

5. Winston Weathers, *The Archetype and the Psyche*, Univ. of Tulsa, Dept. of English Monograph Series, No. 4 (Tulsa: Univ. of Tulsa, 1968), 17.

6. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), 30.

7. Campbell, 30. Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1944), 75, comments: "In mythical imagination there is always implied an act of belief. Without the belief in the reality of its object, myth would lose its ground." And Bronislaw Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," reprinted in his *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1954), 100-1, notes that the anthropologist discovers that myth "is not the nature of fiction . . . but it is a living reality, believed to have once happened."

8. Armens, 65.

9. Weathers, 17.

10. Armens, 59.

11. Moses I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, rev. ed. (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 52, notes that "Penelope could not rule, being a woman."

12. Buero, "Comentario" in *La tejedora de sueños*, 92. Finley, 128-9, observes that the woman was the second sex in an unequal partnership, and that the better of the two should receive more affection than he gives, as Aristotle has noted. "And that is precisely what we find in Homer. While Odysseus was absent the loss to Penelope, emotionally, psychologically, affectively was incomparably greater than the loss to her husband."

13. Neumann, 376.

14. Finley, 28, referring to Homeric heroes states: "For the latter everything pivoted on a single element of honour and virtue: strength, bravery, physical courage, prowess. Conversely, there was no weakness, no unheroic trait, but one, and that was cowardice and the consequent failure to pursue heroic goals."

15. Armens, 54-5.

16. Joelyn Ruple, *Antonio Buero Vallejo. The First Fifteen Years* (Eastchester, N.Y.: Eliseo Torres, 1971), 36-7, attempts to draw an analogy between *La tejedora de sueños* and the historical situation existing in Spain at the time of its composition.

17. Robert L. Nicholas, *The Tragic Stages of Antonio Buero Vallejo* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1972), 48, comments on the humanization and more especially the Christianization of myths in the drama.

18. Käte Hamburger, *From Sophocles to Sartre*, trans. Helen Sebba (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969), 2.

Revista de Estudios Hispánicos

Fitón's Aleph, Ercilla's World

IN A POSTSCRIPT TO HIS *FICCIÓN "EL ALEPH,"* JORGE LUIS Borges recalls references to the aleph—a single point or sphere in which the entire world is visible¹—in a manuscript of Sir Richard Burton discovered in the Santos library by Pedro Henríquez Ureña. Borges lists Lucian of Samosata's mirror, Merlin's "round and hollow . . . world of glass" in *The Faerie Queen*, and Tarik Benzeyad's mirror from the *One Thousand and One Nights*. He conspicuously fails to mention a similar *speculum mundi* from the literature of his own language and continent: Fitón's orb in Ercilla's *La Araucana*, Cantos XXIV and XXVII. Borges, omnivorous reader and multivalent writer, has forced us to reconsider traditional generic divisions and to accept the confluence of history and fiction at the level of selection of material, plot, and characterization. Borges explains that every writer creates (or, perhaps more exactly, identifies) his own precursors by refining and reusing received literary ideas. Every literary work comments on its predecessors and alters the way we read its antecedents.²

If we take Borges' ideas to their proper and fruitful conclusion, the Argentine master's short story can help us understand the most puzzling sections of Ercilla's Renaissance epic poem—those which use the aleph in Fitón's cave. The two works, *La Araucana* and "El Aleph," share a common aesthetic tenet, the opposition of art to reality, and the concomitant notion of the impossibility of reproducing a given reality in a work of art. To exemplify this problem, each text uses the device of the aleph, paradigm of the richness of this world, the place which contains all reality. Incorporating the idea of the aleph in the two works, both Ercilla and Borges juxtapose their artistic verbal constructs

to the material world which stands behind them, and which they represent.³

In the prologue to the first part of *La Araucana* (1569), Ercilla explains that his ambition is to tell the true history of the Spanish conquest of one of the fiercest and most indomitable tribes of the Americas, the Araucanians. His medium is the epic poem, and, like its principal model, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Ercilla's is an epic based upon recent historical events rather than on extant texts or on imaginative fancy. In the first verse of his first canto, and many times after that, Ercilla attempts to dissociate his work from the contrived, romantic epics popular in his day in Spain as well as in Italy:

No las damas, amor, no gentilezas
de caballeros canto enamorados,
ni las muestras, regalos y ternezas
de amorosos afectos y cuidados;
mas el valor, los hechos, las proezas
de aquellos españoles esforzados,
que a la cerviz de Arauco no domada
pusieron duro yugo por la espada.⁴

Ercilla begins his poem with a lengthy *historia naturalis* of Chile, explaining the area's geography, climate, topography, fauna, and flora. He then provides a description of the nature, history, and customs of the Araucanians—all unknown to his audience—and brings the story of the conquest up to the time of his arrival in Chile in 1557. The greater part of his poem (nearly thirty of thirty-seven cantos) is devoted to the wars between the Spaniards and the Araucanians, and Ercilla vows, time and time again, to keep to this subject and treat no other.⁵ Thus the intercalations of the scenes of the supernatural, including Ercilla's visit to Fitón's cave, where the aleph is located, have caused special problems for critics, many of whom have considered these reports on events and situations outside Chile to represent a divergence from the author's stated purpose.

The poem contains three such scenes. In Canto XVII Belona, the Roman goddess of war, whisks Ercilla up out of the Chilean wilderness and places him on a high hilltop, giving him a panoramic view of the Spanish victory at the battle of St. Quentin, in Picardy. In Canto XXIV the magician Fitón shows

Ercilla the battle of Lepanto in the "pomo de cristal" (aleph); and in Canto XXVII Fitón shows Ercilla the entire world, nation by nation and city by city, in the glass orb.

A number of critics have pointed out the seeming incongruities of the supernatural episodes in the poem as a whole. In 1852 Manuel José Quintana, after recalling that *La Araucana* was one of the few tomes from Don Quixote's library saved by the barber and the curate, praised Ercilla's epic generally, but found that the battles of St. Quentin and Lepanto, and the vision of the world, were the work's major defects; ". . . absolutamente extraños y aun incompatibles con el argumento."⁶ Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, writing near the end of the last century, contended that the incidents were worthwhile in themselves, but that they did not really form part of Ercilla's whole poem and were "débilmente enlazadas . . . con su narración."⁷

More recently, a Chilean critic, too, complained of the intrusive nature of the supernatural episodes: ". . . las hechicerías del mago Fitón . . . son formas degradadas del mito, significan una ruptura del sistema épico del poema y se les descubre a la legua su espuelita de pura superstición o superchería literaria."⁸ But these criticisms are mere trifles compared to Abraham König's sweeping and absolute condemnation of Ercilla's use of the supernatural. In 1888, in Santiago, König published an edition of *La Araucana* "para uso de los chilenos," from which he deleted all references to the poet's encounters with Belona and Fitón, thus reducing the poem from thirty-seven cantos to thirty-two. His rationalization for this butchery was chauvinistic as well as aesthetic:

Ningún lector chileno se quejará de estas omisiones, que contribuyen a dar unidad e interés a la acción desarrollada en el poema. Eliminando lo que es inconducente, se consigue además otro propósito, que he tenido en vista desde el primer momento: hacer de *La Araucana* un libro exclusivamente chileno. Las supresiones enunciadas no amenguan su mérito histórico o literario. La parte útil y bella se ocupa de Chile, lo demás es mediocre i accesorio.⁹

These and similar difficulties cannot result solely from the incorporation of the supernatural, since these kinds of episodes are present in nearly every epic poem of the Homeric and Virgilian traditions; they abound in the *Pharsalia*, Ercilla's clos-

est model. In Ercilla's case the problem seems to derive from the very nature of his poem or, more precisely, from the difficulty of establishing its nature. Enrique Anderson Imbert reminds us of *La Araucana's* novelty:

Fue la primera obra en que el poeta aparece como actor de la epopeya que describe; por lo tanto, fue la primera obra que confirió dignidad épica a acontecimientos todavía en curso . . . también fue la primera obra en que el autor . . . nos revela el íntimo proceso de su creación artística.¹⁰

Ercilla himself called the work an "historia verdadera," (Prólogo to Part I).¹¹ This declaration, together with the poem's narration in the first person, the subject's origin in recent events in which the author himself had participated, and the frequent entry of the persona of the poet into his work to proclaim a fidelity to truth and to discuss the processes and decisions of poetic creation, naturally might have raised expectations among the readership for authenticity or veracity. In the absence of the usual historical, literary, or biblical sources used by other epic writers of his time to provide background and incident for their works, Ercilla's poem became the major source of information on the Araucanians and on the Spanish campaign in southern Chile. Among the many cribs, copies, and spurious sequels which *La Araucana* engendered was that of Diego de Santisteban y Osorio, who, in 1597, published his *Cuarta y quinta parte de La Araucana*, of which Menéndez y Pelayo says "apenas hay una palabra de verdad histórica en todo lo que relata." The author had never been to Chile or even to the New World; his single source of information was the three parts of Ercilla's *La Araucana*.¹²

In fact, the temptation to see Ercilla's poem as a kind of history has proved a strong one,¹³ and to some degree accounts for the sort of complaints—even those couched in terms of aesthetics—which we have just seen: that the supernatural episodes are incongruous and do not belong in the poem. It is true that, in comparison with the romantic and biblical epics which were its contemporaries, *La Araucana* is unusual in its general emphasis of historical and verisimilar actions. But the Europeanized vision of the Araucanians, particularly in discussions of their morality and expressions of love, the omniscient narrator who

writes as a personal witness to simultaneous but geographically separated events, the supernatural episodes themselves, among many other indicators, all militate against the poem's being read as anything but a fiction, albeit a fiction based on historical reality.

The poem may contain a record of some real events, but Ercilla, like any other writer of a work with a plot, has had to select his material and organize it within a sequence which follows a plausible chain of causality; he has had to establish point of view, ideology, and narrative mode. Aristotle (*Poetics*, XXIII), distinguishing between history (which treats all events of a given period, whether or not they are related or lead to a single result) and the epic (which deals with a single event, admitting many episodes for variety, all of which achieve a single result), saw no reason why an epic could not be based upon history, since the poet is still the "maker" of his art, and "even if he chances to take an historical subject, he is none the less a poet, for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker" (*Poetics*, IX, 9). By his frequent intrusions into the narrative, Ercilla insists that his audience understand that he is the "maker" of his poem, and that he constructs it with the material of historical truth (*historia verdadera*). With his use of the supernatural incidents, Ercilla demonstrates the enormity of the gulf which separates the artist's material from his poetic creation, that is, the transformations which must take place in the creative process.

The three visions offered the poet by Belona and Fitón are situated carefully within the poem to have maximum impact on the reader. Each follows a description of a particularly odious or grisly kind of behavior on the part of the Spanish conquerors in Chile, and each offers an example of Spanish bravery and heroism in another part of the world. The events do not follow each other in real time, of course (two months elapse in the first instance, skimmed over in a half-dozen verses), but only in Ercilla's elaboration of the poem. Canto XV depicts a bloody massacre of many Araucanians by the Spanish troops. In the next canto an Indian leader rises to warn his people that the Spanish

justification for the wars of conquest—the spreading of the true faith—is a ruse, and that the invaders covet Indian lands and wealth. Shortly after this, Ercilla admits as much when he says “nos aumentaba el ánimo y codicia, / dándonos a entender que había flaqueza, / y abundancia de bienes y riqueza” (XVII, 13). Just when the moral underpinning of the military operation is thrown into question, Belona appears and carries Ercilla to St. Quentin. In Canto XXII the Indian leader Galvarino has his hands cut off as punishment by the Spaniards. He makes his way back to his tribe, where he gives an impassioned speech about the perfidious, brutal invaders, waving his bloody stumps in the air as evidence. At this point Ercilla happens onto Fitón’s cave, where he watches the battle of Lepanto in the aleph. In Canto XXVI, the Spaniards hang twelve Indian leaders as examples to the entire tribe (or, more precisely, they force the leaders to hang themselves), and Ercilla again is summoned to Fitón’s domain to witness Spain’s glory and power around the world.

The two battles in Europe share with the Chilean campaign an identity as just wars against infidels as part of the expansion and protection of the Spanish empire.¹⁴ In fact, the battle which Ercilla witnesses in Fitón’s aleph is the very version of Lepanto of Spanish popular mythology: the triumph of the forces of Christendom led by the national hero, Don Juan de Austria, over the predatory and insidious forces of Islam. The traditional epic function of the prophetic vision offered to the hero is continued here—that of adding to the unity of the story by tying one part to another and, most of all, that of increasing the reader’s faith in the truthfulness of the text as a whole. Just as the reader can now confirm the veracity of Belona’s prophecy (XVIII, 43), of Ercilla’s meeting Fitón and visiting his cave, so he can confirm, from his extra-textual experience, the accuracy of Ercilla’s report of the vision in Fitón’s aleph; by extension, this gives greater credence to Ercilla’s other reports.

Although he is a sorcerer and not a writer, Fitón recognizes the need for variety in the epic poem,¹⁵ and he offers Ercilla the vision of Lepanto for its artistic effects, as well as for the authenticity it lends the work: after repetitious descriptions of battles on land, “falta una naval batalla con que / será tu historia autorizada” (XXIII, 73). This, however, is variety with a vengeance, for its immediate effect is to provide a tacit contrast to

the poverty of the Spaniards’ situation in Chile: the decisive and immediate defeat of the Turks in the Mediterranean shines beside the dullness of the protracted and (by comparison) seemingly inconsequential series of battles at the antipodes.

Other contrasts between the Chilean and European battles are not hard to find. The purpose of Lepanto is clear—the salvation of Spain and of Christendom—but the true purpose of the Spanish excursion into southern Chile is debated by many of the figures in the poem. It may be to spread Christianity, but it also may be motivated by greed and cupidity, the pursuit of gold and new lands. The naval battle, which concentrates many men and much armament in a small area, is decided in a single afternoon; the war in Arauco is a guerrilla campaign with many inconclusive skirmishes and pitched battles over a period of thirty years. In the Mediterranean the European forces are protecting their homelands, fighting under the direction of strong, capable, and heroic leaders; Don Juan de Austria even becomes the subject of an epic poem, Rufo’s *Austriada*. In Chile, half a world away, anonymous soldiers labor under an inept commander (Valdivia), who knows little of leadership, command, or the strategies of war.

The inclusion of the Battle of Lepanto, then, reassures readers of the veracity of Ercilla’s entire story, introduces variety, combats satiety, and provides an example of morally superior heroism in a just war. It also contributes to Ercilla’s development as an artist, for after viewing the battle scene in Fitón’s ball, the poet better understands the limits which art must impose on reality. Ercilla frequently reminds himself and his readers of the need to condense his material, to eliminate the non-essential, to treat only that which is important and which has (or can be given) meaning within the whole poem:

Luego, Fitón con plática sabrosa
me llevó por la sala paseando
y, sin dejar figura cada cosa
me fué parte por parte declarando;
mas teniendo temor que os sea enojosa
la relación prolija, iré dejando
todo aquello, aunque digno de memoria
que no importa ni toca a nuestra historia. (XXIV, 97)

Then, turning from the supernatural vision to the tales of the Chilean campaign, Ercilla relates the battle he has just portrayed to the accomplishments, not just of the Spaniards in Chile, but to those of their equals, the Araucanians:

Cosa es digna de ser considerada
y no pasar por ella fácilmente,
que gente tan ignota y desviada
de la frecuencia y trato de otra gente
de innavegables golfos rodeada,
alcance lo que así difícilmente
alcanzaron por curso de la guerra
los más famosos hombres de la tierra. (XXV, 1)

The battle of St. Quentin tests Ercilla's artistic skill and determination in a slightly different way. Belona, who offers Ercilla this vision, is aware, as Fitón was, that she provides the poet material which has a place, and perhaps a permanence, in art. She urges him to continue the struggle to write his epic even in the face of the great difficulties of life in southern Chile. But this goddess of war is also a temptress, and she offers material which will lead Ercilla from the proper subject of his poem: "si quieres de damas y de amores / en verso celebrar la dulce pena, / tendrás mayor sujeto y hermosura / que en la pasada edad y en la futura" (XVII, 42). But, faithful to his ambition expressed in the first lines of the poem, Ercilla fights free of this temptation and goes on with the description of the battle of St. Quentin. Just as the battle is ended, Ercilla catches sight of his wife, María de Bazán, in an Edenic garden. The poet is tempted to try to join her, but is roused from his reverie by the cries of his comrades, and he rushes off to join them in battle. Throughout his poem Ercilla feels the threat of the intrusion of amorous themes—and of all extraneous material—into his work. He confesses that "quisiera mil veces mezclar algunas cosas diferentes pero acordé de no mudar estilo" ("Al Lector," Part II), and he resolves to keep to the war in Arauco. Once, tempted by amorous themes, he cries out in language reminiscent of that which other Golden Age poets used, in very different contexts:

Pérfido amor tirano . . .
Tanto, traidor, te va aunque yo no siga

el duro estilo del sangriento Marte . . .
Déjame ya, que la trompeta horrenda
del enemigo bárbaro vecino
no da lugar a que otra cosa atienda . . . (XXII, 1-4)

Ercilla seems to be saying that the epic of the New World demands a bellicose cast unknown in Renaissance Europe, and he is refusing to write his work according to the manners and values of the Old World epics of his time.

The full scope of the epic poet's task is made most clear in Ercilla's third brush with the supernatural, and his second glimpse into the glass ball. Once more the pattern of Spanish misconduct in Chile, followed by a vision of Spanish glory, repeats itself. In a skirmish Ercilla is urged on by his companions in pursuit of the Araucanians: "del honor y vergüenza compelido, / no pudiendo del trance ya excusarme" (XXVI, 16), he confesses to the reader. As a result of his aggressive leadership, many Indians are killed and others are captured. Among the prisoners, the Spaniards choose twelve to be put to death as examples to the rest. Ercilla spies the brave Galvarino among the group of the condemned and argues for the Indian's freedom, but he is shouted down by his fellow Spaniards. For lack of a hangman, the twelve are issued ropes and take their own lives. In recounting this scene, Ercilla the poet is forced to see Ercilla the soldier and protagonist of the poem in a dual role.¹⁶ He is not simply a hero to his own side, but is in full measure responsible for the barbarity toward this tribe which he greatly admires, and is specifically responsible for this grim scene which he paints in savage and poignant detail: "los robustos robles desta prueba / llevaron aquel año fruta nueva" (XXVI, 37). The ambivalence of Ercilla's role is still more complex; as a soldier he fails to save Galvarino, yet as a poet he preserves the entire campaign, the entire tribe, its valor and its values, in his art. The reader's overall impression is, once more, of the very relative benefit and very great destruction—to Chile, to Spain—of the conquest of the Araucanians.

Suppressing intervening events, Ercilla links this scene to his visit to Fitón's cave by again using the image of the unnatural garden which presages insight or understanding: "en un jardín entramos espacioso, / do se puede decir que estaba junto / todo lo

natural y artificioso . . . [n]o produce natura tantas flores / cuando más rica primavera envía" (XXVI, 48-9). The poet's second view into the aleph differs from his first in this very important respect: here it is Fitón who narrates the scene, not Ercilla. In their first meeting Fitón had explained to Ercilla that his orb "es del mundo el gran término abreviado" (XXIII, 71), and now Ercilla goes on to explain to the reader that the ball contains a perfect reproduction of the world, "donde todas las cosas parecían / en su forma distinta y claramente" (XXVII, 4). The *poma*, then, is a metaphor for the raw material which the artist uses to create his art; it contains (or is) a reflection of the world, rather than its artistic representation. The aleph is a prodigy, and it interests us mainly as a scientific curiosity—for what it is, rather than for what it contains. Fitón, too fascinated by his apparatus to be concerned with artistic problems of representation or selection, begins listing the geographic components of the whole world which can be seen, in all their detail, in the aleph:

Mira al principio de Asia, a Calcedonia,
junto al Bósforo enfrente de la Tracia
a Lidia, Caria, Licia y Licaonia,
a Panfilia, Bitinia y a Galacia;
y junto al Ponto Euxino a Paflagonia,
la llana Capadocia y la Farnacia,
y la corriente de Eufrates famoso,
que entra en el mar de Persia cuadaloso. (XXVII, 6)

Thus he begins in the sixth verse of the canto, and he goes on in the same vein for forty-eight verses, introducing each stanza of the catalogue with "Mira . . . Mira . . . Mira," and "Ves . . . Ves . . . Ves." Fitón's act is an Adamic naming of the world—a necessary step, but one taken in the pre-history of art. The vision's meaning for the poem—that only the Spaniards' courage and daring in passing the Pillars of Hercules could have brought them to their successes in the New World and to this remote corner of the globe—is lost in the jumble of unshaped and nearly chaotic enumeration.

Ercilla, of course, has not lost control of his poem here. By including Fitón's seamless and untidy exposition within his own, the poet demonstrates graphically the very difficulty on

which he has insisted so often—that of making the poem. Ercilla shows that any work depends for its success on the artist's vision and skill in selecting, ordering, and representing the reality he wishes to convey. The aleph, as Borges' name for this phenomenon implies, is simply the beginning, the first letter, or first step. The aleph (or alphabet, of which it is the emblem as well as the initial component) is to communication what the material of reality is to art: the raw, unordered, unmediated matter.

Ercilla's opposition of *poma-poema*, reality and art, returns us to Borges' "El Aleph." The success of Borges' story contrasts with the ultimate failure of his antagonist Daneri's poem in much the same way that Ercilla's historical epic contrasts with Fitón's insufferable, rambling list. Borges, trying to describe the aleph, or what is visible in the aleph, puts together two pages of enumeration more varied (and thus more chaotic?) than Fitón's. By doing this, Borges makes clear, as Ercilla did four centuries before him, that neither the aleph, nor a verbal representation of it, is art. Borges is mistrustful of this unnatural—or supernatural—phenomenon, but Daneri finds it indispensable to the opus which Rodríguez Monegal calls his "insane poem."¹⁷ When his house (site of the aleph), is threatened with destruction, Daneri hyperbolically proclaims that "es inajenable mi Aleph" (*El Aleph*, 166), and initiates legal proceedings to save it. But the house is pulled down and the aleph destroyed. Six months later the "Editorial Procusto no se dejó arredrar por la longitud del considerable poema y lanzó al mercado una selección de 'trozos argentinos'" (*El Aleph*, 172; emphasis mine). The very title hints at the prolixity, induced by the alephic vision, which Daneri has been unable to resist. And Borges speaks of Daneri's pen "entorpecida . . . por el Aleph" (*El Aleph*, 173). For his work Daneri receives second prize in a national literary competition. Borges comments ironically, "una vez más triunfaron la incomprensión y la envidia" (*El Aleph*, 172), and it is not at all clear if the "incomprensión" he speaks of is that of the contest's judges, or of Daneri himself, who has failed to understand the demands of art. The latter case would be supported by the text of Daneri's telegram to Borges which, while self-congratulatory and sarcastic, is laced with Daneri's envy of the true creative artist, Borges.

In 1932 Borges, discussing the writer's difficulties of achieving

una fuerte apariencia de veracidad" which will induce in the reader a willing suspension of disbelief,¹⁸ expressed his preference for literature which betrays contrived and controlled plots with many interlinking and mutually referential elements. According to Borges, the novelist (and, we may assume, any literary artist) has an obligation to order his fictional world, to impart to it a sense of causality, of sequence, of design. Concomitantly, Borges argues against fictions, particularly psychological fictions, which simply reproduce the "asiático desorden del mundo real."¹⁹

The differences between these two kinds of writing can hardly be made more clear than they are in *La Aracucana* and "El Aleph." Both Borges and Ercilla draw attention to the fact that their texts are mere imperfect verbal representations, limited by their all-too-human narrators: "¿cómo transmitir a los otros el infinito Aleph, que mi temerosa memoria apenas abarca?" Borges wonders (*El Aleph*, 168). Addressing himself rhetorically to King Phillip II, Ercilla asks:

¿Cuál será el atrevido que presume
reducir el valor vuestro y grandeza
a término pequeño y breve suma,
y a tan humilde estilo tanta alteza?

...

Y el querer atreverme a tanto creo
que me será juzgado a desatino,
pues llegado a razón, yo mismo veo
que salgo de los términos a tino.

Ironically, Fitón and Daneri express no such doubts about their own literary works. But Ercilla, who in spite of his unstinting effort in scribbling on the battlefield "en cuero por falta de papel, y en pedazos de cartas" (Prólogo to Part I), must acknowledge the *lacunae* in his work ("yo dejo mucho y aun lo más principal por escribir," "Al lector," Part II), and Borges, whose mind, "porous with forgetfulness," must struggle to recall even the features of his beloved Beatriz Viterbo, have created works infinitely richer, more complex, and more interesting than those envisioned by

their supposed benefactors, Fitón and Daneri, the owners and worshipers of alephs.

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NOTES

1. The definition offered by Carlos Argentino Daneri, one of the story's characters, is "uno de los puntos del espacio que contienen todos los puntos." Jorge Luis Borges, *El Aleph* (1949; Madrid: Alianza, 1971), 165. Further quotations will be from this edition and will be indicated in the text with appropriate page numbers.

2. Borges expounds these ideas in a number of essays. See, for example, "Kafka y sus precursores," in Borges' *Otras inquisiciones* (1952; Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1960), 145-8. A discussion of the implications of Borges' ideas can be found in John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," *The Atlantic*, CCXX, 2 (1967), 29-34.

3. Borges has dealt with this problem in another story. Ireneo Funes' memory ("Funes el memorioso") is a kind of limited aleph, an organ or a mechanism wherein everything the protagonist has ever seen can be reconstructed, in all its detail. Funes himself is "el solitario y lúcido espectador de un mundo multiforme, instantáneo y casi intolerablemente preciso." (*Ficciones*, segunda edición aumentada [Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1956], 126) But, as the narrator of that story suggests, Funes would be incapable of writing a story about himself, recording for posterity the feats of his own prodigious memory. Language is inadequate to represent the rich exactness of Funes' world, and that world totally dominates his brain: "Sospecho . . . que no era muy capaz de pensar. Pensar es olvidar diferencias, es generalizar, abstraer." (126)

4. Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, *La Araucana* (1569, 1578 and 1589; México: Editorial Porrúa, 1975), 15. Further citations from the poem will appear in the text with canto and verse numbers. The opposition which Ercilla emphasizes is, most obviously, to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, although the aversion is by no means as complete as many critics have thought; see Juan Bautista Avallé Arce, "El poeta en su

- tema, el caso de Ercilla," *Revista de Occidente*, 32 (1971), 152-170. More generally, Ercilla wants to avoid the contagion of the values of the romantic epic and the romance itself.
5. See the Prólogo to Part I, "Al lector" to Part II, Canto I, 2, and *passim*.
 6. Manuel José Quintana, *Obras completas*, Biblioteca de Autores españoles (Madrid, 1852), 162.
 7. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de la poesía hispanoamericana*, Tomo II, in his *Obras completas*, edición definitiva, revisada por el autor (Madrid: Librerías Suárez, 1913), 294.
 8. Germán Sepúlveda, "Retablo épico de *La Araucana*," *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos*, 233 (1969), 441.
 9. Abraham König, Preface to *La Araucana* by Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Cervantes, 1888), ix, cited in Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia*, 295; emphasis König's.
 10. Enrique Anderson Imbert, *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*, 5ª edición, Tomo I (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965), 65.
 11. This is a convention of much writing of the Renaissance. Camões says of his *Lusiadas*: "a verdade que eu conto, nua e pura . . ." (V, 89). For excellent discussions of this topic, see Robert Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in the Renaissance Epic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), especially 110-121, 135-138 and 228-237; and Alban Forcione, *Cervantes, Aristotle and the "Persiles"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), especially 49-85.
 12. See Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia*, 323-5.
 13. There are many critics who incline toward the view that *La Araucana* is a history. Perhaps the most categorical is Ticknor (*History of Spanish Literature*, Vol II [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1849], 461 and 463): "This can hardly be called an epic . . ." It is "versified history . . . geographically and statistically accurate." Mérimée judges the poem through the poet: "comme le récit strictement historique . . . lui parait à la longue un peu nu et froid pur l'épopée . . . L'auteur note au jour le jour ce qu'il a vu, dépeint les paysages qu'il a sous les yeux: on dirait parfois un simple chroniqueur ou un géographe . . ." Ernest Mérimée, *Précis d'Histoire de la Littérature Espagnole* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1908), 228-9. For an overview of the historical, as well as other readings of the poem, see Frank Pierce, *La poesía épica del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Gredos, 1961), 18-209.
 14. In the case of the battle of St. Quentin this is true only by the artifice of collapsing real time (a period of twenty-two years—1557, the battle of St. Quentin; 1579, the publication of the second part of *La Araucana*) into poetic time, the period of Ercilla's stay in Chile. Belona

prophesies: "En este tiempo Francia corrompida, / la católica ley adulterando, / negará la obediencia al Rey debida, / las sacrilegias armas levantando; / y con el cebo de la suelta vida / cobrará la maldad fuerza juntando / de gente infiel ejército formado / contra la Iglesia y propio Rey jurado" (XVIII, 33). A condemnation of the French on similar grounds appears in *Os Lusiadas*, VII, 6-8.

15. cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, XXIV, 4: "in Epic poetry . . . many events simultaneously transacted can be presented; and these, if relevant to the subject, add mass and dignity to the poem."

16. For an excellent discussion of Ercilla's narrator-protagonist duality, see Avalue Arce, "El poeta en su poema."

17. Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *Jorge Luis Borges, A Literary Biography* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), 416. At the end of his postscript Borges hints in another way that these alephs—at least alephs which are apprehended visually—are limited, false, "meros instrumentos de óptica." (*El Aleph*, 174) The true aleph may be one contained in a stone pillar of the mosque of Cairo, which the faithful can perceive only with their imaginations. Thus the equation is preserved—Optical (enumerative) aleph : Daneri's poem :: Imaginative (inventive) aleph : Borges' story.

18. Jorge Luis Borges, *Discusión* (1932; Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1957), 82.

19. Borges, *Discusión*, 90.

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