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DREAMS AND DEATH: BORGES'
EL LIBRO DE ARENA

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INTRODUCTION

EXAMINING Borges' fiction, one may categorize the Argentine author's stories into three basic periods: the first (early period), composed primarily of the stories in *Historia universal de la infamia*; the second (mature period), made up of the collections *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*; and the third (late period), consisting of the works from *El hacedor* to his final writings. One of the author's last collections of short stories is *El libro de arena*, published in 1975.¹ Despite the rather unpopular and unflattering critical reception of the collection since its publication, it is my belief that *El libro de arena* is significant for two reasons. On the one hand, the stories in the collection contain substantial literary merit and illustrate an extraordinary psychological depth. On the other hand, *El libro de arena*² is important because it is one of the final works produced by Borges before his death in 1986,³ and therefore serves as the concluding chapter in the Argentine's highly distinguished career as a writer of fiction. In this study I will examine, by means of a Jungian analysis, four distinctive stories which break new thematic ground in Borges' work and provide a sense of conclusion for his entire body of fiction.

In order to fully appreciate the artistry of *El libro de arena*, one must view the collection in the context of its appearance at the end of the author's life. Generally speaking, the works produced in the final phase of an artist's life differ greatly from those of the early and mature periods. As Storr has indicated in his *Solitude: A Return to the Self*, works of art produced in the late period may be characterized in the following way:

First, they are less concerned with communication than what has gone before. Second, they are often unconventional in form, and appear to be striving to achieve a new kind of unity between elements which at first sight are extremely disparate. Third, they are characterized by an absence of rhetoric or any need to convince. Fourth, they seem to be exploring remote areas of experience which are intrapersonal or suprapersonal rather than interpersonal. This is, the artist is looking into the depths of his own psyche and is not very much concerned as to whether anyone else will follow him or understand him. (174)

In the works of the final period, the artist frequently will look back at his or her own life, not to relive and reexperience past glories and successes, but rather to attempt either to make alterations in earlier perceptions of reality or to express a "regret for opportunities missed" (Storr 178). Most often, alterations of previously perceived reality appear in dreams.⁴ In other words, the stage in which the artist perceives the nearing end of life is usually dominated by compensatory dreams which endeavor to put the past into a new focus and to make up for what was lacking in youth.

For example, Borges' writing in the late period reveals a marked tendency toward simplicity, clarity, and directness. In the prologue to *El informe de Brodie*, he states that he has "renunciado a las sorpresas de un estilo barroco; . . . Durante muchos años creí que me sería dado alcanzar una buena página mediante variaciones y novedades; ahora, cumplidos los setenta, creo haber encontrado mi voz" (*IB* 11-12). The simplicity of Borges' late period writing, according to Oviedo, is marked by an attempt at "cuentos realistas" and that "aunque un Borges realista es imposible, es evidente el esfuerzo del autor por contar sus historias del modo más llano, con menos subrayados metafóricos y menos guiños de complicidad intelectual con el lector: las cosas pasan como por segunda vez, desleídas y en un mediotono sin sobresalto" (715).⁵ Oviedo further characterizes the stories in *El libro de arena* as reworkings and reelaborations of Borges' earlier works by saying that the author "vuelve sobre sus huellas (en los temas, en los motivos, en los símbolos) con el ánimo incierto de quien no se decide a borrarlas del todo o hacerlas más profundas en su segunda vista. . . . es como si alguien, que insistiese en ser Borges, escribiese ahora otra vez las páginas de Borges" (714). With precision, Oviedo is echoing here Storr's assertion that late period writing is usually distinguished by its reworking of earlier creations. According to Oviedo, then, Borges has gone back to reinterpret his earlier themes, motives and symbols and has rewritten them in a more direct, simple and "realistic" manner.

The reaction on the critics' part towards Borges' *El libro de arena* illustrates this point. The reworking, in simplified form, of Borges' earlier texts seems to have confounded and disappointed critics; to them Borges appears to

have "repented" from a youthful indulgence or foolishness (the baroque complexity and intricacy of his mature writing) and has "found his voice" in the unadorned and simplified texts of his last stories. The critics seem to be mourning the loss of what they had come to perceive as a quality of Borges' literary greatness and, as a result, long for a type of fiction that the author appears to have outgrown toward the end of his life. This may explain why only a relatively small number of critical studies on *El libro de arena* have been written and why those studies have tended to be rather negative. Oviedo, for example, asserts that of all the stories in the collection, "la única pieza que puede considerarse enteramente digna del maestro es 'El Congreso'" (716). Further on, Oviedo states that, as a whole, the writing in this collection "sólo puede ser disfrutado por los lectores más asiduos (y hasta viciosos) de Borges, pero son justamente ellos los que pueden medir la distancia que va de los modelos a las copias . . ." (718). Bell-Villada calls the work a "curious collection. Unlike *Doctor Brodie's Report* [1970], which presents a uniform tone throughout and visible continuity in plots, themes, language, and even lengths of the narratives, this later book shows no discernible pattern" (225) and is "extremely uneven in its artistry" (256).

Against Bell-Villada's assertion that the collection lacks a "discernible pattern," Goloboff has attempted a classification of the stories in *El libro de arena* by suggesting that they can be divided according to two major themes: "aquellos relatos cuya trama más o menos detectable es la que gira alrededor del problema de la identidad; . . . aquéllos cuya trama es – en sus múltiples variantes – la de la persecución de la palabra poética" (259). In the first group, the critic places the following stories: "Ulrica," "El Congreso," "*There Are More Things*," "La noche de los dones," and "El otro." The second group is composed of "El espejo y la máscara," "*Undr*," "El disco," and "El libro de arena." Goloboff, however, leaves four of the stories out of his classifications, perhaps because they do not fit adequately into his general scheme: "La secta de los Treinta," "El soborno," "Avelino Arredondo," and "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado."

The lack of a clear patterning and unifying thread that join together this collection might seem to reiterate Storr's postulation that late period works often illustrate an attempt on the artist's part to "make sense out of what had previously appeared impenetrable, or . . . [to make] a new unity by linking together concepts which had formerly seemed to be quite separate" (188). In my opinion, this is precisely what Borges is doing in *El libro de arena*. The author is juxtaposing two of his most characteristic themes, expressed in earlier collections, the theme of evil and the theme of totality and harmony, with a very novel one: the theme of preparation for death. The innovation lies in Borges' elaboration of several stories which illustrate characteristics of the final stages in the development of the psyche as it prepares for death.

The reworking of earlier themes is quite apparent in *El libro de arena* insofar as several of the stories continue to examine the same psychological realities explored in the author's earlier collections. For example, Borges again analyzes the relationship between good and evil which characterizes *Historia universal de la infamia*, and he continues his exploration of the nature of the "Self," the primary underlying foundation for the stories in *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*. With regard to the first theme, the Shadow aspect of psyche, there are four stories which explicitly treat the nature of the evil: "La Secta de los Treinta," "La noche de los dones," "El soborno," and "Avelino Arredondo." In addition to examining the meaning of wickedness, Borges expands and renews his obsession with the archetype of wholeness, divinity, and totality: the Jungian concept of Self. In such stories as "El espejo y la máscara" and "Undr," Borges treats totality in the form of a single word or single line, while in "El disco" and "El libro de arena," totality is not found in words, but rather in more tangible objects, and in "El Congreso," totality is expressed in the form of a secret organization that represents all humankind and the world itself. The desire for a reworking and reelaboration of previously explored themes demonstrates that artists, at the end of life, still struggle with several unresolved conflicts and obsessions which require further exploration and elucidation.

Unique to this collection, however, are several stories which herald the imminence of death. They provide for an easier transition from the ego consciousness of the physical world to the psychic harmony and unity of the conscious and unconscious mind in the next.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

Death frequently consumes the waking thought processes and unconscious dreamwork of the aged. Old age has a value and purpose for humankind insofar as the elderly provide youth with the wisdom of life's elusive truths. Jung asserts that "in primitive tribes we observe that the old people are almost always the guardians of the mysteries and the laws, and it is in these that the cultural heritage of the tribe is expressed" (*The Structure and Dynamics* 8: 787).⁶ In other words, the elderly, because of their advanced development of psyche, hold the keys to the mysteries of psychic individuation and self-actualization and are in a position to inform and instruct the other members of the cultural group in the values and truths of life and death. The most important of these truths is that *life is cyclical and regenerative*: the earthly, mortal life of humankind is marked by stages – infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle-age, old-age. This periodic development of life indicates that, taken as a whole, the entire life of the individual may be merely a stage in the greater,

ongoing processes of the entire cosmos. "That is why all great religions hold out the promise of a life beyond, of a supramundane goal which makes it possible for mortal man to live the second half of life with as much purpose and aim as the first" (*The Structure and Dynamics* 8: 789). The preparation for death, announcing the ending point for earthly life, is the goal of the final stage of physical existence. Part of this preparation is effected by means of dreams.

The idea that the dreams of the second half of life prepare the psyche for death is based, in part, on a remarkable theory that links psychology with recent discoveries in physics. Marie-Louise von Franz, in her *On Dreams and Death*, has studied the particular images and motifs in dreams that precede death and that work to prepare the psyche for the end of the material universe. She states that

almost all of the symbols which appear in death dreams are images that are also manifested during the individuation process – especially as it unfolds during the second half of life. As Edinger has remarked, it is as though this process, if not consciously experienced before death, may be 'telescoped' by 'the pressure of impending death.' *In principle, individuation dreams do not differ in their archetypal symbolism from death dreams.* (xiii; original emphasis)⁷

Additionally, Hillman points out that "Aniela Jaffé [. . .] has written that the 'psychological path of individuation is ultimately a preparation for death.' If this is the ultimate intent of Jung's fundamental therapeutic principle, then the soul's process of individuation moves toward the underworld. Then every resurrection fantasy of theology may be a defense against death. . . ." (89-90). In essence, then, the process of individuation that has been expressed in the works of Jorge Luis Borges can be understood as a process that attempts to join the divided psyche into a unified whole in preparation for the end of the physical stage of life. Individuation, as a goal, cannot be achieved in life; its process merely prepares one for the state of union with the cosmos.⁸ It is precisely this union of psyche and cosmos beyond the physical realm that we call "Death." As the laws of physics indicate, no energy can ever be destroyed; on the contrary, energy, even *psychic* energy must continue to exist, albeit transformed, in some way or another. As von Franz states, there are "dreams which symbolically indicate the end of bodily life and the explicit continuation of psychic life after death. The unconscious 'believes' quite obviously in a life after death" (ix).

The death of the material body releases the psyche into a state of existence beyond the physical limitations of time and space. Hall makes the case that dreams, in preparing the dreamer for death, "seem to view death in no more dramatic terms than a journey, a marriage or some other major change in

life. . . . It is as if the dreams of someone approaching physical death were no more concerned about the approaching death than they would be about any major change *within life*" (133). In very general terms, it can be stated that several common characteristic motifs in dreams prepare the dreamer for death: 1) the presence of a guide which usually takes the form of a particularly wise female (for men) or of the "personal 'other' half of the soul of the dying individual"; 2) an intruder who puts the dreamer in danger, 3) situations which provide compensation for the missed opportunities of youth; and 4) an exploration or discovery of objects that represent the after-life (von Franz 72).

DEATH PREPARATION STORIES

In *El libro de arena*, there is one story that places a female guide figure in a primary position. "Ulrica" is the story of a Colombian scholar, Javier Otálora, who, on a visit to England, meets a young Norwegian girl named Ulrica. They meet in the city of York, in an inn, and talk. The next day, the two walk towards Thorgate on new fallen snow. Ulrica promises Javier that, at nightfall, she will spend the night with him in the inn. During their walk, they hear a wolf howling and a bird singing; the scene takes on an unmistakable dream-like quality. They reach the inn at Thorgate and Javier realizes that in possessing Ulrica for the first and last time, the world of time and matter ceases.

Several significant details of the text indicate the symbolic function of Ulrica as a soul guide that prepares and leads the male protagonist on his journey towards death. For example, Ulrica is a completely mysterious figure: "menos que su rostro me impresionó su aire de tranquilo misterio"; and lacks the distinction and specificity of a surname: "(no supe su apellido y tal vez no lo sabré nunca)" (LA 15). The enigmatic and indistinct qualities of Ulrica convert her into a symbolic figure. The narrator indicates also that the relationship that forms between Javier and Ulrica is not unprecedented, but that her appearance at this time and in this place is meaningful only to Javier: "comprendí que [yo] no era el primero y que no sería el último. Esa aventura, acaso la postrera para mí, sería una de tantas para esa resplandeciente y resuelta discípula de Ibsen" (LA 17). Furthermore, she refuses a drink from another man, but is attracted immediately and specifically to Javier. When the two begin their journey together the next day, they enter a landscape in which the two are in complete isolation since "no había un alma en los campos" (LA 16). In other words, Ulrica's goal is to encounter Javier, to lead him out alone, to unite with him physically, and bring him into a state beyond time and space.

In addition to Ulrica as the soul guide, other details underscore the significance of this story as a death preparation dream. First, the journey begins on fresh snow, indicating a covering or blanketing on the ground which forms a separa-

tion between the couple and the earth (Cirlot 324). The snow thus forms a partition between earthly reality and the walking pair and indicates that this is a first step in the journey of death from physicality towards insubstantiality. The second symbol is the cry of the wolf. In the Nordic tradition, the wolf denotes the breaking of the chains that provide the world with order. The wolf represents the end of the world and the chaos that follows from the unbinding of the earth from its temporality (Cirlot 280). In other words, the wolf's howling heralds the approaching end of earthly life (material organization and time) for Javier. At the end of the story, Ulrica emphasizes that the wolf is not a real, tangible creature, but merely a symbolic entity: "—¿Oíste al lobo? *Ya no quedan lobos en Inglaterra. Apresúrate*" (LA 18; emphasis added). In conjunction with the howl of the wolf, an additional auditory symbol clarifies Javier's death journey with his soul guide, Ulrica. She says, "—Oye bien. Un pájaro está por cantar. Al poco rato oímos el canto" (LA 17-18). As Cirlot indicates, the bird is frequently a symbol for a person's soul (350). Javier's soul, in the form of a bird, has become separated from the material body, announcing the proximity of the end of his physical being.

The Norse tradition, so apparent in this story,⁹ further contributes to the interpretation that Ulrica is the soul guide preparing Javier for death. The references to the *Völsunga Saga* are particularly significant. Because Ulrica and Javier have difficulty in pronouncing each other's name, Ulrica says that she will call him Sigurd and he replies by calling her Brynhild. The myth of Sigurd and Brynhild indicates here that the two lovers will be joined and will die as a result of their love, whether or not a sword is placed between them in the bed. As von Franz points out, the motif of the union of male and female as described in "Ulrica," frequently symbolizes the "death wedding" that has been so universally noted throughout the ages in fairy tales and folk stories. In a sense, the death wedding is a "description of the completed individuation process, of an ultimate union of psychic opposites, a liberation from all egocentricity and an ecstatic entrance into a state of divine wholeness" (45). The union of Javier and Ulrica, the soul guide, is a symbolic declaration of death, when the spirit is set free from the physical world: "ya no quedaban muebles ni espejos. No había una espada entre los dos. Como la arena se iba el tiempo. Secular en la sombra fluyó el amor y poseí por primera y última vez la imagen de Ulrica" (LA 19).

In "El otro," the soul guide figure takes on the form of a true double of the dreamer. Unlike the other doubles seen in Borges' earlier works, this double is *identical* to the narrator, except that the two are differentiated by time. On a February morning in 1969, the narrator, named Jorge Luis Borges, meets his own younger self on a park bench on the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The younger Borges, at the moment of the encounter, believes that he is in Geneva, Switzerland on the banks of the Rhône. The elder Borges, however, "proves" that they are, in fact, one and the same person by describing

the contents of the younger's bookshelves, including a book hidden behind the others on the sexual customs in the Balkans. The younger Borges replies that he must be dreaming, and for that reason, the elder Borges would certainly know all those details. The two discuss a variety of different topics from politics to literature and in the end the elder Borges decides to try out Coleridge's famous fantasy about the possibility of bringing back a tangible object from the world of dreams.¹⁰ The younger Borges takes out some Swiss coins, while the elder shows the younger a dollar bill dated 1964. In the face of such a peculiar situation, the younger Borges rips up the dollar and the elder Borges throws the coin into the river. The two resolve to meet again the next day, but neither one intends to keep his promise. At the end, the elder Borges concludes that the meeting was completely "real" for him, but that the younger Borges, the "other," had merely dreamt the encounter, thereby permitting him to forget it. Proof of the dream is the fact that the younger had mistakenly dreamt a date on the dollar bill which, according to the narrator, does not have the date printed on it.¹¹

In this story, the figure of the "double" or the "other" again indicates the presence of a soul guide that prepares the dreamer for death. The narrator, significantly, equates the meeting with "un hombre [que] a punto de morir quiere acordarse de un grabado entrevisto en la infancia. . . . Nuestra situación era única y, francamente, no estábamos preparados" (*LA* 11-12). The bizarre juxtaposition of the younger and the older versions of the narrator implies the life of the dreamer has come full circle and that death and rebirth are imminent. The experience of meeting one's own self in a different form leads to transformation. Jung has noted that the transforming Individuation process expresses itself mainly in dreams and that rebirth into another being is "the other person in ourselves . . . whom we have already met as the inner friend of the soul" (*The Archetypes* 9-1: 235).

In "El otro," this inner friend of the soul is the younger Borges whose presence demonstrates, for the elder Borges, the psychological "reality" of the psyche's immortality. As has been noted previously, the preparation for death in dreams is equally a preparation for the rebirth and renewal of the psyche since the essence of psyche, energy, does not simply cease to exist, but is merely transformed. Jung describes the theme of the immortality of the psyche by saying that "the intuition of immortality which makes itself felt during the transformation is connected with the peculiar nature of the unconscious. It is, in a sense, non-spatial and non-temporal. . . . The feeling of immortality, it seems to me, has its origin in a peculiar feeling of extension in space and time. . . ." (*The Archetypes* 9-1: 249).¹² Clearly, the narrator's encounter with his "other" self across time (the "other" exists in 1914, while the elder exists in 1969) and across space (Geneva¹³ and Cambridge) indicates an experience of the "proof" of psyche's indestructibility. As Helen Calaf de Agüera states, "El encuentro entre ambos 'yos' expresa la aspiración humana a trascender la

noción tradicional del tiempo lineal negando su postulado central de que sólo el presente es real; es una experiencia imaginaria que quiere dar cuerpo a la paradoja de la simultánea identidad e independencia de pasado y presente y que, a la vez, apunta al anhelo humano de una identidad que abarque todas las etapas de la vida – de un yo total y eterno que no se limite al instante inmediato” (168).

In contrast to the story “Ulrica,” in which the encounter with the feminine soul-guide is pleasurable and enlivening, in “El otro” the narrator is terrified by the encounter with his younger masculine double: “sé que fue casi atroz mientras duró y más aún durante las desveladas noches que lo siguieron” (LA 7) and “todavía me atormenta el recuerdo” (LA 14). Von Franz notes that, “from my own experience, it seems to me that the terror-filled, uncanny aspect of the ‘other’ appears especially when the dreamer has as yet *no relation to death or does not expect it*” (72; original emphasis). The terror to which von Franz refers is usually due to the evil nature of the “other;” in other words, the Shadow figure. But why is the narrator in “El otro” so disturbed by the encounter with his double when the character of the younger Borges definitely does not express the Shadow and in no way could be considered evil?

Perhaps the answer to the question posed above lies in a feeling of regret on the part of the narrator, the elder Borges. It is possible that the narrator sees a part of himself that was never explored sufficiently or developed fully in his youth and grieves the opportunities missed for a fuller psychic life. The elder Borges notes several instances of regret: there is a strong sensation of love for the “other;” reminding the narrator that he was never a father (LA 10); the “other’s” first book of poetry, to be entitled either *Los himnos rojos* or *Los ritmos rojos* and in which the poet “cantaría la fraternidad de todos los hombres” because the modern poet cannot turn his back on his era, reminds the dreamer that he lacked any solidarity with mankind and that he was never really aware of his own time and circumstance (LA 11); the “other’s” belief in the “invención o descubrimiento de metáforas nuevas” reminds the narrator that perhaps he had relied too much on convention and tradition (LA 12). Thus, when the narrator is faced with his younger double figure, all the regrets for missed opportunities make the encounter frightening and very disturbing in the face of the nearness of death. The unpleasant experience of this dream reminds the narrator that he is, as von Franz indicated, not quite ready for death because he has not resolved his feelings of disappointment and discontent for having not fulfilled what he would have liked to have accomplished.

In “*There Are More Things*,”¹⁴ death appears as a frightening and bizarre “intruder.” The story begins with very specific references to external “reality” and little by little turns inward, developing into a nightmare. The narrator, an Argentine philosophy student at the University of Texas at Austin, is suddenly notified of his uncle’s death. He returns home in 1921 to find that his uncle’s house, the “Casa Colorada,” has been auctioned off to a man named Max

Pretorius, a "foreigner." The house had been the site of many happy childhood memories: he had often played in the house as a child, and his uncle had taught him the delightful intricacies of philosophy using oranges, chess boards, and colored cubes. The attachment that the narrator has to the house suggests that he should have inherited the house on his uncle's death, but now it has fallen into the hands of a very unusual stranger. Pretorius' strangeness becomes apparent when he disposes of all of the house's furniture, household items, books, and so forth, and, further, when he hires workers to make certain "alterations" to the house. The carpenters work only at night and at one point, the uncle's decapitated, mutilated sheepdog is found dead in the yard. Once Pretorius moves things into the house, at night, no one ever sees him again and it is presumed that he has left the country. The narrator, responding to these strange circumstances with a mixture of curiosity and uneasiness, dreams one night of a stone amphitheater (a labyrinth) which encloses the Minotaur, "el monstruo de un monstruo" (LA 42). One summer night, during a severe storm, the narrator finds himself at the gate of the Casa Colorada, and decides to enter the house. The house of his happy childhood memories had been completely altered: the hallway tiles had been replaced by sod, there was "un olor dulce y nauseabundo" (LA 44), and what little furniture there was seemed to be designed for a figure that did not resemble the human form in the least. The narrator feels revulsion and terror at the "presencia de las cosas incomprendibles" (LA 44) and wonders what kind of inhabitant requires such extravagant objects as the one that served as his bed: "una suerte de larga mesa operatoria, muy alta, en forma de U, con hoyos circulares en los extremos" (LA 45). Suddenly, the narrator feels "un intruso en el caos" (LA 45) and, as he descends a ladder from the second floor of the house, he states that "algo ascendía por la rampa, opresivo y lento y plural. La curiosidad pudo más que el miedo y no cerré los ojos" (LA 45).

The response elicited by the death figures in "El otro" and "*There Are More Things*" is quite similar. In "El otro," the figure of death, in the form or a younger version of the narrator, causes fear (as well as affection); similarly, in "*There Are More Things*," the death figure is presented as a monstrous, horrifying creature which, despite its presumed grotesque appearance, inspires more curiosity than terror. However, the unexpected, unprecedented appearance of this snake-like monstrosity¹⁵ clearly prefigures and announces imminent death due to its role as an "intruder" (LA 45). As von Franz indicates, "the nearness of death is frequently represented in dreams by the image of a burglar, that is, by someone unfamiliar which unexpectedly enters one's present life" (68). The terror and fear caused by this death figure is probably due to the intruder's monstrous form, indicating a coloration that is clearly the result of Shadow projection. In contrast to "El otro," in which the soul-guide is not tainted by Shadow characteristics, in "*There Are More Things*," the soul-guide is an intruder of an abominable and repellent nature, installed in the Casa Colorada by its agent and assistant, the secondary Shadow figure: Pretorius.¹⁶

In this story, the narrator is drawn to a place where death awaits him. The Casa Colorada is a house built by his uncle according to the latter's specifications. In a symbolic sense, it is a house (the psyche) built by an overabundance of intellection, that is, the thinking function. The thinking function that has constructed the house becomes evident when the narrator remarks that it was built according to the "sólidas normas del buen poeta y mal constructor William Morris" (LA 41)¹⁷ and that this uncle had had a firm interest in philosophy, and theology, "los falaces cubos de Hinton [y] las bien concertadas pesadillas del joven Wells" (LA 40).

Since the narrator's uncle had had the house built after his retirement, death awaited him there, as it would await the nephew shortly thereafter. The presence of death in that house is openly expressed when the narrator affirms that "el hombre olvida que es un muerto que conversa con muertos" (LA 39). In short, the story appears to suggest that a house constructed on the basis of an unmitigated intellectual foundation will lead to the destruction of its inhabitant. As we have seen, dreams of death differ only slightly from individuation dreams, and according to Jung's postulations these dreams are, by nature, *compensatory*. The dream indicates to the dreamer that the one-sided thinking function of his consciousness will be the death of him.

An interesting twist on the theme of the unexpected soul-guide appears in "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado." In this story, the strange intruder is the narrator, a man from the twentieth century, Eudoro Acevedo, who travels forward in time. He enters the home of a man who, like all others of his day, has no name.¹⁸ The man describes for the narrator the conditions of life in this future time. In general, the specific has been abolished: people remain nameless, thus lacking the specificity of the individual personality; the particular interests of specific national groups have been lost by the disappearance of government: individual linguistic groups no longer exist since everyone speaks a universal language, Latin: such things as facts and history have been replaced by more general approaches to reality (reasoning, doubt, invention, forgetting); the printing of books has long since disappeared; and personal material possessions no longer exist. All persons must create for themselves their own sciences and arts, according to their needs. The man paints curious canvases and gives one to Acevedo as a souvenir of his visit. While the two men talk, others arrive to help gather up what little possessions the man has and together they walk with the man towards the crematory where the man will end his life. At the end of the text, the narrator contemplates the canvas "que alguien pintará, dentro de miles de años, con materiales hoy dispersos en el planeta" (LA 75).

"Utopía" represents a very imaginative expression of the same experience seen in "El otro" insofar as the two stories form a complementary mirror image pattern: the latter explores the strange occurrence when the narrator is confronted with his double from the past, while the former demonstrates the

same situation, with the exception that the narrator plays the role of the double who visits himself in a *future* incarnation. Again, in "Utopía," as well as in "Ulrica" and "El otro," time and space are utterly relative. Although the identity of Borges with his double is explicit in "El otro," the relationship between Acevedo and "Someone" in "Utopía," in my opinion, is equivalent.¹⁹ MacMurray correctly states that the reader is led to presume that the two characters are "Borges and his double or reincarnated self" (44). This being the case, then Acevedo is clearly the soul-guide which announces the imminent death of Someone. The narrator inquires, "¿No te asombra mi súbita aparición?" (*LA* 70), and as a consequence of Acevedo's visit, Someone makes his trip to the death chamber.

Again, Borges explores the enticing notion of bringing back a tangible souvenir of the dream world. In contrast to "El otro," in which the two figures reject the exchanging of coins and bank bills, Acevedo actually brings the canvas painted by Someone back to his office in Buenos Aires (*LA* 75). In this story, in which novelty predominates, Borges' obsession with possessing material proof of the existence of other worlds, or states of being, becomes reality. In general, then, one could state that "Utopía" takes the experience of "El otro" one step further and transcends it. For one reason, the terror and fear of meeting one's double has disappeared. One of the regrets of the elder Borges in "El otro" which made the presence of the soul-guide so terrifying has been resolved in "Utopía": Someone states that "cuando el hombre madura a los cien años, está listo a enfrentarse consigo mismo y con su soledad. Ya ha engendrado un hijo" (*LA* 72). Someone further mentions that at the age of maturity "los males y la muerte involuntaria no lo amenazan" (*LA* 73). Equally important in this story is the fact that a physical object, the canvas, has changed hands from one plane of time and space to another. Such an exchange provides consolation for the narrator who needs tangible proof of the continuity of the psyche after the death of the body.

CONCLUSION

In a sense, *El libro de arena* summarizes the totality of Borges' work. On the one hand, Borges has reworked and reelaborated several of the major concerns and fascinations explored in earlier works by continuing to examine the relationship between good and evil and by expanding his obsession with order, harmony and wholeness in several experiences with Self images. On the other hand, the author has introduced something completely new and unprecedented by prefiguring the end of ego-consciousness and preparing the psyche for death.

With *El libro de arena*, Borges has enlarged and deepened his literary expression to include significant psychological insights into the dynamics of life

and death. As has been illustrated. Borges, in this final collection of stories, has explored the relationship between the end of physical, material and conscious life and the inevitable, immaterial stage which follows. By means of a variety of figures that foreshadow and announce the imminence of death, the narrators in the stories are prepared for the change that puts an end to a life that has been bound by chronological time and physical space. Death, as the final stage of existence, comes not to destroy life, but rather to transform it.

NOTES

¹ Goloboff indicates that four of the stories were published separately before being collected in *El libro de arena*: "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" originally appeared in the third section of *La Nación* (5 May 1974); "There Are More Things," in *Crisis*, Number 13 (May 1974); and "El otro" in the "Suplemento Cultural" of *La Opinión* (15 September 1974). However, " 'El Congreso' es todavía mucho más antiguo ya que su redacción final data de 1955, y fue publicado en 1971 . . ." (259).

² For the sake of brevity, the following abbreviations of Borges' works will be used in this study: (BS) *The Book of Sand*; (F) *Ficciones*; (IB) *El informe de Brodie*; (OI) *Otras inquisiciones*, and (LA) *El libro de arena*.

³ In June of 1985, Borges published *Los conjurados* which contains several very short prose pieces.

⁴ It is my contention that the private "dreams" of an artist become their creative works, displayed for public viewing. The analogous relationship between dreams and works of art has been explored both explicitly and implicitly by Borges himself (especially in his "El sueño de Coleridge" and "Nathaniel Hawthorne" in *Otras inquisiciones*), as well as in the works of such researchers as Freud, Jung, Edinger, Campbell, Progoff, Goloboff, Gertel, González, Rodríguez Monegal, Porter, Briggs, and Jacoby, to name just a few.

⁵ One can easily corroborate Oviedo's point by taking a look at the first lines of the stories. The more "realistic" style of Borges' fiction becomes quite apparent in comparison with the opening lines of the stories in *Ficciones*. For example, consider the first lines of four of the stories from *El libro de arena*, "El otro," "Ulrica," "El soborno," and "Avelino Arredondo": "El hecho ocurrió en el mes de febrero de 1969, al norte de Boston, en Cambridge" (LA 7); "Mi relato será fiel a la realidad o, en todo caso, a mi recuerdo personal de la realidad, lo cual es lo mismo" (LA 15); "La historia que refiero es la de dos hombres o más bien la de un episodio en el que intervinieron dos hombres" (LA 77); "El hecho aconteció en Montevideo, en 1897" (LA 85). In general, the texts begin with a simple statement which places the story in a certain place at a certain time. These straightforward, precise openings contrast greatly with the complexity and intricacy of the first lines of Borges' mature (second period) stories in *Ficciones*.

⁶ Since many reprintings of Jung's works preserve the paragraph numbers found in *The Collected Works*, all parenthetical references to Jung's writings will show the volume name, number, and *paragraph* number, rather than page number.

⁷ To some, von Franz's remarks may seem "mystic." In conjunction with contemporary theories of physics, however, her assertions gain a scientific basis. As the physicist Fritjof Capra has noted, "in modern physics, mass is no longer associated with a material substance, and hence particles are not seen as consisting of any basic 'stuff,' but as bundles of energy. . . . Their forms have to be understood dynamically, as forms in space and time" (188). It could be stated, then, that the material body of mankind (physical energy) and the immaterial psyche (psychic energy) may "be two aspects of one and the same energy" (von Franz 144).

⁸ Samuels suggests that Jung's process of individuation and the desire for a "merger with something 'greater' than oneself" (the archetype of Self) forms an interesting point of convergence with Freud's "death instinct" which he describes as "an attempt by the organism to reduce excitation and tension to zero by achieving an inorganic state as in death." He further states that "the self, manifested in 'death-instinct' forms, has to do with experiences of merger, fusion, oneness. A combination of psychoanalytic and analytical psychological approaches suggest that the death instinct has a purpose; namely to act as a necessary antidote to the pain and anxiety resulting from rupture and separation so that, in the peace and quiet of an integrated state of oneness, the boilers of creativity can be re-stoked" (99).

⁹ In his study, "Borges y las literaturas germánicas medievales en *El libro de arena*," Joseph Tyler has summarized the use of Medieval Germanic literature in several stories in this collection.

¹⁰ See Borges' essay, "La flor de Coleridge" in *Otras inquisiciones* 17-20.

¹¹ American bank notes do indeed have dates, but Borges, blind at the time of the writing of this story, could only go by what he had been told by others. The English translation of the story corrects the inaccuracy. The sentence in the original story, "(Meses después alguien me dijo que los billetes de banco no llevan fecha)," is deleted from the translation and at the end, where the original has "El otro me soñó, pero no me soñó rigurosamente. Soñó, ahora lo entiendo, la imposible fecha en el dólar" (*LA* 14) is altered in the translation to read, "The other man dreamed me, but he did not dream me exactly. He dreamed, I now realize, the date on the dollar bill" (*BS* 20).

¹² Durand emphasizes the timelessness and spacelessness of the psyche when he states that "dreams, and all 'active images' as we would say, abolish spacial [sic] limitations, preserving only the freedom of extension: active images are ambiguous. . . and ubiquitous. In dreams, the here is elsewhere, places are telescoped, losing both their geographic and geometric context.

More than anything else, the time (one is almost tempted to say the tempo) of the active image burkes [sic] the causal antecedencies, blending the extasis of time (past-present-future) into concrete 'pure duration,' as Bergson later pointed out. Memory ceases to be restoration, repetition and *mimesis*, becoming instead creative reminiscence (anamnesis) and, above all, creator of self" ("Exploration" 89; original emphasis).

¹³ An interesting detail from Borges' life reveals the link between Geneva and death. Upon hearing the news of the fatality of his liver cancer, the writer immediately left Argentina and decided to die and be buried in the Swiss city. In Alazraki's

moving personal account, "Epilogue On Borges' Death: Some Reflections," the critic notes that "Borges had come to Geneva to search for a country which, through the years, had become very much his own. Argentina, his own country – he left – had been lost to him, and Switzerland offered him a peace he could not find in his native land" (*Borges and the Kabbalah* 179).

¹⁴ The text is dedicated "A la memoria de Howard P. Lovecraft" (*LA* 39). It is worth noting that Barton L. St. Armand's analysis of the nature of horror in the fiction of Lovecraft, particularly his story "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), has curious parallels with this story by Borges.

¹⁵ Once the narrator has discovered the inhabitant's U-shaped bed, he states: "De alguna página de Lucano, leída hace años y olvidada, vino a mi boca la palabra *anfisbena*, que sugería, pero que no agotaba por cierto lo que verían luego mis ojos" (*LA* 45). "Amphisbaena" is a highly poisonous mythological snake with a head at both ends and which can move in either direction. Although the symbolism of the snake is extraordinarily complex (see Cirlot 407-410), the image presented here of a snake with two heads indicates a snake that cannot form the uroboros. The uroboros, as a "dramatic symbol for the integration and assimilation of the opposite, i.e., of the shadow" (Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* 14: 513), is an impossibility for this creature, and indicates, therefore, that the Shadow is still very active on an unconscious level.

¹⁶ Preetorius' role as a *guardian* of the death figure is suggested by his name.

¹⁷ In addition to his original poetry, William Morris is also known for his work as a furniture designer and as the author of a retelling of the Icelandic saga, *Sigurd the Volsung* (1875). The latter work explains the seemingly gratuitous reference to Morris in the story "Ulrica" (*LA* 18).

¹⁸ In the Spanish text the man says "me dicen alguien" (*LA* 71), but in the English translation, di Giovanni gives the man a generic name, indicated by capitalization: "I'm simply called Someone" (*BS* 91).

¹⁹ I differ with Calaf de Aguera when she states that "El otro" is the only example of Borges' use of the "doble en el tiempo" (168). She might perhaps be correct if she were to add that "El otro" is the only example of a double in *past* time.

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