

about how a work of the given kind ought to look, and the chasm separating what ought to be from what in fact amuses him (or offends him).

Because our superior knowledge decreases as the themes of literature become increasingly remote from reality, kitsch takes up residence in regions inaccessible to the reader: in the palace, in the far future, among the stars, in history, in exotic lands. Every literary genre has its masterwork-ceiling, and kitsch, by a tactics of crude mimicry, pretends to have soared to such an altitude. Todorov, fettered by the immanence of his procedures, has deprived himself of any possibility of recognizing mimicry of values, and accordingly his implicit reader *must*, by dint of solemn exertions, see to it that the silliest twaddle about spirits sends chills up and down his spine. On pain of a structuralist curse he is forbidden to poke fun at such rubbish; since structuralism establishes absolute equality in literature, the right of citizenship which the text usurps for itself is a sacred thing.

A possible rejoinder at this point would be that idiotic stories are written for idiotic readers. And indeed, we observe this state of affairs in the book market, dominated by the laws of supply and demand. But this is not an extenuating circumstance for a theory of literature. A "theory" is synonymous with a generalization which applies without exception to all elements of the set under investigation. Since the structuralists' generalizations balk at applying thus, or, more precisely, because when they are made to apply thus everywhere they yield such nonsense as no advocate of the school would like to acknowledge (for *structural equivalence democratically places the counterfeit on an equal footing with the masterpiece*), the theoreticians carry out certain sleight-of-hand manipulations when they assemble their materials for public dissection. They place on their operating table, to wit, only what has already earned a respectable reputation in the history of literature, and they conjure away under the table works that are structurally of the same kinds but artistically trashy. They have to proceed thus, because their method impels them toward simple texts such as the detective story, their over-weening ambitions, on the other hand, toward celebrated works. (Kitsch, being subject to relativization in the process of reception, is not the structurally simplest case, for it *seeks* to be one thing and *is* in fact another; the detective story, on the other hand, devoid of pretensions, is decisionally unimodal.)

Now we can more readily understand the makeup of Todorov's bibliography, as to the names (Balzac, Poe, Gogol, Hoffmann, Kafka) and the works it includes. The theoretician has taken as his "sample" that which could not involve him in difficulties, since it had already passed its cultural screening examination and by that token could give him no trouble. A therapist, if he were to proceed analogously, would take as patients only robust convalescents. A physicist would test his theory only on facts that he knew beforehand would confirm it, carefully avoiding all others. Let us spare the structuralist the description which the philosophy of science would give to such a method of selecting "representative samples."

A theory of literature either embraces all works or it is no theory. A theory of works weeded out in advance by means beyond its compass constitutes not generalization but its contrary, that is particularization. One cannot when theorizing discriminate *beforehand* against a certain group of works, i.e. not bring them under the scope of analysis at all. A taxonomically oriented theory can set up a hierarchy in its subject matter, i.e. assign non-uniform values to the elements of the entire set under investigation, but it should do this openly, not on the sly, and throughout its whole domain, showing what sort of criteria it employs for making distinctions and how they perform their tasks of evaluation.

These obligations are binding not for humanistic studies alone. They stem from the set of directives to which all scientific cognition is subject. A zoologist cannot ignore cockroaches because they're such nasty little beasts, nor a cosmologist ignore the energy balance of quasars because it makes his calculations blow up in his face. The sleight-of-hand artist's activities are not always and everywhere admirable. So, we conclude, if structuralism desires to avoid expulsion from among the sciences, it must rebuild itself completely from the ground up, since in its present state it is—in the words of Pierre Bertaux—a procedure which from its point of departure in logic has strayed into useless mythology.

NOTES

¹Bertaux is a Germanist, and he published the article quoted, "Innovation als Prinzip," in German in the volume *Das 19. Jahrhundert* (Christian Wegner Verlag, 1969). —SL. The passage given in German in Dr. Lem's original text (from which the first sentence has been reduced to the bracketed phrase in our translation) reads as follows: "Unter 'Diagonalwissenschaften' (um den Ausdruck von Roger Caillos aufzunehmen) verstehe ich ungefähr das, was man auch 'formalistische' Wissenschaften nennt, also Disziplinen, deren Gebiet sich quer durch die herkömmlichen Fächer der Realwissenschaften zieht.... Eine Zeitlang hat man hoffen können, der Ansatz zu einer ähnlichen Formalisierung der Humanwissenschaften sei vom Strukturalismus zu erwarten. Leider sieht es heute aus, also ab gerade die lautesten Vertreter des Strukturalismus ihn zu einer Mythologie hätten entarten lassen—und nicht einmal zu einer brauchbaren. Das Gerede, das jetzt den Namen Strukturalismus trägt, hat den ursprünglich in ihm enthaltenen wissenschaftlichen Ansatz wahrscheinlich tödlich getroffen." —CN, RDM, DS.

²Translated by Richard Howard (Cleveland/London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University 1973) from *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (Editions du Seuil 1970). All quotations from Todorov are from the pages of this translation. —RDM.

Robert M. Philmus

Wells and Borges and the Labyrinths of Time

...and so on to the end, to the invisible end, through the tenuous labyrinths of time. —Borges (OI 119).¹

"For years I believed I had grown up in a suburb of Buenos Aires, a suburb of random streets and visible sunsets. What is certain is that I grew up in a garden, behind a forbidding gate, and in a library of limitless English books" (OC 4:9).² These words, which begin the Prologue to the second edition of *Evaristo Carriego* (1955), evoke, with characteristic concision, the universe of metaphors their author, Jorge Luis Borges, still inhabits. The geography is deliberately, symbolically, vague: Borges locates the garden and the library that created him indefinitely in a labyrinthine suburb of the Buenos Aires of visible sunsets whose relation to him he is perhaps no longer certain of, or

Very poor article
almost nothing in it abt
Wells, & the acct of Borges
is ridiculous

at least does not choose to define. Where he is definite, circumstantial, the details reveal one of those secret plots he delights in puzzling out, and perpetrating: the enclosed garden and the library of (ambiguously) infinite books appear in his parables as metaphors of the world. "The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries" wherein men seek, among a possibly infinite number of volumes, the one book which may contain their "Vindication" (L 51 ff).³ That model of man's perplexity, and of his extravagant futility, Borges offers in "The Library of Babel." In "The Wall and the Books" he suggests elaborate, tentative, and contradictory explanations of the metaphoric significance of "the two vast undertakings" of the emperor Shih Huang Ti, "the building of the almost infinite Chinese Wall" and "the burning of all the books that had been written before his time." The emperor may have begun these monstrous projects at the same time: the walling in of space and the incinerating of the past might have been "magic barriers to halt death" or to delimit the world so that all things might have "the names that befitted them."⁴ Perhaps the two acts "were not simultaneous," in which case possibly (since the one is destructive and the other creative) "the burning of the libraries and the building of the wall are operations that secretly nullify each other" (OI 1-2). Another of Borges' versions of this crepuscular analogy between the wall and the books, the garden and the library—a mysterious correspondence that is "trying to tell us something," or has "told us something we should not have missed," or is "about to tell us something" (OI 4; cp "Forms of a Legend," OI 157-62)—had appeared earlier, in "The Garden of the Forking Paths." There Borges postulates an identity the basis of which is a tautology: the infinite book and the labyrinthine garden nominally come together as *The Garden of the Forking Paths*, an imaginary novel by the hypothetical Ts'ui Pên predicated on the idea of time as a labyrinth.

Ts'ui Pên [says the sinologist Stephen Albert] must have said once: *I am withdrawing to write a book.* And another time: *I am withdrawing to construct a labyrinth.* Every one imagined two works; to no one did it occur that the book and maze were one and the same thing. The Pavilion of the Limpid Solitude stood in the center of a garden that was perhaps intricate; that circumstance could have suggested to the heirs a physical labyrinth. Ts'ui Pên died; no one in the vast territories that were his came upon the labyrinth; the confusion of...[his]...novel suggested to me that *it* was the maze. (L 25)

Ts'ui Pên conceived of a book whose labyrinthine structure depends on the notion of bifurcations in time. Stephen Albert gives an account of that book's mystery to Hu Tsun, a descendant of Ts'ui Pên and a man who, pursued as a spy for the Germans (the story is set during the First World War), has to elude capture temporarily and to communicate a military secret, conceived of a labyrinthine plan of evasion based on the bifurcations of space.⁶ At the center of that labyrinth, which is also a garden of forking paths,⁷ Yu Tsun's pursuer will discover the labyrinth-maker and his atrocious mystery, the murdered Stephen Albert, victim of Yu Tsun's monstrous and efficacious attempt to outwit the confines of space. The various labyrinths in the story—Ts'ui Pên's, Yu Tsun's, Borges's—fit each inside the next like a series of Chinese boxes; each is a garden of forking paths and a *Garden of Forking Paths*. The coincidence supposes a clandestine analogy, perhaps an identity; both the garden and library Borges has, as it were, created as models of

the labyrinths of space and time. Thus in saying "I grew up in a garden...and in a library" he is esoterically confessing himself to be the creature of his own creation. (The parable "Borges and I" sets out to distinguish between the two—"I live, let myself go on living, so that Borges may contrive his literature, and this literature justifies me"—but concludes in mock despair, "I do not know which of us has written this page" [L 246-47].)

The self-consciousness involved in portraying oneself as the creature of one's creation is baroque, the sort of self-consciousness Velásquez graphically epitomizes in his masterpiece *Las Meninas* (1656). The scene is the artist's studio. In the foreground the maids of honor assume various attitudes. On the rear wall hangs what at first looks like, but is too luminous to be, another of the many paintings adorning the room: it is a mirror reflecting two figures who do not otherwise appear in the "fictive" space of *Las Meninas*; they belong to the "reality" outside the spatial limits of the canvas. All the same, the presence of their mirror images has the intellectual effect of confounding any nice discrimination of art from life, a confusion Velasquez deliberately intensifies by placing the mirror symmetrically in balance with a door opening on interior space also outside the confines of the space depicted (the symmetry calls attention to this baroque analogy between mirror and door). Initially, the maids of honor detract from the viewer's perception of the artist who stands self-deprecatingly to one side, in partial obscurity, poised with brush and palette before a canvas whose dimensions, it can be inferred, are similar to those of *Las Meninas* itself. This artist, of course, is Velasquez, who has portrayed himself in the act of painting *Las Meninas* from a different angle.⁸

Las Meninas is a compendium of baroque predilections and conceits: the fondness for paradox (which the mirror of art and life typifies); the metaphysical tricks of perspective and point of view (illustrated by the divergent angle of vision of the Velasquez who depicts himself vis-à-vis the self-portrait within *Las Meninas*); the tendency towards infinite regress (consciousness of being self-conscious...*ad infinitum*—perhaps in the *Meninas*-within-*Las Meninas* there is another self-portrait of Velasquez delineating the maids of honor from yet another angle).

Borges shares this baroque fascination with paradoxes, metaphysical games, and infinite progressions and regresses. He titles one essay "A History of Eternity," another "A New Refutation of Time." He defends Berkeleyan idealism and also quotes with relish, twice, Hume's dictum that "Berkeley's arguments do not admit of the slightest refutation nor do they produce the slightest conviction" (OC 6:67, and L 8). He returns again and again to the paradoxes of Zeno the Eleatic and cognate *regressus in infinitum*.⁹ And in his formulation of some thoughts provoked by the *Quixote*, paradox, metaphysical speculation, and the idea of an infinite series converge:

Why does it make us uneasy to know that the map is within the map [a reference to Josiah Royce's *The World and the Individual*] and the thousand and one nights are within the book of *A Thousand and One Nights*? Why does it disquiet us to know that Don Quixote is a reader of the *Quixote*, and Hamlet is a spectator of *Hamlet*? I believe I have found the answer: those inversions suggest that if the characters in a story can be readers or spectators, then we, their readers or spectators, can be fictitious. In 1833 Carlyle observed that universal history is an infinite sacred book that all men write and read and try to understand, and in which they too are written. (OI 48)

The dreamer who is himself dreamt (in "The Circular Ruins") and the chess player who is a pawn in the hands of gods who are pawns in the hands of higher gods (in the poem "Chess") afford Borges other metaphoric disguises for similar metaphysical paradoxes.

His ultimate theme—perhaps the logical consequence of the tendency of baroque self-consciousness towards self-irony—is self-betrayal. Nils Runeberg finally concludes that God "was Judas" ("Three Versions of Judas"). Of Donne's *Biathanatos* Borges writes:

Christ died a voluntary death, Donne suggests, implying that the elements and the world and the generations of men and Egypt and Rome and Babylon and Judah were drawn from nothingness to destroy Him. Perhaps iron was created for the nails, thorns for the crown of mockery, and blood and water for the wound. That baroque idea is perceived beneath the *Biathanatos*—the idea of a god who fabricates the universe in order to fabricate his scaffold. (OI 96).

The detective Erik Lönnrot infers from what he believes to have been three murders the existence of a cabalistic pattern analogous to the tetragrammaton, the hidden name of God; he arrives at the point of the compass where he calculates the fourth and last murder will occur and finds that he is the victim of the homicidal labyrinth he has imagined; the name of the murderer (which, redundantly enough, is Red Scharlach) secretly corresponds to his own¹⁰ ("Death and the Compass"). And Borges himself, having attempted to demonstrate the factitiousness, or at least ideality, of space, time, and the self, eventually must admit,

And yet, and yet—To deny temporal succession, to deny the ego, to deny the astronomical universe, are apparent desperations and secret assuagements. Our destiny (unlike the hell of Swedenborg and the hell of Tibetan mythology) is not horrible because of its unreality; it is horrible because it is irreversible and iron-bound. Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river that carries me away, but I am the river; it is a tiger that mangles me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire that consumes me, but I am the fire. The world, alas, is real; I, alas, am Borges. (OI 197)

For Borges, "universal history," the history of all men and of one man, is the history of the human mind, lost in the labyrinths of time, conceiving labyrinths of vast simplicity wherein to betray itself.¹¹

IN AN ESSAY ON KAFKA, Borges remarks that "Every writer creates his precursors"; by way of explaining this paradox, he adds:

If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous selections I have mentioned [Zeno, Kierkegaard, *et cetera*] resemble each other, and this fact is the significant one. Kafka's idiosyncrasy, in greater or lesser degree, is present in each of these writings, but if Kafka had not written we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist. (OI 113)

Some of the authors Borges has talked about, most of whom he read in his paternal grandmother's library of "limitless English books,"¹² are his precursors in this sense: among them, the Hawthorne of "Earth's Holocaust"

and perhaps "Wakefield," but not the Hawthorne who imagined a utopian "celestial railroad" that goes to hell (OI 56-62). Stevenson in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Kipling, the writer of short stories, especially in *The Finest Story in the World* and *Many Inventions* (OC 6:73n); Oscar Wilde (OI 83-85), a translation of whose *The Happy Prince* was Borges' first published work; and G.K. Chesterton (OI 86-89). In that sense Poe is perhaps not a precursor (though he is more interested in the mere effect of a bizarre idea than is Borges) and H.G. Wells is certainly not.¹³ His repeated praise of Wells notwithstanding, Borges has not "created" him as he has, for example, "created" the Chesterton he describes as "a *monstrorum artifex*":

In my opinion, Chesterton would not have tolerated the imputation of being a contriver of nightmares..., but he tends inevitably to revert to atrocious observations. He asks if perchance a man has three eyes, or a bird three wings; in opposition to the pantheists, he speaks of a man who dies and discovers in paradise that the spirits of the angelic choirs have, every one of them, the same face he has; he speaks of a jail of mirrors; of a labyrinth without a center; of a man devoured by metal automatons; of a tree that devours birds and then grows feathers instead of leaves; he imagines (*The Man Who Was Thursday*, VI) "that if a man went westward to the end of the world he would find something—say a tree—that was more or less than a tree, a tree possessed by a spirit; and that if he went east to the end of the world he would find something else that was not wholly itself—a tower, perhaps, of which the very shape was wicked." (OI 87)

Here Borges, by enlarging details out of all proportion to their original context, has perceived an image of Chesterton that, as he admits, Chesterton himself would not have recognized. On the contrary, the Wells of the "scientific romances" (Wells's term) is recognizable even in the slightest circumstance Borges singles out. His remark, "the conventicle of seated monsters who mouth a servile creed in their night is the Vatican and is Lhasa," accords with Wells's own summation of *The Island of Dr. Moreau* as a "theological grotesque".¹⁴ Wells's parable of a man who, as a consequence of the most banal oversight, must dissipate his godlike power of invisibility in futilely trying to satisfy the most basic animal demands encompasses the significance Borges discovers in a minute detail: "The harassed invisible man who has to sleep as though his eyes were wide open because his eyelids do not exclude light is our solitude and our terror." (OI 91).

Borges has recorded his admiration for:

The Time Machine, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *The Plattner Story*, *The First Men in the Moon*. They are the first books I read; perhaps they will be the last. I think they will be incorporated, like the fables of Theseus or Ahasuerus, into the general memory of the species and even transcend the fame of their creator or the extinction of the language in which they were written. (OI 92)

He has acknowledged his specific debt to Wells's short story "The Crystal Egg" as the inspiration for "The Aleph" and "The Zahir."¹⁵ Other "inventions" of Wells's (Wells's term again), most of which Borges never mentions, further evidence their mutual attraction for "atrocious miracles": the vampiric plant in "The Strange Orchid"; an imperishable Apple of Knowledge, obtained acci-

trible story

dentally, which cannot be located again after it has been carelessly thrown away ("The Apple"); the fanatic barbarian who sacrifices another, and then himself, to the dynamo he worships ("The Lord of the Dynamos"); a country whose topography its congenitally blind inhabitants know so well they can move through their world as if they could see ("The Country of the Blind"); eyes whose field of vision is geographically antipodal to the body they belong to ("The Story of Davidson's Eyes"); a man who returns from somewhere that is Nowhere or hell "inverted, just as a reflection returns from a mirror" ("The Plattner Story").¹⁷ Although Wells as a writer of science fiction is far more neo-gothic than baroque, Borges does not have to "create" him as his precursor: the disposition they share to pursue rigorously the "opposite idea,"¹⁸ the conception they both have of fantasy as a mode of subversion, establishes the basis of their affinity.

Only in what he says about *The Time Machine* does Borges come close to refashioning Wells. The Time Traveller, he asserts, "returns tired, dusty, and shaken from a remote humanity that has divided into species who hate each other...He returns with his hair grown gray and brings with him a wilted flower from the future...More incredible than a celestial flower or the flower of a dream is the flower of the future, the unlikely flower whose atoms now occupy other spaces and have not yet been assembled" (OI 10). Wells's is a parable of guarded hope (in an early published draft the Time Traveller confronts the "Coming Beast"¹⁹ in the one hundred and twenty-first century; in the final version that encounter is postponed still further): the future is real, possibly catastrophic, but not beyond redemption; this is the testimony the flower of the future mutely offers. Borges, on the contrary, seems to regard that flower as a hieroglyphic of despair: the future is already inexorably configured in the particulate structure of present time, what will happen is already destiny.²⁰ What for Wells is an obvious application of the theory underlying time travel—a man who can journey into the future can also come back, into the past as it were, with a flower from that future age²¹—Borges transforms into the metaphysical paradox of a future coexisting with the present.

Borges inverts the significance of the flower of the future by not assuming, as Wells does, that time is a function of space. That assumption is of course the ground of the Traveller's demonstration in the opening chapter of *The Time Machine*. Time, he argues, constitutes a Fourth Dimension; that is to say, "Time is only a kind of Space."²² To define time as a variable and space as the constant obviates any philosophical paradox: the flower then occupies the same space at two different times; space in that view, is continuous, and in that sense retains its identity through time—a proposition which, while it is vulnerable to theoretical objections of the sort Borges raises in citing Heraclitus' "You will not go down twice to the same river,"²³ is hardly startling to common sense. However, by reversing the subordination, by supposing, as Borges does, that space is "an episode of time" (OC 6:43), a paradox, symbolized by the flower, does emerge: the basis of the flower's self-identity then becomes the identity of time, the contemporaneousness, so to speak, of present and future.

THE ESSAY WHEREIN BORGES ADVANCES his notion of space as an episode of time, an essay entitled "The Penultimate Version of Reality" (1928), clarifies the central but usually implicit, postulate of his fictions. In that discussion Borges avers an "opposition between the two incontestable concepts of space and time" to be delusory—notwithstanding the illustriousness of some of its proponents, such as "Spinoza, who gave his undifferentiated deity—

Deus sive Natura—the attributes of thought, that is consciousness of time, and extension, that is [consciousness] of space." "According to a thoroughgoing idealism, space is nothing but one of the constitutive patterns in the replete flux of time"; it is "situated in [time] and not vice-versa." Moreover,

space is an accident in time and not, as Kant posited, a universal modality of intuition. There are whole provinces of Being that do not require it: those of olfaction and hearing. Spencer, in his critical examination of the arguments of metaphysicians (*Principles of Psychology*, VII, iv) has elucidated that [notion of] independence and also reinforces it with this reduction to absurdity: "Whoever thinks that smell and sound implicate space as intuitive concept can easily convince himself of his error simply by [attempting to] seize the right or left side of a sound or by trying to imagine a color in reverse." (OC 6:42-43)

The consequence Borges deduces from this reasoning is that a belief in the reality of space can be dispensed with: without spatial referents, without an awareness of corporeality, humanity would still continue "to weave its history" (OC 6:44). Time alone is the universal substratum of perception.

Borges's conception of space accounts for, and perhaps also reflects, his mature concern for geography only as the geometry of space.²⁴ "Death and the Compass" (1942) is an instance where this is clearly the case. Less obviously in a story like "The Immortal" (1947) the cartographical details conform to a geometrical pattern. The antiquary Joseph Cartophilus, a manuscript of whose history is found in his copy of Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, begins his quest for immortality in Berenice, a seaport in Eritrea, as the Roman tribune Marcus Flaminius Rufus, and recovers the mortality he longs for "in a port on the Eritrean coast" the name of which Borges ostentatiously withholds.²⁵ The circularity of the geography is thus an objective correlative of the circularity of the immortal's search.²⁶

That image of eternal recurrence, in "The Immortal" as in "A New Refutation of Time" (1944, 1946), represents a negation of time. Such a repudiation may afford the *ultimate* version of reality; at least Borges sees it as the final, perhaps logically inevitable, extension of idealist philosophy.²⁷ Its paradoxical consequences he adumbrates in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," an encyclopedic account of a world that mirrors, that is inverts, the model of the universe philosophic materialism proposes (the story opens, "I owe the discovery of Uqbar to the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopedia" [L 3]).

The inhabitants of Tlön are "congenitally idealist":

the men of this planet conceive the universe as a series of mental processes which do not develop in space but successively in time. Spinoza ascribes to his inexhaustible divinity the attributes of extension and thought; no one in Tlön would understand the juxtaposition of the first (which is typical only of certain states) and the second—which is a perfect synonym of the cosmos. In other words, they do not conceive that the spatial persists in time. The perception of a cloud of smoke on the horizon and then of the burning field and then of the half-extinguished cigarette that produced the blaze is considered an example of [the] association of ideas. (L9)

Here the equivalent of the Eleatic paradoxes, which call into question the (orthodox) spatial continuum by assuming the infinitesimal divisibility of infi-

nite time as a series of discrete moments, is "the sophism of the nine copper coins," which insinuates the (in Tlön, paradoxical) existence of spatial continuity as the ideational adjunct of temporal continuity. To obviate the need for supposing what would subvert idealism—that it is possible for Y and Z to find certain coins that X lost at a previous time because space does persist in time independent of its being perceived—one of the philosophers of Tlön formulates "a very daring hypothesis":

This happy conjecture affirmed that there is only one subject, that this indivisible subject is every being in the universe and that these beings are the organs and masks of the divinity. X is Y and is Z. Z discovers three coins because he remembers that X lost them; X finds two in the corridor because he remembers that the others have been found...The Eleventh Volume [of *A First Encyclopedia of Tlön*] suggests that three prime reasons determined the complete victory of this idealist pantheism. The first, its repudiation of solipsism; the second, the possibility of preserving the psychological basis of the sciences; the third, the possibility of preserving the cult of the gods. (L 12).

In other words, the solution to the paradox of the coins postulates the unitary nature of mind.

Gradually it becomes apparent that Tlön is a world in the flux of time, an amorphous world in the process of conforming to the full implications of its idealist premises. Gradually it becomes apparent that the incidental details of Borges's fiction reflect that process (the words *descubrimiento* and *descubrir*, meaning *discovery* and *to discover*, recur frequently in the story; the conversation at the outset that leads to the "discovery" of Tlön concerns "a novel in the first person, whose narrator would omit or disfigure the facts and indulge in various contradictions which would permit a few readers—very few readers—to [divine] an atrocious or banal reality" [L 2]). The intellectual *voyage imaginaire* in search of Tlön begins with Bioy Casares' putative discovery of certain pages in Volume XVI of the 1917 edition of what is "fallaciously called" *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia*, pages which appear in some copies of that book (at least in one) but not in others. Later, following the demise of one Herbert Ashe, a Volume XI of the *First Encyclopedia of Tlön* adventitiously comes into Borges's possession. Its contradictions, when one considers the "lucid and exact...order observed in it" (L 8), constitute a proof that companion volumes must exist. In a postscript it is revealed that forty volumes of the encyclopedia were subsequently located "in a Memphis library" (L 17). The postscript also confirms the existence of a vast and labyrinthine conspiracy to disintegrate this world by perpetuating and spreading the habits of thought of an "imaginary planet": "The World," Borges asseverates, "will be Tlön" (L 17-18).

The facts admit, indeed demand, something more than this credulous and literal rehearsal of them. A careful examination of other details of Borges's account discloses their true and clandestine meaning. The discovery of Tlön begins on the revelation that certain pages occur in some copies of a particular book but not in all; later it is learned that the encyclopedia of Tlön has, as it were, disappeared at times. Those details call to mind Ts'ui Pên's delphic clue to his labyrinth—"I leave to various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths" (L 25, 26)—and with it his idealist conception of the multiplicity of time. The article purportedly contained in Volume XVI of *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* deals with Uqbar and supplies "fourteen names" as its

geographical coordinates; a note to "The House of Asterion" alleges that "as used by Asterion" this number stands for infinity (L 4-5, 138). The language of Tlön, in accord with idealist thought, excludes all substantives: "The moon rose above the river" is *hlör u fang axaxaxas mlö*, or literally; 'upward behind the onstreaming it mooned' " (L 8); *Axaxaxas mlö* is the title of a book in one "of the many hexagons of my administration" (L 57) in "The Library of Babel." A Princess Faucigny Lucinge figures in the postscript to "Tlön" in connection with a compass; in "The Immortal" Joseph Cartophilus offers "the Princess of Lucinge the six volumes...of Pope's *Iliad*" (L 105). The elusive pages of *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* inform its readers "that the literature of Uqbar was one of fantasy and that its epics and legends never referred to reality, but to the two imaginary regions of Mlejnas and Tlön" (L 5). The allusive pages of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" insinuate that Borges's fictions comprise the definitive encyclopedia of Tlön.

The World of Borges's fictions generally, like the world of Tlön, is a predicate of idealist philosophy, which premises that nothing exists independently of perception. But if space does not exist outside the human mind, then the perceptions the mind has when waking and visions arising in a dream become indistinguishable from one another. It becomes as impossible to differentiate the imaginary Uqbar from the real world as it is to differentiate Uqbar from Tlön, the fantasy from the fantasy-within-a-fantasy. (Borges illustrates this point elsewhere with the parabolic anecdote about a certain Chuang Tzu who "dreamed that he was a butterfly and when he awakened... did not know if he was a man who had dreamed he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming it was a man" [OI 194]). The confusion of real with imaginary names which proliferates in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and everywhere else in Borges's fantasies in another deliberate example of this consequence.

To suppose that time as well as space is not absolute means to relinquish the temporal coordinates of individual identity. In a world where space is merely a perception, during Chuang Tzu's dream "he was a butterfly" (OI 195). In a world where time is merely a sense of time, whoever dreams he is Chuang Tzu dreaming he is a butterfly—at that moment, which is identical with the moment of Chuang Tzu's dream, he is Chuang Tzu. Any chronological determination to the contrary, inasmuch as it belongs to the realm of absolute time, is inadmissible. For similar reasons, the man who imagines he is immortal is immortal; if he chooses as well to think of himself as Homer, whom he conceives of as an almost speechless Troglodyte, then he is Homer; and Pierre Menard, the symbolist poet who undertakes to write *Don Quixote* without becoming Cervantes, has as good a claim to its authorship as Cervantes. These consequences inhere in the "idealist pantheism" of Tlön.²⁸

"Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" to some extent imitates an idealist universe: the unstated premise of the fiction posits the narrative order as the order of discovery; its narrative sequence, manifestly at variance with absolute chronology, supposedly follows exactly the sequence of the author's perception of events. The story abounds in accidents because causality requires space persist in time; in apparent irrelevancies because the sequence of human perceptions is not logical but random.

The idealist universe wherein a sense of time derives from a web of perceptions which contradict or coincide with or complement one another is a vertiginous universe of "divergent, convergent, and parallel times," a labyrinthine universe analogized as the Lottery of Babylon, which consigns identity to chance, or the Library of Babel, with its indefinite, perhaps infinite, number of books composed of all the possible combinations of orthographic

no

no

the
other
forms
(exc. "P
Menard")
which
yet been
with

symbols. These labyrinths the mind constructs are mirrors that reflect itself and also maps of the world.

"Work that endures..." Borges asserts, "is a mirror that reflects the reader's own traits and...is also a map of the world." He speaks of Wells's enduring legacy as a "vast and diversified library": "he chronicled the past, chronicled the future, recorded real and imaginary lives" (OI 91, 92). His metaphor suggests that Borges identifies this "vast and diversified library" of fantastic books in which Wells plausibly traces the absurd consequences of an idea, with the "library of limitless English books" in which Borges himself has sought a model of the universe.

NOTES

¹OI 119 = *Other Inquisitions*, tr. Ruth L.C. Simms (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 119.

²OC 4:9 = *Obras Completas*, 10 volumes (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1953-1967), Volume 4, Page 9. All citations from this source are in my own translation from the Spanish. (Despite the title, this edition, by his own choice, does not include the complete work of Borges.)

³L 51 = *Labyrinths*, ed. and tr. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 51.

⁴For clarification of this idea about the names of things, see my essay, "Swift, Gulliver, and 'The Thing Which Was Not,'" *ELH* 38(1971):62-79.

⁵Alexander Pope, whom Borges quotes in the epigraph of his essay, takes "Chi Ho-am-ti" (Pope's spelling) to have been simply one more enemy of learning (the Queen of Dulness praises him in *The Dunciad* §3:75-78).

⁶In "The Wall and the Books" another of Borges' speculations is that Shih Huang Ti undertook the building of the wall so that a future emperor would "destroy the wall, as I have destroyed the books, and he will erase my memory and will be my shadow and my mirror and will not know it" (OI 2). Shih Huang Ti himself, in burning the books, would, according to this baroque notion, be just such a shadow and a mirror of "that legendary Huang Ti, the emperor who invented writing" (OI 2). Similarly, Yu Tsun is the negation (shadow) and inversion (mirror) of his ancestor Ts'ui Pên, of whom Yu Tsun says, "The hand of a stranger murdered him" (L 23).

⁷The labyrinthine nature of Yu Tsun's journey to Stephen Albert's becomes explicit as Yu Tsun reflects on the unsolicited directions given him at the Ashgrove railroad station: "The instructions to turn always to the left reminded me that such was the common procedure for discovering the central point of certain labyrinths" (L 22). A road that "forked among the now confused meadows" takes him to the "rusty gate" which opens on Stephen Albert's garden: "Between the iron bars I made out a poplar grove and a pavilion" (L 23)—suggesting Ts'ui Pên's "Pavilion of the Limpid Solitude." Thus, Borges insinuates, *The Garden of the Forking Paths* and the Garden of the Forking Paths converge at the center of Yu Tsun's labyrinth—a spatial correlative to Ts'ui Pên's idea of "an infinite series of times...divergent, convergent and parallel" (I. 28).

⁸In *The Structure of Spanish History*, trans. Edmund L. King (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 236, 662, Américo Castro connects some of these features of *Las Meninas* with those observable in Spanish literature of the Golden Age, especially in the *Quixote*. See also Wylie Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), pp. 171-172.

⁹In "La perpetua carrera de Aquiles y la tortuga" and "Avatares de la

tortuga" in *Discusión* (with the second essay also in OI), "Kafka and his Precursors" in OI, and "Tlón, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" in *Ficciones*. There is also an allusion to Zeno in "The Lottery of Babylon" (L 34).

¹⁰Borges himself makes this point in his notes to *The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969*, ed. and tr. Norman Thomas di Giovanni ["in collaboration with the author"] (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), p. 269: "The Killer and the slain, whose minds work the same way, may be the same man. Lönnrot is not an unbelievable fool walking into his own death trap but, in a symbolic way, a man committing suicide. This is hinted at by the similarity of their [sic] names. The end syllable of Lönnrot means red in German, and Red Scharlach is also translatable, in [sic] German, as Red Scarlet."

¹¹The Borgesian notion of universal history as the history of all men and of one man is implicit in many of his writings, particularly in "The God's Script," "The Immortal," and "Pascal's Sphere." The last begins: "Perhaps universal history is the history of a few metaphors" (OI 5); a corollary of this notion can be found in "The Wall and the Books," where Borges defines "sacred books" as those "that teach what the whole universe of each man's conscience teaches" (OI 3). Here and in the discussion above of Borges's baroque qualities I have made no attempt to exhaust the possible examples.

¹²Along with his grandmother's books Borges seems to have inherited her idiosyncratic taste in literature. In "An Autobiographical Essay" (*The Aleph and Other Stories*, p. 206) he recalls: "When she was over eighty, people used to say, in order to be nice to her, that nowadays there were no writers who could vie with Dickens and Thackeray. My grandmother would answer, 'On the whole, I rather prefer Arnold Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells.'"

¹³Ronald J. Christ, in *The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Illusion* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1969), maintains that the "authors who really influence [Borges's] work, the reflection of whose writing can be seen in his fiction, are Chesterton, Wells, and Kipling" (p. 43). Of the three, Christ focuses mainly on Wells (e.g., on pp. 144-45, 164-65); he also makes a convincing case for an affinity between Borges and De Quincey (pp. 148-210).

¹⁴*Preface to The Island of Dr. Moreau* in *Works* (The Atlantic Edition), 28 volumes (New York: Scribner's and London: Dent, 1924-1927), 2:ix.

¹⁵Epilogue to *El Aleph* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1968), p. 198.

¹⁶This phrase, quoted from "The First Wells" (OI 92), originally occurs in a review Borges reprints in *Discusión*, where he speaks of Wells as the "ancient [in the sense of ageless] narrator of atrocious miracles: that of the voyager who brings back from the future a wilted flower; of the Beast Men who gabble a servile creed in the night; of a traitor who flees from the moon" (OC 6:164-65).

¹⁷*Works* (see Note 14), 1:434. The same story contains this hellish speculation: "It may be...that, when our life has closed, when evil or good is no longer a choice for us, we may still have to witness the working out of the train of consequences we have laid" (1:445).

¹⁸Wells uses this term in his essay "Zoological Retrogression," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 271 (Sept. 7, 1891):246.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 253.

²⁰Compare Yu Tsun's precept: "The executor of an atrocious undertaking ought to imagine that he has already accomplished it, ought to impose upon himself a future as irrevocable as the past" (L 22).

²¹"The Flower of Caleridge" goes on to give a brief account of Henry James's *Sense of the Past*, where "The cause follows the effect, the reason for his [Pendrel's] journey is one of the consequences of the journey."

Borges finds this "an incomparable *regressus in infinitum*" (OI 11)—that is, the future determines the past, which determines the future, and so on. Could he be hinting, by his juxtaposition, that he perceives this regress in embryo in *The Time Machine* (see OI 11, Note 2), where, as it were, the present identity of the Traveller is dependent on the future?

²²*The Time Machine, Works* (see Note 14), 1:5. For a further analysis of how the Fourth Dimension functions in *The Time Machine*, see my essay "The Time Machine: or, The Fourth Dimension as Prophecy," *PMLA* 84(1969): 530-35.

²³"A New Refutation...." OI 187: "I admire his [Heraclitus'] dialectic skill, because the facility with which we accept the first meaning ('the river is different') clandestinely imposes the second one ('I am different')."

²⁴Compare this sentence from "The Man on the Threshold": "The exact geography of the facts I am going to report is of very little importance" (OC 7:143). The abstractness of space in Borges's fictions undoubtedly has something to do with his congenitally bad eyesight. Compare T.S. Eliot's discussion of Milton's "auditory imagination" in his first essay on that poet, in *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), p. 157 ff. I speak of Borges's mature concern for the geometry of space because in his early work, "in books now happily forgotten, I tried to copy down the flavor, the essence of the outlying suburbs of Buenos Aires" ("The Argentine Writer and Tradition," L 181).

²⁵Borges's footnote at this point in the text says, "There is an erasure in the manuscript; perhaps the name of the port has been removed" (L 116).

²⁶Compare L.A. Murillo, *The Cyclical Night: Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 237-238.

²⁷See "A New Refutation...." OI 186-87.

²⁸"Today, one of the churches of Tlön platonically maintains that...All men, in a vertiginous moment of coitus, are the same man. All men who repeat a line from Shakespeare are William Shakespeare" (L 12n).

Robert H. Canary

Utopian and Fantastic Dualities in Robert Graves's *Watch the North Wind Rise*

For nearly sixty years Robert Graves has thought of himself as primarily a poet; for nearly thirty years, he has publicly identified himself as a poet-servant of the eternal Muse, the White Goddess worshipped under many names in antiquity. But Graves is more familiar to the reading public as the author of historical novels like *I, Claudius* (1934) and of the classic autobiography of World War I, *Good-bye to All That* (1929). Some critics have argued that Graves' prose works deserve as much serious consideration as his poetry, but little has been done; especially surprising is the general neglect of *Watch the North Wind Rise* (1949), a utopian novel about a future society which has returned to the worship of the Goddess.¹ I would like to suggest that the framework of this novel exhibits a duality characteristic of the genre of the "fantastic," that it provides an example of the way in

which similar dualities may be found in utopian works, and that it is the very existence of such dualities which makes this novel a satisfactory vehicle for Graves's reflections on the nature of poetry, the Muse, and the women in whom she is seen incarnate.

The term "fantastic" here is taken from Todorov, who sees the genre as defined by the reader's hesitation between a natural and a supernatural explanation for the events he observes; the fantastic is thus midway between the uncanny and the marvellous (which is often called "fantasy").² *Watch the North Wind Rise* begins with the protagonist summoned into the future by the poet-magicians of New Crete and ends when he recovers consciousness to find himself naked outside his own door back on the night on which he had left. The dream journey can be explained either by magic or by sleepwalking. The protagonist is an English poet, Edward Venn-Thomas, who might naturally dream of a utopia managed by poets; on the other hand, Venn-Thomas professes to be convinced of the reality of the journey—and Graves, his creator, had recently published a long work testifying to the historical power of the Goddess, *The White Goddess* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).

Traditional tales of the fantastic have been situated within known history; alternative worlds have usually been thought of as giving complete allegiance to natural laws (science fiction) or as openly allowing for the supernatural (fantasy, fairy tale). Although set in a future alternative world, *Watch the North Wind Rise* maintains a certain tension between natural and supernatural explanations for what Venn-Thomas sees in New Crete, as well as for the dream-journey which takes him there. The poet-magicians who have summoned him believe implicitly in their own magic powers, but the magic which Venn-Thomas actually observes is explainable in terms of psychological suggestion and common sense; Venn-Thomas himself, as a poet, is a member of the magician caste and can work some minor feats of suggestion, which he regards with suitable skepticism: "If one used the right formula, the commons could be hypnotized into doing any ridiculous thing" (§22). Venn-Thomas meets the Goddess herself, incarnate in an old crone and perhaps in other forms as well, but the possibility that these are merely mortal women remains open. His attitude toward her worship remains ambivalent: "Such fantastic ingenuousness of faith! Yet, without such ingenuousness, what strength had religion?" (§19). On balance, Venn-Thomas seems to believe in the Goddess, but the reader is not required to do so.

IT MIGHT BE THOUGHT THAT the uncertainties of the fantastic would be incompatible with the demands of utopia as a literary genre, for the latter would seem to call for an ideal society constructed within the realm of natural possibility. But utopias have always been both "the good place" and "no place," and few literary utopias of any merit have failed to deal in some fashion with the obvious question of whether the ideal proposed is a possible one for natural men. Even in B.F. Skinner's positivist, small-scale, contemporary utopia, *Walden Two* (1948), the author has his protagonist wonder whether the utopian community's success derives from its principles or from the temporary influence of a charismatic founder.

The existence of such hesitations between the possible and impossible is, in fact, one of many such dualities in utopias, which cannot be reduced to mere blueprints for attainable social reforms. While sketching one possible ideal society, literary utopias also serve as criticisms of the author's own