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# “SYMBOLICITY”

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## SYMBOLS AS PASS-WORDS BETWEEN SPACES AND SPECIES

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...the general answer to the question  
What is man?  
is that he is a symbol

— Charles S. Peirce —

*The very notion of planetary homeostasis critically implies an active process of continuous criss-cross communication: semiosis is, in fact, the instrument which assures the maintenance of the steady state of any living entity, whether in Lilliputian microspace, dealt with by molecular geneticists and virologists; the Gulliver-sized world of our daily existence; or the (as far as I know) unique 'Gaia', the biosphere viewed as a Brobdingnagian macrostructure that subsists upon a splendid blue marble.*

— Thomas A. Sebeok, "Communication, Language and Speech" —

*Non si è mai di fronte al caso, o al Fato, si è sempre all'interno di una trama (cosmica o situazionale) pensata da qualche altra Mente secondo una logica fantastica che è la logica della Biblioteca.*

— Umberto Eco, "L'abduzione in Uqbar" —

I would like to begin today by recalling the story of two statues which at one time were together. Enrique Amorim, an Uruguayan writer, came across them in a junkyard in Buenos Aires, behind one of those open air stores which accumulates discarded objects of value, from demolished houses and villas. They were two identical and beautiful female figures. One of them Amorim presented as a gift to Silvina Ocampo, the wife of Adolfo Bioy Casares, who since then has kept it in her house in Buenos Aires, facing a mirror. Amorim kept the other for himself, which today can be found in the "Las Nubes" garden, facing a fountain. Several days ago,<sup>1</sup> we invited Bioy to Salto for the 50th anniversary celebration of "Tlón, Uqbar, Orbis

Tertius" a story by Borges in which Bioy himself is protagonist, which was held in the very house where Borges claimed to have written it, in "Salto Oriental".<sup>2</sup>

Long ago, Bioy had promised both Borges and Amorim that he would one day visit Salto, and this celebration was the first time that he had been there. However, as well as the expected encounter, there occurred other encounters, as unexpected as they were symbolic in which theory, imagination, and friendship intermingled and were extended, in much the same way a most distinguished and amiable intellectual recognition has united us here in Budapest to celebrate the 70th birthday of Thomas Sebeok, in honor of his outstanding contribution to the Doctrine of Signs.<sup>3</sup>

It is already commonplace in modern history and current literary criticism to allude to a third entity, known as "Biorges", the nickname which results from the fusion of Borges and Bioy, a superposition of names first coined by Emir Rodríguez Monegal in allusion to the visual superimposition which earlier Gisele Freund had merged in a single photograph. This name also records the close association which both writers established by means of an intimate, literary collaboration. It is precisely one of these works, *Seis problemas para don Isidro Parodi* (Honorio Bustos Domecq, 1942) which provides Umberto Eco with a basis upon which to formulate his witticisms on the subject of abduction. In "La abducción en Uqbar" (Eco 1984: central pages), he examines the type of conjecture which Peirce would call "Abduction" beginning with this parody of classic detective fiction signed by H. Bustos Domecq, one of the famous pseudonyms which Borges and Bioy adopted to authorize their joint texts, hiding behind a pseudonym formed from two names and which alludes to their biographic and literary dualities towards which the parodies generally incline. It is quite some time since Emir invented the third name "Biorges". This combination of *proper nouns*—which are also their *proper names*—reveals a variant which is more transparent, yet no less legitimate than the pseudonyms behind which both authors attempted to conceal themselves, partially at least, *under a third identity*.<sup>4</sup>

However we are not dealing here just only with bi-nominal pseudonyms or onomastic haplogy, which theory, criticism and semiotics have had the good fortune to extol, but, as well with the formulation, by means of this *third "hombre-nombre"* (man-name), of a hypothesis on the coincidences between Borges and Bioy, coincidences which are not proposed by the fiction itself, but which the reader, being someone who elects his own choices, discovers or invents for himself, conjecturing between different worlds, imaginary or not.

In formulating these conjectures, I am taking into account the points outlined some years ago by Thomas A. Sebeok when, in his notable conference on "Vital signs" (1986: 77-78), he characterized

semiotics as a mode of extending mankind's perception of the world, and depicted its subject matter as 'the exchange of any messages whatever and of the systems of signs which underlie them'. I now have impressive progress to report: the central preoccupation of semiotics is an illimitable array of concordant illusions; its main mission to mediate between reality and illusion—to reveal the substratal illusion underlying reality and to search for the reality that may, after all, lurk behind that illusion.

Recognizing the necessity of this "mission to mediate" and the semiotic questions it solves, I will attempt to approach a part of the "illimitable array of concordant illusions" by focusing on the relationship between two masterful narrations, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (Borges, 1940) and "*La invención de Morel*" (Bioy Casares, 1940). The objective is to recuperate by means of a hypothesis of "reading in a symbolic key", the convention, the initial union and the agreement, the pass-word which the term symbol would have originally established, the initial semantic coincidences which the accumulation of meanings has worn out through the exhaustion and replenishment of signify and symbolize.

Admittedly, 'symbol' is the most abused term of those under consideration here. In consequence, it has either tended to be grotesquely overburdened, or, to the contrary reduced to more general kinds of behavioral phenomena, or even to absurd nullity [Sebeok 1976: 134].

Whilst strolling through the "Las Nubes" garden, Bioy Casares explained me how Borges would frequently propose that they search for an original and distinctive meaning for any common word. By this was meant the primary meaning of a word, the original and earliest meaning which through overuse had fallen into oblivion.

In spite of being convinced that Borges had read everything, Eco suspected that Borges had not read Peirce; and it is my own suspicion that neither had Bioy. As I did not wish to remove this doubt, I preferred not to ask him.

Nevertheless, upholding such legitimate associations as those devised by Sebeok (Umiker-Sebeok and Sebeok 1981:17-52) and through adoption of a well known strategy, I am able to formulate, instead of the "French-Swiss Connection" (Sebeok 1979: 183-186), a type of "Argentine-American Connection". Just as Sebeok speculates (1979: 185) that Saussure (1857-1937) could have known of Peirce when he states that

It is not all implausible that members of the Peirce family got acquainted with Henri (de Saussure, 1829-1905, le père de Ferdinand) while he was here (Switzerland), but, again, there is no evidence to prove this.

It also does not appear implausible to me that Borges, who had been raised in an environment "où la plus haute culture intellectuelle est depuis longtemps une tradition" (Sebeok 1966: 2, 92) might have heard mention of Peirce from his own father. Jorge Guillermo, the father of Borges, was a professor of psychology, an anarchist and fanatical follower of William James. Indeed, because of James he may have proudly exhibited his own name, Guillermo (William) just as Peirce, due also to James, had adopted the use of Santiago. The Borges' adherence to the thinking of William James is well known and this can be further substantiated through mention of a strange anarchistic writer, Macedonio Fernández. Not only was he an esteemed friend of the family and through his philosophical speculations, an important influence on Borges, but was also one of the few people in Buenos Aires who exchanged correspondence with William James.

Whilst on the subject of their reading matter we can be certain that both Borges and Bioy had read Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881). We know as well that Walter Benjamin, having once acquainted himself with Blanqui's writings, could not put them down.<sup>5</sup>

I still cannot be sure whether or not Peirce knew Blanqui; however, by journeying to France in the 1870s as "Observer of the Harvard College Observatory" to complete astronomical investigations, remaining there for extended periods so as to observe and formulate his theories on the oscillation of the pendulum, meeting and later marrying Madame Juliette Pourtalai, I assume that Peirce could not have failed to have become acquainted with the "Astronomical hypothesis" which were formulated by Blanqui in Paris during those same years.<sup>6</sup>

Those were the years of the Commune and Blanqui, as for the greater part of his life, remained confined in prison from which seclusion he would organize conspiracies, lay schemes for uprisings, never ceasing to write and plot. He was well known in Paris during those years as a socialist, conspirator, instigator of insurrections (1870-1878) and founder of secret societies, too well known in fact, for Peirce not to have known of his existence, nor of his extraordinary speculations on the strange plurality of stars and parallel worlds which wander through an infinite or indefinite space, the chemical constitution of spheres, their composition, distribution according to density of materials, the forces of gravity, the dimensions of stars and planets. Even from his prison cell,<sup>7</sup> Blanqui kept himself well informed of the investigations of astronomy, past and present, could quote his hypothesis and experiments and confirm or correct them. It would have been difficult for those outside to remain unaware of him.

In much the same way as Peirce, Blanqui supposes and describes a plurality of diverse and co-existent universes in which the same objects present, as with Peirce, parallel existences. An interior reality of ideas and another exterior reality: Things and Facts, and a symbolical reality, which establishes a conventional cooperation between both, uniting them by means of a dynamical process, a symbolical activity of representation and mediation: an interior medium, an exterior medium, and between the two, another medium. I find it interesting to exploit the polisemy of the Spanish word "*medio*" (Lat. "*medius*") with the view to formulate relations between fractions and units: *Dos medios entre dos medios* (Block de Behar 1990) gives three units or three times one peculiar unit;  $2/2$  divided by  $2/2 = 1$ , or  $1/1=1$ .

Sebeok (1981: 2) points out that Peirce

proceeded to identify three Universes as being familiar to us: "The first comprises all mere ideas, those airy nothings to which the mind of the poet, pure mathematician, or another might give local habitation and a name within that mind" (6.455). The second Universe is "that of the Brute Actuality of things and facts (Ibid.). The third Universe is, as already noted, the semiotic one, which comprises everything whose being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different Universes.

Rather than saying, as has too often been said, that the style is the man, or as with Bakhtine-Todorov, who claimed style to be two men, I would say that in this case, the symbol is three men. It is not a Question of replicating (neither copying nor refuting) sacred trios, the most sacred of all, nor would I say, as does Peirce (1866: 503):

In many respects, this trinity agrees with the Christian trinity; indeed I am not aware that there are any points of disagreement. The interpretant is evidently the Divine *Logos* or word; and if our former guess that a Reference to an interpretant is Paternity be right, this would be also the *Son of God*. The *ground*, being that partaking of which is requisite to any communication with the Symbol, corresponds in its function to the Holy Spirit. I will not however carry this speculation any further, as it may be offensive to the prejudices of some who are present.

Nevertheless, even if the constitutive terms of the triad are different, the transposition appears to me to be valid. The association of Borges-Bioy gives place to a third entity: Biorges, as much "tiers-arbitre" as "tierce-personne".<sup>8</sup> Neither Borges nor Bioy, nor the two of them together, but rather a *third man* (with a name, a photograph, an output) who, starting from an amicable agreement, accounts for a symbolic entity which crosses spaces and species, kingdoms of reality and fiction, which are sanctioned through one and the same nominal estate.

In the same way that Peirce considered "Crime (is) particularly suited to the application of Musement (Sebeok, 1981:36) I myself believe that the coincidences and the study of the necessary ways to achieve this coincidences, the pass-words which are exchanged, constitute another form of this "Pure Play (....) with no rules except this very law of liberty (Peirce) names Musement, and defines as a process by which the mind searches for "some connection" between two of the three Universes of Experience" (Sebeok, 1981:35). As Peirce himself points out in the XI of his Lowell Lectures: "Tell me a man's name, his story and his matter of character, and I know about all there is to know of him."

It goes without saying that I am trying to conjecture, through two notable narrations by two different authors, some aspects of a "third dimension" which, according to Sebeok, any semiotic perspective requires, acknowledging furthermore, the accord which reveals the coincidences of a *symbolic relationship* the friendship which continues to unite statues far beyond and behind, in this type of "arrière-pays" neither poor nor sad, but which belongs to a *third world*, "Orbis Tertius", like the Earth, third only in name and position: Tlön and Uqbar being the first two.<sup>9</sup>

Chacun de nous, par conséquent, est fraction complémentaire, tessère d'homme, et, coupé comme il l'a été, une manière de carrelet, le dédoublement d'une chose unique: il s'ensuit que chacun est constamment en quête de la fraction complémentaire, de la tessère de lui-même.<sup>10</sup>

At the bottom of the page appears a footnote:

La traduction n'est pas littérale, Le mot grec est *symbole*: mais son sens propre s'est perdu en français, tandis que pour nous la *tessera* latine évoque une image plus concrète. Essentiellement il s'agit d'une tablette, d'un cube, d'un osselet, dont deux hôtes gardaient chacun la moitié, transmise ensuite aux descendants; en rapprochant l'une de l'autre (c'est l'étymologie) ces deux fractions complémentaires de l'entier, on établissait l'existence de liens antérieurs d'hospitalité. Le symbole est donc un signe de reconnaissance, manifestation d'une solidarité de droit.<sup>10</sup>

(It is surprising that, considering an intense and rigorous application, the erudite scholar should have substituted precisely the term *symbol*. The philosophical, philological, linguistic, semiotic and hermeneutic coincidences brought about through symbolic definition are interminable).

Exactly fifty years ago, Borges published a story about the existence of parallel worlds, strange words which through contact or custom end up penetrating, and disintegrating, the real world. "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" is the tryptic title of the story. Just as today, this parallel existence of words and worlds was exhaustively documented in complete bibliographies, manuals, atlases, literal versions which analyzed and copied reality, causing it to vanish.

In the same year, fifty years ago, Adolfo Bioy Casares published *La invención de Morel*, a novel in which the eponymous character invents a machine which can produce immortal copies and perfect replicas of the images which are revealed through the cinema, movies that fascinated Morel as much as they fascinated Bioy. He describes a project which, as the protagonist explains, proposes to "give perpetual reality to (his) sentimental fantasy", recording all of the objects in copies which are so realistic that they become confused with the objects they represent.

The coincidences between the objects and their representation is so minute that one is led to think of an invention which does not invent; it conserves, and such conservation, as opposed to invention, can introduce an *aesthetics of disappearance*, in many ways contradictory, which, having been initiated by media, continues to be extended by them. Disappearance through multiplication would be the first contradiction. Furthermore, so far as mechanical conservation aspires to total conservation, so exact, that for this accuracy it destroys what it conserves. Thus the representation loses the complexity—diadic and triadic—which is its nature. By confusing representation with the represented object, it no longer represents—it ceases to be what it is—it is *something else* and as such can be yet another object or simply not be at all.

The conservation attempted in the past through the introduction of writing was not very different, and although it was by this means that history could begin, writing was the first invention which became lost between gods and myths. Since the time when the most ancient legends imagined with the same gest "the sword and the Pen" instruments of registration, technical and mechanical, have continued to aggravate this polemic. In our day, when everything is easily recorded by means of archives which take up all of time but virtually no space or place, the dilemma of the disappearance of that which is recorded, causes ever increasing alarm. Today the lack is through excess; technology, through being perfect is found wanting.

Technical registration dispenses a twofold efficacy; through mechanization it both conserves and destroys. By over production of images, with ever increasing fidelity, machines surpass perceptions and suppress presences. As stated by the narrator of *La invención de Morel*, "the copies survive, incorruptible". The same thing occurs in Tlön where "even in memories, a fictitious past occupied the site of another, so that we can know nothing for sure—not even if it is false."

In spite of their differences, both narrations partake of a common species, a type of biographical and literary *hybrid* which recuperates, through reading, the origin of symbolic imagination. Thus this hybrid *gives a name* to a confabulation, both literal and distinctive, a fable, whereby authors, narrators, characters and readers, introduce fiction by use of words and going beyond its verbal limits, overflow it. There is enough *hybris* in the hybrids. It is not etymology but rather literary proximity which in this case endorses the rule of the *hybrid*:<sup>11</sup> a mergence of species on one hand; and on the other, by exceeding the limits, another violation of norms; all those excesses of kind and measure which irritate the gods. Zeus did not tolerate these transgressions and chose to correct them by another form of violence.

C'étaient en conséquence des êtres d'une force et d'une vigueur prodigieuses; leur orgueil était immense; ils allèrent jusqu'à s'en prendre aux dieux. L'histoire que raconte Homère d'Ephialte et d'Otus, leur tentative d'escalader le ciel, c'est les hommes d'alors qu'elle concerne; ils voulaient en effet s'attaquer aux dieux.<sup>12</sup>

Greek androgynes or babelic insolence, no Gods will tolerate the challenge of mortal arrogance, and their divine (pre)potence burst unities into symbols. Entities that break into fragments, perhaps because if they didn't, they would be not able to reunite. "Breaking of the vessels", the dispersion of Babel, clinamen or the fracture which enables, through consecutive separation and reparation, the specificity of the symbol in an anthropological definition.

Si je ne me trompe, je tiens, dit-il un moyen pour qu'à la fois il puisse y avoir des hommes, et que ceux-ci mettent un terme à leur indiscipline, du fait qu'ils auront été affaiblis, je m'en vais en effet, poursuivit-il, couper par la moitié chacun d'eux; et de la sorte, en même temps seront plus faibles, ils nous rapporteront en même temps davantage, parce que leur nombre se sera accru. Ainsi, ils marcheront tout droit sur deux jambes.<sup>13</sup>

Long before the laboratory, different biological species were crossed in the imagination, in which dreams, myths and legends combined and transformed entities, parts and halves into astonishing hybrids. In the hybrid, dreams, awakeness or awareness are mixed together, bringing forth a criss-cross reality of truth and fiction which claims a third medium, a symbolic space where these differences are reunited in a new entity which cannot be alien to semiotics.

The chimera, the fabled animal which contracts into one dream parts of a lion, dragon and goat was not exclusively gothic. Nor would nagualism, an indigenous belief in an animal which identified itself with an individual and does not separate from it—be found only in our own American continent.

In spite of the distances that separates them, these fabulous derivatives spring from the same flight of imagination, an open shelter against the rigidity of species and genres, from where would embark once and again the mythological quest for an anterior unity, pre-hinting the stages of an ever latent metamorphosis.

This confusion of diverse species which the hybrid generally stirs up re-emphasizes the coincidences and differences which attend two notably distinct and distinguished individuals. Thus, on examining their fiction, and bearing in mind the affinity which both writers share, a first opposition would note Bioy's preference for hybrids and Borges resistance to them. Except for references to the Minotaur, hybrids which are not frequently found in Borges' invention have required his careful inventory. (Borges, 1967)

On the other hand, such transgressions of fauna classifications through fabulation occur constantly in the bestiary of Bioy (*Plan de evasión*, 1945; *Dormir al sol*, 1973. *Diario de la guerra del cerdo* 1969) who does not reject zoöantropomorphic experiments in isolated lands, nor doctors, machines and hospitals where transplants and mysteries are engendered.

However, "La secta del Fénix", a 1944 story by Borges which recalls an animal of fable, presents another emblematic and narrative example of remote, fantastic mutations. The interest of this story lies on the fact that it insinuates another difference which tends to oppose both authors. If *Historias de amor* is not only the title of one of Bioy's books but comprises, in addition, material from narrative and personal adventures, Borges omits all such references, or at least observes them in secret, in the same way that the men who formed the secret sect, perpetuated it by concealing their (sexual/textual) ceremonies. Without ever referring to the sentimental mentions in Bioy's works, the allusions to women and love would make up, without doubt, the most numerous entries in any thematic catalogue of his works, a catalogue which has, indeed, already been compiled.

For a variety of reasons, one must attribute to Borges rather than Bioy, the memorable sentence which appears at the beginning of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and which constitutes the *principle* of the story, both the initiation as well as the origin and foundation: "One of the heresiarchs of Uqbar had declared both mirrors and copulation are abominable because they increase the number of men". Yet neither mirror nor fatherhood are abominable to Bioy who would often recall with delight, the triple mirror in the dressing room where, as though she were immortal, the image of his mother Marta. Marta, as his daughter, was repeated to infinity.

Yet in precisely the same way as the hero of *La invención de Morel* who, sliding between two images, becomes an image which departs from real life and enters into fiction. Bioy as a character in this story quoting this phrase provides a setting—a space which is an origin—to the story. And that would have been enough.

Thus Borges begins a monumental story with an apocryphal quotation. In the fiction, Borges attributes it to Bioy, but outside the story, Bioy does not claim it as his own. Nevertheless and in spite of such "auto-deauthorization" the narrator of *La invención de Morel* states "Man and copulation can not bear long intensities", modulating, in few words a similar but not identical idea.

With one quotation they *patent*—a privilege of invention, too—the invention of a real world. Though it may not be legitimate, nor merit repetition, the quotation is worthwhile as it provokes the encounter of the *personage in person*. This is certainly not the first intrusion of a world of fantasy in the real world, however, the union

convoked by this quotation serves as a *mot-de-passe*, a *pass-word* which precipitates a clandestine encounter beyond the limits of the text, an almost secret passage, a safe passage and alibi, through which the narrator of *Tlön* evokes his peers and those of us who are not.

One could say that this quotation, literal or altered, pretexts a beginning and a plot, it functions as a password through which to enter and leave the text without annulling the pact of fiction which has been sealed by both narrators—a pact between themselves and also with their taciturn readers, from that discovered or invented territoriality, between beings of distinct regions, planes and planets.

During the night in which the story takes place, the narrator discovers that the mirrors contain something monstrous, yet, at the same time, the mirror normalizes the phenomenon of inversion<sup>14</sup> (Barthes 1980: 35). The inversions are various; an object, when turned around *inverts* on the one hand, but on the other it *invests*, because it multiplies. The inversion of biological and grammatical roles or literary genres, the exchange of one name by another, is always an investment in so far as it speculates and augments. By this preposition *by* figures as well as quantities (as figures), they are inverted and multiplied.

The narrator of *Tlön* affirms that "As we are sleeping here, we are awake in some other place and thus each man is two men". Symmetric reasoning would attempt to proportionally reduce this duality to a single unit, towards which the story inclines. With this it would be saying that if one has the right to be two, even more, conversely, do two have the right to be one.<sup>15</sup> In the

*Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, the first definition of the word *monstruo* (monster) is "a production which contradicts the regular order of nature". However, the image in the mirror is not only monstrous due to his hybrid condition, not only because it multiplies itself, but also because it (*demonstrates* (from the Latin *monstrare* comes *muestras* and *monstruos* in Spanish). A monstrosity is more often than not a motive of dreams and stories. This "showing" is inexpressible because "to show" (*Mostrar*) is "to make visible", and is, above all, not "to tell". Since antiquity "to tell" and "to show" (*contar* and *mostrar*) appear as contrary actions, confronted by two imitative and antagonistic resources, diegesis and mimesis, which ever since that point in time have been rivals. As with other antagonisms which initiate so many cosmos, both resources, on beginning this story, appear contradictory yet equal. "I owe the discovery of Uqbar to the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopedia".

The confabulation, then, begins with the union of this pair of objects, a different pair which represent emblematically both an image and a word. The mirror *exposes*, shows and risks: through not showing, the book contains and conceals. Both are imitations, or ambivalent reproductions. They present an absence, which is to say, they re-present, but on doing so, present something else. Once shown, described and told—as the figure in a mirror, the article in an encyclopedia, a reflection causes an image and another reflection, its disappearance.

Each representation remains attentive to what it represents, or attempts against what it represents. The duality—image or word—is contracted into one suspect unity which is encountered in the origin of the anthropological fracture, of the breakage which the *symbol-sūmbolon* does not lose when applied to other designations. (It is a fact that in Greek the term could mean sign, signal, mark, emblem, insignia, etc.) however the normal usage of these meanings in the past, did not amount the revoking the remains of a jig-saw puzzle, the shattered fragments of a shared unit, which

would verify the reciprocal acknowledgement of those who recalled, through means, a former friendship. As Borges' narrator says (Borges, 1940):

Bioy Casares had dined with me that evening and we pondered a long time on the vast polemic with regard to the execution of a novel, in first person, whose narrator would omit or disfigure facts, or incur in diverse contradictions which would permit just a few readers—indeed, very few readers—the divination of an atrocious or banal reality.

Many critics have considered that if the narrator of *Tlön*, instead of saying 'novel' had said 'story', this passage would remit to "*Tlön*, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" other words, to the same 'story' (Rodrigues Monegal, 1978) from where it comes. even this narratological difference would not have been necessary as it is not the path or autoreference which can relate fiction inside the same fiction. In the story there are several other plaitings on "interreality" which *double* the fiction<sup>16</sup> (augmenting or dividing it). Insinuating from this imaginary world the ambiguities which are common place as much in the history of fantasy stories, as with another history which is no more real.

"Who invented *Tlön*?" One does not have to reduce this universe of fiction to a mere version of the Earth. "La terre est très terre à terre", as Laforgue said—rather to observe the invention of a country by means of an amicable "cita"<sup>17</sup> by another writer, a "cita" which at times figures in an inconstant encyclopedia. Just as the world, a region, a planet, a poet, begin to exist through a "cita" and finish up with a finality which is also an end—subspecie of encyclopedia.

However neither should one discount that the novel, narrated in first person to which Borges is referring, might be *La invención de Morel*. The publication date of the story coincides with that of the novel, 1940, as has been mentioned already. In this short novel, the narrator also relates in the first person, omitting data, twisting facts and contradicting himself. The reality which results from this 'nouvelle'—neither story nor novel—is no less atrocious or banal. This coincidence however, appears to be neither sufficient nor prudent and, above all, do not wish to commit the same error which the indiscreet editor of Morel's diary constantly notes. To rescue from a philological lapse, I would identify the novel of the story not with one but with at least two narrations. "*Tlön*, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and "*La invención de Morel*" duality which both works illustrate and legitimize. In fact, one might not even have to distinguish between them "I searched in my pocket, took out the book and compared them. They were not two copies of the same book, but rather two examinations of the same copy."<sup>18</sup>

Both Bioy's texts, as well as the story of *Tlön*—where one of the schools negates time, and another affirms bi-localization, omit any allusion to world and word pairs. As with the universal multiplications which abound in diverse passages of *Blanqui*, both authors coincide in elaborating a rhetorical, biological or cosmological law of gemination. As with the french visionary, they do not discount the existence of other universes, diverse "multiverses".<sup>19</sup>

Hundreds of millions repeat the stupidity and crimes of humanity! As well, there are thousands of millions who repeat their individual fantasies. Each one of our moods, be they good or bad, should have at

its disposition a collection of personal globes! All the interlocking of the heavens would be replete with our counterfigures!.

One could continue to compare, distribute coincidences and assign individual responsibilities to two author-readers who defend their own and shared individualities as from their *principles* of fiction, not only through years of collaboration and concurring dates and themes, but as well, through ambiguities and resources of thought and imagination, resources which mark a procedure and a return, two books which need each other so as to be repeated or contradicted, to fulfill themselves inside an economy of compensations applied through this mechanism of exact likeness, as conceived by Blanqui.<sup>20</sup>

Borges and Bioy criss-cross distinct roles. The textual stages are various. Bioy dedicates his novel to Borges, Borges writes the prologue. Borges installs Bioy as a personage in his story, and even better, attributes to him an elusive "cita" which he invents or discovers in inconstant editions of books which appear and disappear as figures in a mirror. However this "cita" whoever it may be from, whoever it may be with, is overall an encounter where imagination and thought are conciliated.

The same contradictory principle, the reproduction in mirror or in species, is a strange origin because it initiates something which already exists; something which has begun before the beginning, compromising imagination and species or the imagination of the species. *Reproduction* does not originate through the image in the mirror, but rather beforehand it is in mind where time and space are confused. Through reproduction—textual as well as sexual—the species which had already begun to exist, continues.

The question of reproduction is constant throughout the writings of Borges and Bioy. Perhaps it all began with the transcription of certain texts which, according to Rodríguez Monegal, both writers collected during the 1930's and which later published in a section of the *Anales de Buenos Aires* under the title of "Museo", using the pseudonym "B. Lynch Davies". Beside being a curious section in itself, and the title to a text, museum figures as a recurrent localization in the work of Bioy and "Museum" is the term which Borges employs to begin one of his most significant texts "Del rigor en las ciencias". As much the museum as the library, both spaces gather and distance all kind of relics in a parallel world of originals and copies, metaphors of displacement, metaphors of transport, that is, metaphors of metaphor, movements of the imagination which isolate themselves or seek asylum in a museum, the utopian site outside of time where, paradoxically, history is reserved; a reservation of the imagination in the margins of history.

While mentioning transports, copies, reproductions, metaphors and symbols which are fractures, isolated or imaginary museums, it is impossible to forget that during these same years W. Benjamin was elaborating one of the most off-quoted essays in recent years (Benjamin 1936).

Through different approaches, W. Benjamin, Borges and Bioy speculate, from distant points, on originals and copies on static pieces in the museums or transported ones, in movement and in the cinema. *La invención de Morel* and "Tlön, Uqbar ..." were published in 1940; in 1940 W. Benjamin, under threat from the French police or the Gestapo, committed suicide. The advance of Nazism in those same years appears to be interwoven in his writings, the theme of mechanical reproduction, of perfect reproduction as well. "Since ten years any symmetry with an apparent order—dialectical

materialism, antisemitism, nazism—has been sufficient to fascinate men", Borges remarks in a postscript to this story. Neither the story of Borges, nor the novel of Bioy are detached from the tragedy of a century which could not hold back the advance of totalitarianism, the obsessive problem of a *Trauerspiel*, a mourning for that which the memory cannot be enough and which mechanical reproduction finishes off in a deadly game (20). A Faustian pact inside out: the narrator falls in love with Faustine, a Faust made woman, but above all a false Faust, an "unfaust" Faust, Faustine being pronounced "*Fausse*" in French.

In the novel, Morel explains his invention which, though anticipating death, will assure immortality; "Now I will explain to you about my invention," says the personage, and the certitudes of this announcement reminds me of Peirce's formulation in 1866 (p. 501):

Gentlemen and ladies, I announce to you this theory of immortality for the first time. It is poorly said, poorly thought, but its foundation of truth.

The world and the totalitarianism were already there, in 1940, and have begun to extend themselves. "The world will be Tlön", the narrator continues to say. As is the cosmos, so is "Tlön", an ordered, all articulated, coherent planet. Spelling out the successive capital letters of the title, as cardinal points in an old atlas, gives T.U.O.T., which is "tout" in French but in an inverted sense; all turned around as the image in the mirror, as "*le monde renverse*", inverted and ruined by the machines which Morel invented reproducing life but immobilizing it. An invention to avoid death provokes and conserves death. In the inverted world of Tlön, it is necessary for each text to find completion with its opposite. According to Bioy, the "primitive language" which is that of Tlön resembles the "panlingua" which was invented by Nul Solar, and to confirm this resemblance, Borges translates exactly an example of this "neocereol" in his story. Besides having a mania for "pungames", Nul Solar considered *La invención de Morel* to be one of the *panbooks*, a total book.<sup>21</sup>

As did both Borges and Bioy, W. Benjamin, identified the mechanical efficiency of the media, the temptation of the media with the totalitarian temptation. "The loss of Aura"—Benjamin's own formulation—which marked the individuality of a work of art, warns of the individual loss, mass murder, the concentration camp, the suicide of Benjamin. In place of a person, the image; in place of the work, its reproduction: the mechanical temptation compromises memory and immortality; at the same time they affirm and refute. Neither Dr. Caligari, nor Mefisto, neither Moreau nor Morel nor the Doctors Faust could prevent Hitler.

Political activity appearing aesthetically in multiplied images through photography and the cinema imitates a counterfeit life—*contrefaire* is "imitate" in French. The original, when folded or doubled, becomes a counterfeit. The copies which plunder it and the loss of originality which distinguishes and designates both the individual and his origin are one cause of fragmentation and totalitarianism. A present which through representation is absent; a past which through images, has passed.

In *La invención de Morel* can be found the major concerns of today: the relation of the recorded with the memory, the verity as a version, the impossibility of a history, as impossible as its legacy because it is equally tolerant of both memory and

profanity. "Toute la mémoire du monde" is a film by Alain Resnais (1956) which portrays the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris in an interminable debate between memory and oblivion. There in the BN, as it is called by the French, one can hear a reader mumbling almost unidentifiable words through the telephone: one of them is "Tlön". That same year, *Nuit et bruillard* (1956) also by A. Resnais, assembles outrageous film clippings from Auschwitz which show piles of accumulated human remnants, the remains of humanity. The same director made *L'année passé à Marienbad* (1961), a film which reviews the illusions of memory where figures debate between shadows and mirrors, trying to distinguish the fluctuations and ambivalences of the emotions and perception. Like the figures that shadow the narrator of *La invención de Morel*, there gather spectres which run through the rooms and gardens of a theatre, a museum of a brain, a ghostly projection which could have taken place in Los Teques or in Marienbad.<sup>22</sup>

Framed within the fragmentation of photographs, the faithful copies cut and mounted by the cinema, W. Benjamin, Borges, Bioy observe the affinities across unfathomable universes which cross and interlock together at an historic intersection where an Encyclopedia can anticipate a revolution and films, informative or fantastic, more than just reproduce history, can produce, double and originate it at the same time. These mechanical versions multiply worlds which are not just parallel because they co-incide in imitating and modifying each other reciprocally, and where documentation does not rely on a mere austere fiction in which identity is reduced to a police record—an identity card, a cell (*cedula* and *celda* is almost the same word in Spanish), a square piece of official paper resembling the four walls which keep a man recluse in prison, as that which incarcerated Louis-Auguste Blanqui for the greater part of his life, yet from which he invented galaxies and revolutions, both astral and historical, the same ones which years later, from different utopias, were to be discovered by Benjamin, Borges and Bioy.<sup>23</sup> It is indeed noteworthy how through fiction and reflection, all three of them invoke profusely and at the same time, the visions of Blanqui and his celestial speculations.<sup>24</sup>

In the same way that Isidro Parodi resolved crime enigmas from inside a cell, one must be amazed at how Blanqui, from his prison, continued to be the stubborn conspirator who never ceased to create, as did the tlönists, secret societies in diverse worlds, nor did he cease to plot, from his confinement, plans for insurrection which did not confuse the monotonies of a revolution, a return to the beginning, an apocatastasis which is inaugurated through continual restitution, again and again.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The "Centro Cultural Internacional" was founded in Salto, Uruguay in mid-August 1990. As the motive of its inauguration, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Borges' story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" which he claimed to have written in "Salto Oriental" where this new Cultural Center is located. Ever since the first edition of the text, in the magazine Sur, No.68, Buenos Aires, these references appear in foot notes to the story. Borges, together with his mother, Leonor Acevedo de Borges, used to frequently visit this Uruguayan province where, as well as a circle of friends, they had close family connections. Esther Haedo, the wife of Enrique Amorim, an important Uruguayan writer and owner of the villa "Les Nubes" where we held our meeting, still preserves memories of the repeated presence of Borges.

<sup>2</sup>"Salto Oriental, 1940" is a double reference which figures at the end of the story, perhaps so as to underscore the contrast with his famous pre-dated "Postdata de 1947", published in 1940 together with the rest of the story.

<sup>3</sup>I would like to warmly express my gratitude for the friendly participation of the ODIN Teatret: Isabelle, Julia, Falk, Jan, who have demonstrated yet again, their most generous friendship. Thanks especially to their director Eugenio Barba.

<sup>4</sup>In *Jorge Luis Borges. a Literary Biography* (Rodriguez Monegal, 1978) Emir recounted the story of this name which had been devised years before to designate "the author" of much "humorous stuff" which both writers had produced, parodying the grandiloquent expressions of known writers and critics, the inflated rhetoric of traditional River Plate criticism, and the procedures of detective fiction, as well as the formalities and canons of literary events in general.

<sup>5</sup>The attraction between enthusiastic readers has continued without interruption. Last year I mentioned to Bioy the coincidences between his aesthetics and those of Walter Benjamin. Since then, as he remarked in Salto, he has been reading W. Benjamin uninterruptedly.

<sup>6</sup>*L'éternité per les astres. Hypothèse astronomique* par L.-Auguste Blaqui, Paris, 1872, was a book too well known at the time for Peirce to have been unaware of it. Many of his themes touched on those of Blanqui, and his french relations could not have failed to point out to him the existence of the author, his books and his ideas.

<sup>7</sup>As was the case with Isidro Parodi, the famous personage of Biorges, whose detective strategies were most productive to the Umberto Eco, of both fiction and theory, Blanqui from his prison could perform feats which belied his seclusion and isolation.

<sup>8</sup>In French, the "tiers-arbitre" is the one encharged with settling disputes between two references, and tierce personne" therefore, by extension, means a foreigner *Dictionnaire Petit Robert* (Paris, 1982).



<sup>9</sup>I prefer to discard the current most widely used meaning of "third world: the feeling of protest, appeal for charity or ambivalent resignation on occupying one of the least positions inside an established order according to criteria which does not appear to me to be valid, and recapture, thus, the "Orbis tertius" the ancient cartographical planetary inscription where the Earth figures as the third planet of the solar system in distance outward from the sun. I do not doubt that the Earth is Orbis Tertius, that is to say, the third world.

<sup>10</sup>I have used the French translation as it is the only bilingual edition which I have been able to obtain in Montevideo. In addition, I am interested in the translators' footnotes and his substitutions. Platon, *Le Banquet*, Tome IV. 191d, texte établi et traduit per Léon Robin (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1941).

<sup>11</sup>Latin *hybrida*, -ae, bâtard, de sang mélangé. Se dit des animaux et des hommes. (La graphie) a sans doute été influencée par un faux rapprochement littéraire avec ἵβρις (A. Ernout et A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la langue Latine* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1932; Reed, 1979).

<sup>12</sup>Platon, Op. cit. 190 b et c.

<sup>13</sup>Ibidem 190 d

<sup>14</sup>Barthes names as *enantiology* (à partir du fr. *enantiotrope*, gr. *enantios* "opposed" and gr. *morphe* "form"), the discipline involving the study of the complex transformation undergone by images when inverted in a mirror.

<sup>15</sup>Borges says: "The idea of a single subject is omnipotent. Rarely do books bear a signature. The concept of plagiarism does not exist: it has been established that all works are those of a single author who is timeless and anonymous. Criticism tends to invent authors. -it will chosen two differing works, -let us say, the Tao Te Kin and the 1001 Nights-, attribute them to one and the same author and afterwards determine with honesty the psychology of this interesting *homme des lettres* (Genette 1966). G. Genette uses this same quotation to form the basis of *L'Utopie littéraire*" which is precisely what is here being dealt with.

<sup>16</sup>"an entire weeks work with pick and spade could not exhume another *hrön*, other than a rusty wheel, with dates prior to the experiment". (Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius) in the same way, the "Postdate del 47" appears already in the first edition of the Story, *Sur* No. 68, 1940. In relation to the later publication (first Spanish edition, Emecé, 1944) it appears with a modification which is of interest in the same sense: "I reproduce the earlier article exactly as it appeared in the issue No.68 of *Sur*—in jade green covers, May 1940—with no excision except for a few metaphors and a type of burlesque summary which now appears to be frivolous. So many things have happened since that date ... I will limit myself in recording them". This reference to the magazine *Sur* is, of course, an autoreference which had already been published in the same magazine which mentions it. In addition, the reference to the burlesque summary refers to the same postscript where this mention is included.

<sup>17</sup>The word "cita", in Spanish, means both "quotation" and "appointment".

<sup>18</sup>In both the novel and the story, duplication is unavoidable. "I know something which might be of use to the readers in this report in ascertaining the date of the second apparition of the intruders. The two moons and the two suns were seen on the following day. It could have been just a local apparition; nevertheless it seems more likely to me to be a phenomenon of mirages, brought about by the moon or the sun (....) But I think that the two moons and the two suns don't hold much interest; they would have had to have reached everywhere, either through the sky or through more complete and scholarly information. I am not recording them so as to accord them any poetic or bizarre value, but rather so that my readers, who receive newspapers and have birthdays, may put a date on these pages." This is about a duplication which the narrator even with the corrections of the editor had already conformed We are experiencing the first nights with two moons. But already they have seen two suns. Cicero recounts in *De Natura Deorum*:

*Tum sole quot ut a patre audivi Tuditano et Aquilio Consulibus egenerat.*

"I don't believe it was a bad quotation " says the narrator. It is here where appears the editor's note which says at the foot of the page "He is mistaken. He omits the most important word *geminato* (from *geminatus*-geminated, duplicated, repeated, reiterated) (Bioy 1940).

<sup>19</sup>In the Italian translation of *L'éternité par les astres*, Fabrizio says that "L'universo di Blanqui si pluralizza in multiversum. Ed e il pluralismo derivato del suo atomismo, ovvero il polimorfismo temporale che struttura l'eternità, quanto contrasta la mono-dromia universale, quanto sovverte l'uni-voce direzione alle morte di ogni corpo celeste" (Blanqui 1983:20).

<sup>20</sup>"They remain unknown and removed in such a way that there is no possibility their warnings can cause us to be more alert; "So as to save us blunders and pains". All great events in our globe have their cross entry, especially when they have involved fatality. Perhaps the English have lost the Battle of Waterloo many times over in the globes where their adversaries haven't committed the same stupidities as Grouchy. As a compensation, in another globe, Bonaparte does not always achieve victory in Marengo, which appears to be trough luck (Blanqui 1985).

<sup>21</sup>In *Plan de evasion* (Bioy Casares, 1945) Bioy gives his personages the names of French collaborators during the Nazi occupation. The plot involves connections with other periods, but always orientated in the same direction: "My name is Bordenave. I am called Dreyfus because they say I always speak of Captain Dreyfus."

<sup>22</sup>In an interview with Alain Resnais and Robbe-Grillet, the later tells that after a private screening of the film, he received a call from Claude Ollier who told him: "Mais c'est *L'invention de Morel!* The interviewers explained some aspects of the book which associate with aspects of the film and Resnais, who didn't know the book, concluded that there was "*un rapport ... frappant*" (Kosarinsky 1974).

<sup>23</sup>For example, in a letter to Max Horkheimer (1938) from Paris, W. Benjamin referred to the commotion caused through the discovery of Blanqui's astronomical

fantasmagorisms. In the little time he had left until 1940, Benjamin was not to omit the lucidity of the speculations which abound in the revealing messianism of *L'eternite par les astres*"

<sup>24</sup>Borges says in the prologue to *La invención de Morel* "It is enough for me to say that Bioy in a literary manner a concept which was refuted by St. Augustine and Origenes, which was reasoned by Louis-Auguste Blanqui and expressed through unforgettable music Dante Gabriel Rossetti:

I have been here before  
But when or how I cannot tell

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