, blindness and vision, letters written or read. His writing contracts common oppositions in a *double bind*, a *double blind*, a *vision and an insight*,³⁵ *two visions*, however, at the same time a vision and a privation, an interior vision, private, more profound, more perfect. A vision that, deprived of the sensitivity of vision, both is and is not an interior vision: insight; vision and lucidity; lack of vision or blindness.

They are opposite and correlative terms, that is to say, they exist in function of a greater or lesser reciprocal dependence, contradictions that are resolved by *an ironic mediation*, the indispensable third term between

two opposites, because the imagination of Borges realizes what Thomas A. Sebeok analyzes on the basis of one of the best-known premises of Charles Sanders Peirce:

Peirce adapted the designation "semiosis" (in a variant transcription) from Philodemus's fragmentary Herculanean papyrus *On signs*, where the Greek equivalent occurs at least thirty times . . . , to represent a type of reasoning or inference from signs. He endowed the term with a definition of his own as an action or influence, "which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in anyway resolvable into actions between pairs."³⁶

From his vanguardist writings, in the times of the Spanish and Latin American *ultraism*, Borges passed from perplexity to fascination when observing that words not only could have several meanings but also that this plurality could comprise contrary meanings. A fascination that, those years past, disclaiming violently his first books, did not diminish. On the contrary, it is one of the few obsessions other than semantic ones that continued to be among his most lasting. In "Brodie's Report," the eponymous story of one of his last books of stories,³⁷ Brodie assimilates the peculiarity of the language of the tribes to that of our language; the text is in Spanish, but nevertheless the report says: "Let us not marvel excessively; in our language the verb *to cleave*³⁸ means both to rend and to adhere."³⁹ More than fifty years earlier, his stupefaction when faced with the same phenomenon was no different:

The fact that they exist is enough to test the provisional and tentative character of our language faced with reality [. . .] In algebra, the sign more and the sign less exclude each other; in literature, contraries become siblings and impose on consciousness a mixed sensation; but not less true than the others.⁴⁰

The hallucinations of his blindness that extend those of dreaming to the wakefulness of his vainly open eyes; the will or valor of anticipating it, first, and the resignation facing the fatality afterward; the certainty of the lucidity in darkness; the memory of the shadow of forgetting; its elegy; the reading not distinguished from writing; are topics run through by an ironic network that multiplies constant references and preferences⁴¹ in poems, books, essays. Like the ambivalencies of his memory, the ambivalencies of his blindness are so frequent as to discourage, as useless, the catalog.

When Borges formulates the *In Praise of Shadow* or records the *History of Night*, it is not merely a question of affirming that resignation but of exalting the proud *belonging* to an courageous kin: his literal ancestors (Saxons or Gauchos, both warriors), or his literary ancestors converge in *the myth of the blind poet*.

It is with difficulty that the coincidence of fatalities must be attributed only to chance, a license of reasoning in which Borges does not believe. He attributes his blindness to God—in whom he also does not believe—to diminish the arrogance or enjoy a chosen liberty. For this reason he oscillates between a God (indefinite but with a capital G) or the god (definite but with a lower case G) who, like in Plato's dialogue, chooses the poet to whom to bequeath the blindness that Borges recognizes as the perfect instrument of another poet. In "The Other," a poem from *The Other, the Same*,⁴¹ "the other" itself is the title of the poem or of the title that he bequeaths as much to Milton as to another blind poet, model of poetry and blindness, who was the first, Homer, or the other who is he himself:

The pitiless god who is not named gives:
To Milton the walls of shadow,
To Cervantes exile and forgetting.⁴²

In his lecture "Blindness," Borges does not say that Oscar Wilde said it—because he did not say it—but rather that "it was said": "The Greeks maintained that Homer was blind in order to mean that poetry should not be visual, that its duty is to be auditory."⁴⁴ It is Borges who has Wilde say that it is not important if Homer existed or not, but rather that the Greeks preferred to imagine that he was blind in order to insist on the fact that poetry is above all musical, and that the visual in a poet can exist or not.

The series of enthusiasms, stubborn or blinded (he includes, in passing, Tiresias, who, prophesizing, provoked the blindness of Oedipus), is extended to other Argentine writers:

My blindness had been coming on gradually since childhood. It was a slow, summer twilight. There was nothing pathetic or dramatic about it. Beginning in 1927, I had undergone eight eye operations, but since the late 1950's, when I wrote my "Poem of the Gifts," for reading and writing purposes I have been blind. Blindness ran in my family; a description of the operation performed on the eyes of my great-grandfather Edward Young Haslam appeared in the pages of the London medical journal the *Lancet*. Blindness also seems to run among the directors of the

National Library. Two of my eminent forerunners, José Mármol and Paul Groussac, suffered the same fate.⁴⁴

Blindness, a limitation inherited from his elders, made him slide, from the standpoint of that noble and double genealogy: arms into letters, the country into the city, prose into verse, free verse into classic meter; and by way of that adverse itinerary he intended to return to the language of his elders. He says so in an autobiographical essay in which he connects blindness with the mnemonic virtues of verse—other “*mémoires d’aveugle*,” Derrida would say⁴⁵—and the tendency to return through poetry to the story, where a narrative thread, an argument, could lead it like a sonorous thread, a *leitmotiv* between spaces and walls that do not see, quotidian environments that he passes through without recognizing, converting known objects into enigmas, no less threatening for being familiar, only more frequent. A blindness that textualizes its surroundings as “the exercise of commentary illuminates the text by adding it to the text and, in a certain way, hiding it.”⁴⁶

In poems, in talks, in dialogues and interviews, Borges attributes to blindness the necessity of having replaced the visible world with the auditory world of the Anglo-Saxon language, of having given himself over to the study of the tongue of his elders, poetry, classic verse, narration, but above all “the Germanic studies of England and Iceland.”⁴⁷

Already in *In Praise of Shadow* he had attributed—and with gratitude—to his blindness the dedication to study “the language of iron,” Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, the epic of his ancestors. But speaking of that language it is also necessary to recognize that it constitutes an *iron language*,⁴⁸ the language of iron similar to “the hard iron that slices my chest, / the intimate knife at my throat,”⁴⁹ according to the translation of the “Poema conjetural” [“Conjectural Poem”]. The translation is quite close but, for the eye-ear of a English-speaking reader, *iron* (*hierro*) cannot fail to be allude to the *ironies* from which Borges does not distance himself. Neither could *blinded*,⁵⁰ in those circumstances, fail to be associated with *blindado* (armoured).

Even if it is a legitimate play, it is not merely a question of playing with words or letters: In “A Vindication of the Kabbalah,” a text published at the beginning of the thirties, Borges wrote: “it occurs in the verses, whose ordinary law is the subjection of meaning to euphonic necessities (or superstitions). The coincidental in them is not the sound, it is what they signify.”⁵¹

When he names Adam, Borges—who confesses with sorrow to not knowing Hebrew—does not lose the idiomatic opportunity to qualify him as “Red Adam,”⁵² or to recognize that “the stroke / was the blood of

Adam, a first day,⁵³ or to remember the earth, the dust of which he is made. In Hebrew, earth is *Adama*, red is *Adom*, and blood is *Dam*, one more semantic dimension for the name, for the man, for the relation of his substantive condition with the earth.

It is interesting to observe that, Borges being one of the authors who most often and best elaborated the figures of contradiction (syllepsis, oxymoron, chiasmus, antithesis, attenuation, paradoxes), also engaged himself in dissimilar forms of a tricky, transversal repetition, through more than one language. Pierre Menard could be the paradigm of the procedure, but without attaining those archetypal levels; for example, in “From Someone to No One,”⁵⁴ Borges says: Johannes Eriugena or Scotus, that is to say John the Irish, whose name in history is Escoto Erigena, or rather Irish Irish.⁵⁵

The same model of “different repetition,”⁵⁶ could be distinguished in the name of Red Scharlach, one of his most famous characters, the protagonist of “Death and the Compass.”⁵⁷ After *Red* (*rojo*), *Scharlach*⁵⁸ means “scarlet” in German. *Rojo Rojo* is a good forename and last name for the presumed assassin of a political story blazoned across four letters, the tetragrammaton, which is formed on the basis of Kabbalistic clues apt for discovering the ritual deaths of rabbis, Hassidic wise men, specialists in the *Sefer Yesirah*, and other books of Jewish mysticism. Although Adam, the man, also tolerates that strange synonym and promotes others: “In Latin, *humanus* was related to *homo*, although not directly derived, and the form in which both proceed from an ancestor of *humus*, ‘earth,’ is one of the obscure questions of Indoeuropean linguistics.”⁵⁹

Borges, Bioy, like other Rioplatense writers who preceded them, Jules Laforgue, Lautréamont, Supervielle, recur with suggestive frequency to a figure that, despite having been adopted by advertising and continuing to be stalked by the weariness of its insistence, maintains its ironic strangeness. As if it were natural for the word to dissimulate its history and reserve for poetry the revelation of its truth, its past, its origin: “He who discovers with pleasure an etymology,” goes a verse of “The Just Ones,”⁶⁰ and it is not the first time that Borges alludes to the happiness of that class of discovery where the word turns historical or vice versa.

On one occasion I preferred to catalog that rhetorical procedure as an “intraduction,”⁶¹ the figure that hinders languages and differences, a figure that, if one had to assign it an origin, would be originally rooted in Rio de la Plata. It does not cease to be coherently contradictory for it to be just a “figure,” the strategy of literariness of which meaning makes use in order to rescue a common truth from among different words. Interidiomatic, it denominates the impossibility of translating a sign that, without abandoning its language, remains in between, a term comprehended

between two languages, two languages that cross each other like two swords of iron, words like swords, *two-edged words*. The *irony* of an interior translation, or anterior, that remits to an edenic or adamic language, where "My viper letter,"⁶² forked and seductive, will tempt the poet who procures, beyond idiomatic limits, to recuperate the comprehension of a prebabelic language.

Joyce is another blind writer who searches through invented words an identity that supercedes the jurisdictions of a conventional linguistics.

He learned something of all languages and wrote in a language he invented, a language that is difficult to understand but that is distinguished by a strange music. Joyce brought a new music to English. And he said valorously (and mendaciously) that 'of all the things that have occurred to me, I think that the least important is that I became blind.'⁶³

BLIND GAZES

It is likely that Borges managed to say it in Indiana, when he was here in 1976, a visit from which there remain recorded dialogues. He said in one of those conversations, "I have never looked for a subject. I allow subjects to look for me, and then, walking down the streets, going from one room to another of my house, the small house of a blind man, I feel that something is about to happen, and that something may be a line or it may be some kind of shape."⁶⁴

In the same way that he neither searches for nor rejects the themes that present themselves, he posed no resistance to his blindness coming to meet him and, from that point on, Borges elaborated a poetics of blindness, a *different vision*, as if his whole life, since his birth, he had been awaiting it, like one who awaits a reimbursement: blindness and irony in a single gift. Despite the fact that his blindness progresses from the moment of his birth, from before, he prefers to give it a date; he dates it to 1955 and from then on he celebrates both. In that "Poem of the Gifts" he said:

Let no one diminish by tear or reproach
This declaration of the mastery
Of God, who with magnificent irony
Gave me, at the same time, books and the night.⁶⁵

Irony is of God, but God, like the maker in lowercase of the title, who is confused with the author, fuses his irony with the irony inherent to irony, as if it were a metal in an alloy of similar elements. According to Borges, the relation with divinity is no different from the relation that Ion, the gifted interpreter of Homer, describes in the *Ion*. In that dialogue, Plato describes *enthusiasm*, the overflowing of a god in the expansions of a muse who inspires the poet, who inspires the interpreter and inspires the listener. With the same magnetic force of the Heracleian stone, interpretation propagates itself, like a breath. The chain of the enthused of which Ion spoke is like Borges's chain, a chain of iron, a chain of ironic works that neither Socrates nor Plato would have de-authorized.

"A Reader" (*In Praise of Shadow*)⁶⁶ is not the only work he dedicates to one who is, like Don Quijote—another reader—his literary hero par excellence, remembered in his autobiographical essay, in his talk on blindness, in so many poems. He understands that to inherit blindness permits him to recuperate another inheritance: the forgotten language of his ancestors.

I gave myself over to the study of the language of iron
used by my elders, to sing
swords and solitudes.⁶⁷

Because forgetting is, for Borges

one of the forms of memory, its vague basement,
the other secret face of the coin.⁶⁸

Iron is displaced from memory, which is ambivalent, to the language, which is as well, of "the music of the Saxon iron" (as he says in the prologue to *The Iron Coin*, 1976).⁶⁹ The coin, a metal with two faces, is a metaphor of memory and forgetting; blindness, which is double, is a metaphor of foresight and its visions. In the language that is his and is other, the words, like swords—written in English they are barely distinguished—like the "double axis of iron," mark the entrance or exit of the labyrinth (Gr. *labrys*), the dualities of language that irony mediates, as if this duality had its emblematic figure in blindness.

"A great poet of the eye" or a great poet of the gaze is what Derrida could have said of Borges, insofar as a philosopher, such as Derrida himself, would be a great thinker of the eye: "*Idein, eidos, idea*: the whole history, the whole semantics of the European *idea* in its Greek genealogy, we know it, we see it, assigns seeing to knowing."⁷⁰

Words combine (*hacen juego*), twice over. Borges had envisioned, like the Kabbalists, an absolute writing in which every word counts. Blindness enables that interior vision, more than a mystical ascension it gives him access to a *pardes*. In Hebrew, it is the acronym formed by the initials that name the four readings necessary for enabling the comprehension of the sacred text; *pardés* is the same word that designates Paradise, a garden in the form of a library, the Eden that assures perfect comprehension; by way of the writing that does not see, one approaches the truth that is also not possible to see, although he makes it out as archetypes, and it is with them that Borges began the first stanza of his poem "The Golem."⁷¹

In that poem, that stanza, which is the only one of his entire work that he would like to have remain, he names Scholem twice. With Gerhardt—as he preferred calling Gershom Scholem—he had conversed twice in Jerusalem, and had read attentively his book *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.⁷² Attentive to the knowledge of the Kabbalah and to the imagination of the Golem, however, Borges says he names Scholem because he had not found another name that rhymes with Golem. This cannot be understood as a trivial commentary and, as transcendent, it would be inevitable to associate it with a rhyme that stands out in the *Divina Commedia*. Hatzfeld⁷³ recalls that Dante only names Christ three times and, although rhymes with Christ are frequent and easy in Italian, in the *Commedia* Christ only rhymes with Christ. It is not absurd to think that the relation between Golem and Scholem is also the discovery of an identification in rhyme that has for Borges, an erudite poet, scholar of the *Divina Commedia*,⁷⁴ all possible mystical resonances. *Golem*, the word in Hebrew, appears in Psalm 139, 5:16 of the *Book of Psalms* of the Old Testament, and has been the object of different or disputable translations: "substance," "inchoate mass," "imperfect," "embryo," among others.

"Tes yeux voyaient mon Golem"

goes the French translation,⁷⁵

Thine eyes did see my substance,
yet being unperfect;
and in thy book
all my members were *written*.⁷⁶

In the ancient version of Casiodoro de Reina, it says:

Your eyes saw my embryo,
And in your book were *written* all those things
That were later formed,
Without lacking any of them.⁷⁷

"Golem" in modern Hebrew means "larva,"⁷⁸ which would not be difficult to associate with "mask" in German.

Several times Borges said that the poem was related to "The Circular Ruins,"⁷⁹ the story that reveals the hallucinations of dreaming, of thought, of imagination, and of memory, as the key to an aesthetic in which *mise en abîme* questions reality and fiction in the same turn, in the same vertigo; the sign as origin of an unlimited semiosis that affects with unreality all instances in which man participates.

In one of the passages from Borges's Golem:

The rabbi looked at it with tenderness
And with some horror . . .

. . .
. . .

*How did I fall upon adding to the infinite
Series yet another symbol? . . .*⁸⁰

In "The Abduction at Uqbar,"⁸¹ Eco considers that, although he assumes that Borges has not read Peirce, it seems to him a good Borgesian procedure to assume that books speak to one another. Personally, I suspect that this propalation came to Borges in a more direct manner than Eco supposes. It is true that, as he affirms, "many of Borges's stories seem to be exemplifications of that art of inference that Peirce called abduction or hypothesis, and that is nothing other than conjecture."⁸²

But what seems to me even more suggestive is the assimilation between the foundations of illimited semiosis and the aesthetics of the circular ruins. Both may be explained, in Peirce's words, by the fact that a sign is something "which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the sign becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*."⁸³

In the short text "A Dream," the vertiginous unlimitedness of that infinite circularity is condensed by Borges in a few lines: "In a deserted part of Iran there is a not-so-tall tower of stone, without doors or windows. In the one room (whose floor is of earth and which has the shape of a circle) there is a table of wood and a bench. In that circular cell, a man who looks like me writes in characters that I do not understand a long

poem about a man in another circular cell that writes a poem about a man in another circular cell. . . . The process has no end and no one will be able to read what the prisoners write."⁸⁴

Lector and interlocutor of Scholem, always studying the Kabbalah, Borges could not fail to know that every word counts, that names and things exist by virtue of a literal combinatory both wise and mystical. But, most of all, he is fascinated like his character by the aleph, the letter with which all begins, even before the beginning, the sign that represents in Hebrew the first movement of the larynx (like the "sweet spirit" of Greek) that precedes a vowel at the beginning of the word but that, because it is the spiritual root of all letters, contains in its essence the whole alphabet, that is to say, all the elements of human language. In this way the whole world depends on a letter. And Borges imagines this verbal dependence visually, in a story, "The Aleph," that designates as much a world as a book, as much a title as a story. *The Aleph*, in which the poet—author, narrator, and character—is at the root of an orb: "I saw in the Aleph the earth, and in the earth once again the Aleph, and in the Aleph the earth,"⁸⁵ "one of the points in space that contains all points," a point of view that the letter fixes.⁸⁶ That is why aleph is the letter that the rabbi inscribes in the forehead of the Golem, initiating a combination *emet* that means "truth." When he wants to destroy it, he erases the first letter, and in this way what remains is the word that means "death," and the Golem crumbles, like man, made of dust, into dust.

Through absolute writing, a perfect machine, the Golem was created (the first, in Writing). Its death, one not true, puts in evidence the simulacrum of writing that, for Borges, is a simulacrum of memory.⁸⁷ With the death of the Golem life is interrupted, semiosis comes to a halt. In *A Sign Is Just a Sign*, Sebeok asks:

If objects are signs, indefinite regression to a suppositious *logos*, and if interpretants are signs marching in progression toward the ultimate disintegration of mind, what is there left that is not a sign? (. . .) In a celebrated article he published in 1868, Peirce anticipated and answered this question, contending "that the word or sign which man uses is the man himself," which is to claim that "the man and the external sign are identical, in the same sense in which the words *homo* and *man* are identical. Thus my language is the sum total of myself, for the man is the thought."⁸⁸

Despite his magical wisdom, the rabbi did not concede the word to the Golem, nor did he concede language or thought:

Despite such high witchery
Man's apprentice did not learn to speak.⁸⁹

For this reason, deprived of the sign, in the Scriptures, the Golem is an in-form-ed entity, a *larva*, another of the words that accumulate several different and opposed meanings. The Romance languages inherited from Latin the meaning "phantasm, specter, spirit of the dead who haunt the living, embryonic form, particularly of insects, mask." The Golem is anterior or posterior, man remains in the middle; between both extremes, his life. The Golem will exist on the basis of the word, and will cease to exist on the basis of it. It will be or it will cease to be, a chrysalis or the spirit of the dead.

It is that double gift—poison in German, like Phaedro's *pharmakon*—a poison and a remedy, a simulacrum that resolves simultaneously, ironically, memory and forgetting; a simultaneity in an instant, the *Augenblick* that is the *coup d'oeil*, a blink of the eye, the furtive gaze that permits him to apprehend and install eternity in an instant; to know in an instant his world, a knowledge that is the origin of the paradoxical relations between now and eternity. For Isaac Luria and other Kabbalists the paths of the firmament were clear, and he traveled them (seeing his way) with his mental eyes, more an interior vision than a mystical ascension . . . It is a primacy that is verified, in Greek ontology, in such terms as *idea*, *eidos*, *theorein*. To refer to the same notion, Plato and Aristotle speak of the "eye of the soul." The figure is quite similar to the one used by the Kabbalists.

It is not necessary for the observation to be of a theoretical order, but it explains in part the intellectual imagination, the reasoned fiction that defines the universe of Borges. Or as he himself defines his fortune and misfortune:

My lot is what is normally called intellectual poetry. The word is almost an oxymoron; the intellect (vigil) thinks by means of abstraction, poetry (dreaming), by means of images, of myths, or of fables. Intellectual poetry must knit together those two processes. [. . .] Thus does Plato in his dialogues . . . The master of the genre is, in my opinion, Emerson.⁹⁰

Blindness has attenuated the world of appearances, approximating it to another interior world, private, doubly deprived by circumstances and peripateticisms, by timelessness and future, as he says in his talk: "I said to myself: as I have lost the dear world of appearances, I have to create something else: I have to create the future, what happens to the visible

world that, in fact, I have lost."⁹¹ Beyond time, beyond its happenings and successions, a species of revelation of truth arises in the Idea:

At the end of the years I am surrounded
by an obstinate, luminous mist
that reduces things to one thing
without form or color. Almost an idea.⁹²

Permanent like the idea, free of fugacity and contingency, writing shares with the coin and with arms both iron and ambivalencies. We mentioned his veneration for myths, Germanic languages and literatures; where Odin, god of war, inventor of runes, crosses—like Borges, like Cervantes, like Lope—arms with letters.

So many are the personal, biographic, conjectural, and poetic references that I will only recall that in "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quijote*," the famous author is only the author of chapter XXXVIII of the *Quijote*, precisely in the one in which Cervantes "deals with the curious discourse that Don Quijote gave on arms and letters," and a fragment of two others (IX and XXII).⁹³ His Pierre Menard is, without doubt, one of the most quoted authors of the century, perhaps the most important of contemporary literary history. An author who did not exist and who not only wrote some fragments of a work that already existed, but who also did not write it.

It is true that, for Borges as for the tradition that precedes him, in the same way that God created man, man is capable of creating other beings in his image and semblance, subjected, in the same way as

Gradually was seen (how we)
imprisoned in this sonorous net
of Before, After, Yesterday, Meanwhile, Now.⁹⁴

In "Signs,"⁹⁵ one of his least cited poems, Borges brings together signs, ciphers, syllables, metals, secret names. "Signs" ends with a verse:

I can be all. Leave me in the shade.⁹⁶

"The Golem," as he says, the poem that meant the most to him, begins with a reference to Cratylus and to the literal image of a rose, quite different from the roses of Ronsard, of Laforgue, and from all the roses that poetry multiplies like another "miracle of the roses" that, like the Golem, reproduce themselves, grow, and succumb. Borges's rose is, like

"The Profound Rose" of Milton, "The Unending Rose,"⁹⁷ an interminable rose, archetypal, "that the Lord will show to my dead eyes,"⁹⁸ like the one that flowers in the quote of Angelus Silesius.

In the same way that the blindness of his lifeless eyes anticipates the fore-sight of his timeless life, it returns to him paradoxically the language of his ancestors, a language of iron melted across languages and their particular differences by the irony that multiplies meanings to the point of filling to the rim a single sign, wherein begins the infinite of signification.

In the prologue to *The Other, the Same*, Borges recalls his encounter at Lubbock, on the edge of the desert, with a tall girl who asked him if, when writing "The Golem," "had he not intended a version of 'The Circular Ruins'; I responded to her that I had to cross the entire continent to receive that revelation, which was true."⁹⁹ Both compositions recall the vertiginous character of the dream in the abyss of a dreamer who is dreamed to the same extent that a reader is read, or in the gaze of the rabbi who contemplates his Golem, suspecting that, in the same way that he looks, he is also looked at by God. The reader, miraculously, making the gaze his or her own, returns it or puts it away again.

7. THE IRONIES OF A BLIND SEER

1. Borges, *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974), 1098.
2. Borges, *Inquisiciones* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Proa, 1925).
3. Umberto Eco, "La abducción en Uqbar," en *Homenaje a J. L. Borges*, ed. Lisa Block de Behar, Montevideo, *Jaque* 9 (November 1984).

4. de Man, "A Modern Master" in *New York Review of Books*, 3:7 (November 19, 1964), 8–10.
5. de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
6. de Man, *Critical Writings 1953–1978* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
7. de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, 120.
8. *Critical Writings*, 125.
9. Denis Donoghue, "The Strange Case of Paul de Man," *New York Review of Books*, 6/29/89.
10. Borges, *Obras completas*, 472–480.
11. *Ibid.*, 479.
12. English in original.
13. de Man, *Blindness and Insight. Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 104.
14. Borges, *Obras completas*, 496–498.
15. Yeats, "Nineteen hundred and nineteen," *The Tower in The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Richard J. Finneran (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1989), 208. "So the Platonic year / Whirls out new right and wrong, / Whirls in the old instead; / All men are dancers and their tread / Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong."
16. Borges, *Obras completas*, 496.
17. *Ibid.*, 498.
18. I am referring to Oscar Wilde, with whom Borges shares, in addition to numerous narrative and poetic coincidences, epigrammatic formulations, ironies and paradoxes, substantial aesthetic convictions, common references, and the same address in Paris.
19. Borges, *Obras completas*, 497.
20. de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 110.
21. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). The pathways continue to cross. Emir was the one responsible for this book being translated and published in Spanish (Caracas, Monte Ávila, 1972).
22. Borges, "Kafka y sus precursores," *Otras inquisiciones* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1952).
23. *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 1.
24. Borges, *Obras completas*, 706–709.
25. Jean Bessière, *Énigmaticité de la littérature. Pour une anatomie de la fiction au XXe siècle* (Paris: PUF, 1993).
26. Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel Dennet, *The Mind's I* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982).
27. Borges, "Góngora," *Los conjurados*, 83.

28. Borges, "Prólogo," *La rosa profunda* in *Obra poética 1923–1977* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1977), 413.
29. Borges, "G. A. Bürger," *Historia de la noche* in *Obra poética 1923–1977*, 535.
30. Willis Barnstone, *Borges at Eighty, Conversations* (Indiana University Press, 1982).
31. Barnstone, *Conversations avec J. L. Borges à l'occasion de son 80e anniversaire* (Paris: Éditions Ramsey, 1984).
32. Barnstone, Jorge Luis Borges, *Conversazione americane* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1984).
33. Borges, *Elogio de la sombra* in *Obras completas*, 1016.
34. Borges, *La rosa profunda* in *Obra poética 1923–1977*, 443.
35. "Insight" in English in the original.
36. Sebeok, *A Sign Is Just a Sign* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 152. Quotes Peirce, *Collected Papers, 1935–1966*; 5, 484.
37. Borges, *El informe de Brodie* in *Obras completas*, 1073–1078.
38. English in the original.
39. Borges, *ibid.*, 1077.
40. Borges, Buenos Aires, 1921. Published in *Cosmópolis de Madrid*, and in Hugo J. Verani, *Las vanguardias literarias en Hispanoamérica. Manifiestos, proclamas y otros escritos* (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 1986), 279–280.
41. Borges, *Obras completas*, 890.
42. *Ibid.*, 890.
43. Borges, *Siete noches* (Argentina: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1980), 153.
44. Borges, "An Autobiographical Essay," in *The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933–1969* (New York: Dutton, (1970), 250.
45. *Jacques Derrida: Mémoires d'aveugle*, videofilm directed by Jean Paul Fargier, Paris, 1992.
46. Jean Bessière, *Énigmaticité de la littérature*, XI.
47. Borges, "Prólogo," *La moneda de hierro* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1976), 10.
48. English in the original.
49. English in the original; Borges, *Obras completas*, 868.
50. English in the original.
51. Borges, *Obras completas*, 211.
52. Borges, *Obra poética*, 127, 274, 332.
53. *Ibid.*, 425.
54. Borges, *Obras completas*, 737.
55. In Webster's Third International Dictionary, under the entry for "scot," is written: "Middle English Scottes (pl.). Scotchmen. Old English:

Scottas Irishmen, Scotchmen. Scotus-scottus-Irishmen. 1. One of a Gaelic people of Northern Ireland settling in Scotland about A.D. 500."

56. The evocation of Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), is not without justification.

57. Borges, *Obras completas*, 499–507.

58. J. Hillis Miller worked on this transidiomatic synonym in "Red Scharlach, Hermeneutica," in *Diseminario. La desconstrucción, otro descubrimiento de América*, ed. Lisa Block de Behar (Montevideo: XYZ Editores, 1987), 163–173.

59. Joan Corominas, *Diccionario crítico etimológico castellano e hispano* (Madrid: Gredos, 1961), 321.

60. Borges, *La cifra* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1981), 79.

61. Block de Behar, talk given in Porto Alegre: "Jules Laforgue, una figura uruguaya," 6/4/88. Included in *Dos medios entre dos medios* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1990), 62–82.

62. Jules Laforgue, "Complainte du pauvre-chevalier errant," *Les complaintes* (Paris: 1880), 119.

63. Borges, lecture, "La ceguera," *Siete Noches*, 143–160.

64. Barnstone, *Borges at Eighty, Conversations*, 12.

65. Borges, *Obra poética*, 113.

66. *Ibid.*, 353–354.

67. *Ibid.*, 353.

68. *Ibid.*, 353.

69. *Ibid.*, 463.

70. Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle. L'autoportrait et autres ruines* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990), 18.

71. Borges, *Obra poética*, 200–202.

72. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Schocken Publishing House, 1941).

73. Helmut Hatzfeld, *Estudios sobre el barroco* (Madrid: Gredos, 1973), 190.

74. Borges, "La Divina Comedia," *Siete Noches*, 9–32.

75. See *La Bible*, traduite et présentée par André Chouraqui (Desclée de Brouwer, 1989), 1225; and *La Bible, Ancien Testament*, II, introduction par Édouard Dhorme, traduction et notes para Édouard Dhorme, Jean Koenig, Franck Michaéli, Jean Hadot et Antoine Guillaumont (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 1202.

76. *The Holy Bible*, King James version (Chicago: Good Counsel Publishers, 1965), 483.

77. *La Santa Biblia, Antiguo y Nuevo Testamento*, antigua versión de Casiodoro de Reina, revisada por Cipriano de Valera y cotejada posteri-

ormente con diversas traducciones y con los textos hebreo y griego (Miami: Editorial Vida, 1981), 633.

78. On many occasions Borges has busied himself with the Golem. In "La vindicación de la Cabalá" (*Discusión*, 1931), in the prologue to *El otro, el mismo* (1958), in his poem "El golem" (*ibid.*), in his talk "La cabalá" (*Siete Noches*), he gives it a most important place in his memories in *An Autobiographical Essay* and, above all, he defines it minutely in his *Libro de los seres imaginarios*, above all relating it with *Der Golem* by Gustav Meyrink (1915), perhaps the first book he read in German. In "Guayaquil," a story from *El informe de Brodie*, the narrator tells this to Zimmerman.

79. Borges, *Obras completas*, 451–455.

80. Borges, *Obra poética*, 202.

81. Eco, "La abducción en Uqbar" in *De los espejos y otros ensayos* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1988).

82. *Ibid.*, 178.

83. Quoted by Sebeok, *A Sign Is Just a Sign*, 19.

84. Borges, *La cifra*, 71.

85. Borges, *Obras completas*, 626.

86. *Ibid.*, 623.

87. Borges, "Una mañana," *La rosa profunda*, in *Obra poética*, 439.

88. Sebeok, *A Sign Is Just a Sign*, 19.

89. Borges, *Obra poética*, 201.

90. Borges, *La cifra*, 11.

91. Borges, *Siete noches*, 149.

92. Borges, "On His Blindness," *Los conjurados*, 59. The title is in English in the original.

93. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, edición y notas de Francisco Rodríguez Marín (Madrid: Ediciones La Lectura, 1911)

94. Borges, *Obra poética*, 201.

95. "Signos," *Moneda de hierro*, *ibid.*, 500.

96. *Ibid.*, 500.

97. Borges, *Obra poética*, 459. The title is in English in the original.

98. *Ibid.*, 459.

99. *Ibid.*, 167.

8. SYMBOLS AND THE SEARCH FOR UNITY

1. This text corresponds to a presentation given at University of California Berkeley, in the plenary session of the Fifth Congress of the