

BORGES, SIR THOMAS BROWNE AND THE THEME OF METEMPSYCHOSIS

THE themes of metempsychosis and immortality occur frequently in Browne's work. Borges' allusions to Sir Thomas Browne emphasise precisely this unity of mind between the two men, and hence illuminate the ideas of metempsychosis and immortality and the related theme of the universal author in Borges' own work.

Sir Thomas Browne was a major influence on Borges in his youth. In 1925 Borges published an article in *Inquisiciones* entitled "Sir Thomas Browne".¹ His continued interest in Browne is shown by many references in his work.² The best known is no doubt that at the end of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius".³ He also, along with Bioy Casares, translated the fifth chapter of Browne's *Hydriotaphia*, and their sympathy with this chapter extended to them adding a paragraph of their own creation.⁴ There is also a great similarity between the subject matter of Borges' *El libro de seres imaginarios* and much of Browne's subject matter, especially in the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. For instance, both Browne and Borges deal with the nature of the mandrake, the griffin, the salamander, the pelican, the basilisk, harpies, the borometz, the anfibena, the dragon, the unicorn, and the phoenix. Furthermore, at one point Borges paraphrases a passage from Browne's book. In the section entitled "La mandrágora" he writes "Pitágoras la llamó 'antropomorfa'; el agrónomo latino Lucio Columela, 'semi-homo', y Alberto Magno pudo escribir que las Mandrágoras figuran la humanidad con la distinción de los sexos."⁵ This is a paraphrase of Browne's words: "So we may admit of the epiphyte of Pythagoras who calls it Anthropomorphus, and that of Columella, who represents a man. Thus is Albertus to be received when he affirmeth that Mandrakes represent mankind, with the distinction of either sex."⁶ Borges does not acknowledge this debt, but he does point the reader in the right direction. Later in the section he writes: "Brown (*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, 1646) habla de la grasa de los ahorcados."⁷ This refers to Browne's words: "That it naturally groweth under gallowses and places of execution, arising from fat or urine that drops from the body of the dead."⁸

Most of the criticism referring to the influence of Browne on Borges has been restricted to a few references, paragraphs or pages (mostly on the reference to *Urn Burial* at the end of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius") in articles or books that are mainly concerned with other subjects. The salient exceptions to this are Ronald Christ, who gives Browne a fuller treatment in *The Narrow Act*, and an eight-page article by David Newton De Molina entitled "A Note on Sir Thomas Browne and Jorge Luis Borges".⁹ The greater part of De Molina's essay is devoted to arguing

that Borges' use of the metaphors of the infinite sphere, the world as a book, the world as a sacred cryptogram and the idea that the divine image is present in man is similar to Browne's use of them. Ronald Christ offers a much more interesting analysis of the influence of Sir Thomas Browne on Borges and he examines several allusions to Browne in Borges' work. I have further examined in detail allusions by Borges to Browne's *The Garden of Cyrus* in an article that relates the theme of allusion to the themes of the conflicting interpretation of language.¹⁰ Also I have examined the relationship of Browne's *Hydriotaphia* (or *Urn Burial*) to Borges' writing in an as yet unpublished article.

The idea of the universal author is expressed frequently in Borges' work. It encapsulates metempsychosis and immortality as they relate to literature in his work. As such it is used frequently, either explicitly or implicitly. In "La flor de Coleridge" Borges cites Valéry, Emerson and Shelley as having believed in the universal author. He quotes Emerson, who expresses the belief thus: "Diríase que una sola persona ha redactado cuantos libros hay en el mundo; tal unidad central hay en ellos que es innegable que son obra de un solo caballero omnisciente."¹¹ The idea of the universal author has been present since *Inquisiciones*. In "La nadería de la personalidad" he wrote:

Quiero abatir la excepcional preeminencia que hoy suele adjudicarse al yo; empeño a cuya realización me espolea una certidumbre firmísima, y no el capricho de ejecutar una zalagarda ideológica o atolondrada travesura del intelecto. Pienso probar que la personalidad es una trasañación, consentida por el engrعيمiento y el hábito, mas sin estribaderas metafísicas ni realidad entrañal. Quiero aplicar, por ende, a la literatura las consecuencias dimanantes de esas premisas, y levantar sobre ellas una estética, hóstil al psicologismo que nos dejó el siglo pasado, afecta a los clásicos y empero alentadora de las más discolas tendencias de hoy. (p. 84)

Here we can see that the idea of the universal author has been based on the idea of the non-existence of the "yo". We can also see that Borges' reason for insisting on the non-existence of the "yo" and the insignificance of personality was literary. That his reason for insisting on the non-existence of the *authorial* "yo" should also be literary does not surprise us.

The idea of the non-existence of the "yo" allows Borges to take on multiple personae with which to pursue his literary ends. Borges knew very well that one of the biographical facts his readers would learn was that he was blind. He exploits this by creating for himself a persona in which it takes on poetic significance. The antithetical nature of the concept of the librarian that is blind seems to delight him. He writes of:

la maestría
De Dios, que con magnífica ironía
Me dio a la vez los libros y la noche.¹²

He plays on the idea that a man can think better if he cannot see, because he will not be distracted by the world. His illustrious predecessor is Democritus. He writes:

Demócrito de Abdera se arrancó los ojos para pensar;
el tiempo ha sido mi Demócrito.¹³

However, perhaps the most important role that his blindness plays in the creation of his persona is that it allows him to compare himself to Homer. *El hacedor* is the title to the collection that Borges has called his most personal. The first piece in that collection is also called "El hacedor", and it is ostensibly about Homer.¹⁴

However, the word "hacedor" refers to the Greek word for the poet, or maker. The whole collection, Borges' most personal collection, can be thought of as being about Borges himself as a maker or a poet. The title piece itself explores the relationship between the life and art of the imagined Homer. The dagger which the young Homer is given is, however, rather reminiscent of the daggers which fed Borges' own childhood imagination. This piece is as much about the relationship between the life and art of Borges himself. It also allows him to develop further the persona of the man and author who is no-one in himself, but all men and all authors. This, of course, is what Homer represents in "El inmortal".

The main representative of the universal author, the man who is all authors, in Borges' work, is the immortal of "El inmortal", who is Homer. As Ronald Christ puts it in *The Narrow Act*: "There is one immortal who is all the rest: the story's title is pointedly singular; Homer is the universal author" (p. 197). Christ continues:

Men are immortal then, like the rest of the universe [. . .] As Sir Thomas Browne writes in *Religio Medici*:

"For as though there were a Metempsychosis, and the soul of one man passed into another, Opinions do find, after certain Revolutions, men and minds like those that first begat them. To see ourselves again, we need not look for Plato's year; every man is not only himself; there hath been many Diogenes, and as many Timons, though but a few of that name: men are lived over again, the world is now as it was in Ages past; there was none then, but there hath been some one since that parallels him, and is, as it were, his revised self."¹⁵

In reflecting this passage in "El inmortal" Borges is alluding to Browne as one part of the universal author, a part that, like himself, is aware of his nature as a part of that whole. In "Los teólogos" also, Borges alludes to this same passage from Browne. The theme of metempsychosis is strongly present there too. It is implied that Euphorbo is reincarnated in Juan de Panonia and Juan de Panonia in Aureliano. The two stories also allude to the following two quotations: "According to the expression of the Indian burning himself at *Athens*, in his last words upon the pyre unto the amazed spectators, *Thus I make my selfe immortal.*" And: "Which might

make some content with a commutation of the time of their lives, and to commend the Fancy of the *Pythagorean* metempsychosis; whereby they might hope to enjoy this happiness in their third or fourth selves, and behold that in *Pythagoras*, which they now but foresee in *Eurphorbus*.”¹⁶ In “Los teólogos” Eurphorbus dies on a pyre saying “esto lo dije muchas veces”.¹⁷ He has existed many times, and he will exist many times more. He is later reincarnated in Juan de Panonia and Aureliano.

These themes of metempsychosis and immortality are very common in Browne’s work. For instance, in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* he writes: “For thus we read in Plato, that from the opinion of *Metempsychosis*, or transmigration of the soules of men into the bodies of beasts most suitable unto their humane condition, after his death, Orpheus the musician became a Swan.”¹⁸ And in *Religio Medici* he writes: “We do not comprehend their [the Angels’] natures, who retain the first definition of *Porphyry*, and distinguish them from our selves by immortality; for before his fall, man also was immortal.”¹⁹ Also the *Hydriotaphia* is very much concerned with the theme of immortality.

Another passage to which Borges alludes with his idea of the universal author is the following from *Hydriotaphia*; “A great part of Antiquity contented their hopes of subsistency with a transmigration of their souls. A good way to continue their memories, while having the advantage of plurall successions, they could not but act something remarkable in such variety of beings, and enjoying the fame of their passed selves, make accumulation of glory unto their last durations.”²⁰ The universal author has continued, as these men hoped to do, his memories from one life to the next, and has accumulated glory through the ages. Again a combination of the ideas of immortality and metempsychosis are involved.

The idea of the universal author and the notions of immortality and metempsychosis are also involved in the quotation from Francis Bacon at the beginning of “El inmortal”. Borges writes: “Salomon saith; *There is no new thing upon the earth*. So that as Plato had an imagination, *That all knowledge was but remembrance*; so Salomon giveth his sentence, *that all novelty is but oblivion*. Francis Bacon: *Essays LVIII*.”²¹ In *The Narrow Act* Ronald Christ rightly says of this epigraph: “Four authors – Plato, Solomon, Bacon, and Borges himself – are here made to collaborate in expressing the Eternal Return in an intellectual or mental sense. This apparent plurality of minds and demonstrable unity of statement in an allusive tissue is at once the theme and technique of the story [...]” (p. 193). Also (a fact that Christ does not mention) this is indeed a quotation from Bacon’s *Essay LVIII*, “Of Vicissitude of Things”.²² Bacon starts his essay with these words then continues: “Whereby you may see that the river of Lethe runneth as well above ground as below” (p. 168).

Borges is alluding to Bacon both in the use of the epigraph and in the use of the river of immortality; Bacon’s river of forgetfulness becomes

Borges' river of immortality. For the immortal something is new only if he had forgotten it ("ya no quedan imágenes del recuerdo") or as Salomon says, "all novelty is but oblivion".²³ However, Borges is also referring to Browne, and is pointing to the fact that Browne is also referring to Bacon, in his use of the epigraph. Browne starts the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* with the following words: "Would Truth dispense, we could be content, with Plato, that knowledge were Remembrance; that Intellectual acquisition were but Reminiscentiall evocation, and new impressions but the colouring of old stamps which stood pale in the soul before. For what is worse, knowledge is made by oblivion; and to purchase a clear and warrantable body of Truth, we must forget and part with much we know" (p. 1). The reference to Plato, and the words quoted by Plato, are there. So also is the idea that oblivion or forgetfulness is implied in everything we know. Ronald Christ's opinion about the relevance of the epigraph is reinforced. Browne is added as another member of the universal author.

However, the subtlety and complexity of the allusions contained in the epigraph is even greater. All three authors, Borges and Bacon through the epigraph, and Browne through the passage just quoted, also allude to the following passage from Plato: "Cebes rejoined: 'There is also another theory which, if true, points the same way, Socrates: that learning is really just recollection, from which it follows presumably that what we now call to mind we have learnt at some previous time.'"²⁴ The idea that Plato is a member of the universal author is reinforced. That Borges is indeed referring to this passage and to the fact that Bacon and Browne are also is made clear by the fact that the theme and even the title of his story echo the words almost immediately following these. Cebes continues: "Hence we seem to have another indication that the soul is something immortal."²⁵ This judgement is strengthened by other allusions to the previous chapter in the *Phaedo*. The passage just examined from the *Phaedo* is part of Chapter VII, which is titled: "A Complementary Argument. The Theory of Recollection." It is complementary to the previous chapter, which is "The first argument for immortality. The cycle of opposites". Borges also alludes to the ideas in that chapter in "El inmortal". The idea of metempsychosis in Borges' story echoes the words "if the living are reborn from those that have died".²⁶ Also Borges' reference to "la doctrina de que no hay cosa que no esté compensada por otra" echoes the reference to a "circular process of one opposite coming into being to balance the other."²⁷ Consequently, by citing this epigraph Borges is alluding to Solomon, Plato, Bacon, and Browne in such a way as to stress the allusions and the unity of mind between them and himself and hence the ideas of the universal author, immortality and metempsychosis.

Just as in "El inmortal" Borges takes on the persona of Homer, the main representative of the ideas of the universal author, immortality and metempsychosis, he also takes on the persona of Cartaphilus, and by

alluding to Browne, the persona of Browne. As George R. Mc. Murray says, "Cartaphilus represents Borges' persona and, perhaps, his double".²⁸

Cartaphilus is, of course, also Marco Flamínio Rufo, Homer, all men, and all authors. However, he also represents Browne, and hence is an allusion to Browne. As Browne is one part of the universal author, this is, of course, quite fitting. Hence, Borges and Browne become doubles, or Browne becomes yet another of Borges' personae, and Borges' work is consequently self-consciously acknowledged as reflecting and alluding to Browne's.

Perhaps the most important characteristic that Cartaphilus and Browne share is their attitude towards plagiarism. Cordovero denounces Cartaphilus' manuscript as apocryphal because it contains various intrusions from other authors.²⁹ Browne was also, like Cartaphilus, a master of plagiarism, as has been shown by R. R. Cawley in "Sir Thomas Browne and his Reading".³⁰ Browne refers to plagiarism in the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* with the following words:

Thus we may perceive the ancients were but men, even like ourselves. The practice of transcription in our days, was no Monster in theirs; Plagiarie had not its nativity with Printing, but began in Times when thefts were difficult, and the paucity of Books scarce wanted that Invention.

Nor did they only make large use of other Authors, but often without mention of their names.³¹

Browne here seems to consider plagiarism a fairly natural and harmless occupation, an attitude no doubt shared by Caraphilus. As a representative of the universal author, plagiarism or allusion is central to Cartaphilus' work.

However, Cartaphilus and Browne share many other characteristics. Cartaphilus is described as an antiquarian ("el anticuario Joseph Cartaphilus").³² This is also one of the most common descriptions applied to Browne. George Sampson says that to Browne amongst others "the term 'antiquary' can be applied more as a tribute of affection than as a strict definition".³³ Edmund Gosse describes Browne as "the type of the omnivorous country antiquary",³⁴ but he continues: "We do not go to Browne today for correct antiquarian information [...] but as we should to the rhapsody of some great poet, to be borne along on the wind of his imaginative afflatus" (p. 109). This is a description that well fits a double of Cartaphilus, whom we do not think of so much as an antiquarian, but rather as a great poet, Homer. Coleridge, in his *Marginalia*, refers to Browne's "museum and cabinet of rarities".³⁵

Of Cartaphilus' manuscript we read: "El original está redactado en inglés y abunda en latinismos."³⁶ Browne also writes in an English that abounds in Latinisms. Lytton Strachey states: "In his most characteristic moments he [Browne] was almost entirely occupied with thoughts and

emotions which can, owing to their very nature, only be expressed in Latinistic language."³⁷

Of Cartaphilus Borges writes: "Se manejaba con fluidez e ignorancia en diversas lenguas; en muy pocos minutos pasó del francés al inglés y del inglés a una conjunción enigmática de español de Salónica y de portugués de Macao."³⁸ Browne also was proficient in many languages, as Borges was well aware. In *Inquisiciones* he wrote of Browne: "Habló también las lenguas italiana, francesa, griega y latina y las frecuentó en sus discursos" (p. 33). As well as sharing these characteristics with Browne there are many other clues that point to the fact that Cartaphilus can represent Browne. Borges alludes to Browne in "El inmortal" in his use of the themes of immortality and metempsychosis. He also alludes to Browne in many other minor ways. For instance, he refers directly to Browne in his use of the name Joseph Cartaphilus. Browne says that "the wandering Jew" "was first called Cartaphilus" and in another place he refers to "Joseph the wandering Jew."³⁹ Borges is, of course, not only referring to Browne by his use of the name Cartaphilus. Hayam Maccoby writes of the legend of the Wandering Jew: "The legend is known to have developed out of a medieval (13th century) tale, or rather 'tall story', about a man called Cartaphilus, who was neither a wanderer nor a Jew."⁴⁰ Borges is also alluding to the traditional legend by making Cartaphilus' first incarnation the Roman, Marco Flamínio Rufo, as the traditional Cartaphilus was also Roman.⁴¹ Again, Borges' use of Cartaphilus as an immortal is traditional. Maccoby writes: "[...] Jesus conferred on Cartaphilus the curse of immortality" (p. 3).

However, the legend of the Wandering Jew itself enacts the ideas of "El inmortal" as it is a changing legend. Browne's version of the story varies slightly from the traditional one. He writes that Cartaphilus was condemned to wait until Jesus's return for "thrusting out our Saviour."⁴² Whereas in the traditional legend "he struck Jesus, on his way to his Crucifixion."⁴³ By the seventeenth century the Wandering Jew's "name has changed to 'Ahaseurus'" and "he is now a convinced and repentant Christian" and "a dignified figure" (p. 3). Hence, Borges by referring to Browne's Cartaphilus is alluding not only to the idea of the immortality of the man, the Wandering Jew, but also to the immortality of the legend. Both the idea of the immortality of a man and the immortality of the universal book (of which a legend forms a part) are central to "El inmortal".

Similarly also, in Borges' use of the name Cartaphilus, in his mention of the fact "que Cartaphilus había muerto en el mar, al regresar a Esmirna, y que lo habían enterrado en la isla de Ios", he is echoing Browne.⁴⁴ Browne says that Herodotus wrote of Homer "that passing from Samos unto Athens, he went sick ashore upon the island Ios, where he died, and was solemnly interred upon the Sea Side".⁴⁵

Again, Borges is alluding to Browne when he writes: "Flaminio Rufo, que antes ha dado a la ciudad el epíteto de Hekatómpylos, dice que el río es el Egipto; ninguna de esas locuciones es adecuada a él, sino a Homero, que hace mención expresa, en la *Iliada*, de Tebas Hekatómpylos, y en la *Odisea*, por boca de Proteo y de Ulises, dice invariablemente Egipto por Nilo."⁴⁶ In the section entitled "Of the River Nilus" Browne writes of that river: "So Homer hath given no number of its Channells, nor so much as the name thereof in use with all Historians."⁴⁷ Browne is also referring to the fact that Homer always called the Nile the Egypt. Egypt and the Nile are, in fact, two of Browne's favourite subjects, and this is particularly relevant to "El inmortal", as part of it is set in Egypt (Rufo "era tribuno de una legión que estuvo acuartelada en Berenice, frente al Mar Rojo") and the river Nile ("el Egipto") is the river of mortality.⁴⁸ The allusions are deeper, however, than just referring to the river and the place. Browne refers to the fact that the Egyptians considered Egypt the most ancient nation.⁴⁹ This would be a fitting place to start the story of an immortal. Also Browne writes, again in the section "Of the River Nilus":

Fourthly, it is affirmed by many, and received by most, that it never raineth in Ægypt, the river supplying that defect, and bountifully requiting it in its Inundation: but this must also be received in a qualified sense, that is, that it rains but seldome at any time in the Summer, and very rarely in the Winter. But that great showers do sometimes fall upon that Region, beside the assertion of many Writers, we can confirm from honourable and ocular testimony, that not many years past, it rayned in Grand Cairo divers dayes together.⁵⁰

This is similar to the description of the rain that falls in the desert in "El inmortal". Borges writes that "Llovió, con lentitud poderosa", and "raudales le rodaban [a Argos] por la cara".⁵¹

"El país de los trogloditas" (p. 10) which forms a part of this desert, is also described in similar terms to those used by Edmund Gosse to describe Browne's discovery of the urns in *Urn Burial*. When Rufo awakes he finds himself in "un oblongo nicho de piedra, no mayor que una sepultura común, superficialmente excavado en el agrio declive de una montaña" (p. 11) and he continues: "Un centenar de nichos irregulares, análogos al mío, surcaban la montaña y el valle. En la arena había pozos de poca hondura" (p. 11). Gosse writes: "At last, apparently in the autumn of 1657, in a field at Old Walsingham, there were turned up no fewer than between forty and fifty urns, 'deposited in a dry and sandy soil, not a yard deep, nor far from one another'".⁵² The elements of sepulchre or urn, lack of depth, a fairly large number, and sandy soil, are common to both descriptions. Moreover, Rufo, who finds himself "tirado y maniatado" in one of these niches is a Roman.⁵³ And Browne, although mistaken, "thought the urns were 'all of Roman origin'".⁵⁴

Borges alludes further to Browne by his reference to Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*.⁵⁵ Browne often refers to Methuselah throughout his work, particularly in the fifth chapter of *Urn Burial*, the chapter that Bioy Casares and Borges translated. Browne starts the chapter with the words: "Now since these dead bones have already out-lived the living ones of *Methuselah*."⁵⁶ And he continues: "How many pulses made up the life of *Methuselah*, were work for *Archimedes*."⁵⁷ In fact, of the final pages of this chapter Lytton Strachey writes that among "the persons who pass before one's eyes", "one visionary figure flits with a mysterious preeminence, flickering over every page, like a familiar and ghastly flame. It is Methuselah; and, in Browne's scheme, the remote, almost infinite, and almost ridiculous patriarch is – who can doubt? – the only possible centre and symbol of all the rest"⁵⁸.

Browne returns to Methuselah in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* where he writes: "and so that Methuselah was the longest liver of all the posterity of Adam we quietly believe."⁵⁹ This is the clue to the other reason for the reference to Methuselah in "El inmortal". Methuselah as the longest liver is an obvious candidate for immortality. There are indeed, as Cordovero said, "breves interpolaciones" of Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, V, in Cartaphilus' manuscript, and most of these are relevant to the subject of immortality.⁶⁰ The description of the face of "THE ANCIENT" could easily apply to an immortal's: "His face, though fully and firmly fleshed, bears a network of lines, varying from furrows to hairbreadth reticulations, as if Time had worked over every inch of it incessantly through whole geologic periods."⁶¹ Also, when the "Newly Born" asks the "He-Ancient" what his destiny is, he replies "To be immortal" (p. 245). The "She-Ancient" then adds that "the day will come when there will be no people, only thought" (p. 245). Earlier in the section we read of "a company of ancients, who were in those days called prophets and sybils, whose majesty was that of the mind alone at its intensest" (p. 217). In "El inmortal" we read about a time when the immortals "juzgando que toda empresa es vana, determinaron vivir en el pensamiento, en la pura especulación".⁶²

By referring to Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* Borges firstly emphasises the association of Methuselah with long age and immortality. Secondly he alludes further to Browne, as Browne refers to Methuselah so frequently. Thirdly, he underlines the associations between Browne and the theme of immortality, and hence he reinforces the allusions to Browne that the theme of immortality already implied.

The consequence of all these allusions is that Borges and Browne can be viewed as doubles, or Browne can be thought of as yet another of Borges' personae. Similarly, according to Ruth M. Vande Kieft, Melville "saw himself as a fresh incarnation" of Browne, amongst others.⁶³ She also points out that both authors expressed a similar belief in metempsychosis. Hence, in comparing himself to Browne, Borges is also alluding to

Melville's previous comparison of himself to Browne and implying that Browne has been reincarnated in both Melville and in himself. So Borges is pointing to the fact that Browne, Melville and Borges also form part of the universal author in the same way that Salomon, Plato, Bacon and Borges do.⁶⁴

Just as Borges' allusion to Solomon, Plato, Bacon, and Browne stresses the unity of mind between them and himself and hence the ideas of the universal author, immortality and metempsychosis, similarly, in his allusions to Sir Thomas Browne's work as a whole, Borges can be thought of as achieving what Charles Tomlinson might call an "act of literary metempsychosis", in that he allows himself "to be spoken through by the dead".⁶⁵ Tomlinson examines the interest in the idea of metempsychosis in amongst others, Joyce, Yeats and Eliot. He draws attention, for instance, to the fact that although Leopold Bloom can explain the meaning of the term "metempsychosis" to his wife, Molly, he does not realise that he is himself a reincarnation of Ulysses (p. 49). And he considers that in citing Ezra Pound as "el miglior fabbro" (words used by Dante of Arnaut Daniel) at the beginning of *The Waste Land* Eliot is hinting that Pound is a reincarnation of Daniel (pp. 49-50). What Tomlinson does not add is that if this is the case then similarly Eliot can be seen as a reincarnation of Dante. These are the ideas that Borges uses in "El inmortal". A transmigration of souls has taken place from one author to another, from Plato, to Bacon, to Browne, to Borges, and they are not many authors, but one.

In conclusion, Borges' allusions to Sir Thomas Browne both explore the theme of metempsychosis and the related theme of immortality, and enact a form of literary metempsychosis that corresponds to Borges' idea of the universal author. Sir Thomas Browne wrote:

For as though there were a *Metempsychosis*, and the soul of one man passed into another, opinions doe finde after certain revolutions, men and mindes like those that first begat them.⁶⁶

The opinions of Sir Thomas Browne have found a mind like the one that "begat them" in the mind of Borges.⁶⁷

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NOTES

¹ Jorge Luis Borges, *Inquisiciones*, (Buenos Aires, 1925), pp. 30-38. (Hereafter *Inquisiciones*.)

² References to Browne in Borges's work: Jorge Luis Borges, *El Aleph*, sixth edition (Madrid, 1977), p. 43. (Hereafter *El Aleph*.) *Ficciones*, sixth edition (Madrid, 1978), p. 36. (Hereafter *Ficciones*.) *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires, 1974), pp. 203, 277, 393, 650, 704, 716 and 1103. (Hereafter *O.C.*) *Prólogos* (Buenos Aires, 1975), pp. 117 and 166. *Siete noches*, (Madrid, 1980), pp. 36 and 45. "Fragmento sobre Joyce", *Sur* 77 (1941) 60-62, (p. 61). "Moral y literatura: Jorge Luis Borges", *Sur* 126 (1945) 71-72, (p. 71). "Joyce y los neologismos", *Sur* 62 (1929)

59–61, (p. 61). “Lawrence y la odisea”, *Sur* 25 (1936) 79–81, (p. 79). “Neil Stewart: *Blanqui*”, *Sur* 65 (1939) 111–112, (p. 112). Jorge Luis Borges and others, *Obras Completas en colaboración*, (Buenos Aires, 1979), pp. 318, 573, 594, 597, 661, 823, 833, 891 and 948. (Hereafter *O.C. en colaboración*.)

³ *Ficciones*, p. 36.

⁴ Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares, “Quinto capítulo de la ‘Hydriotaphia’ (1658)”, *Sur* 111 (1944), 15–26 (p. 20, “Amplios [...] memorias”).

⁵ *O.C. en colaboración*, p. 661.

⁶ Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, edited by Robin Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford, 1981), p. 143. (Hereafter *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*.)

⁷ *O.C. en colaboración*, p. 661.

⁸ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 143.

⁹ Ronald Christ, *The Narrow Act: Borges’ Art of Allusion* (New York, 1969) pp. 75. (Hereafter *The Narrow Act*.) David Newton De Molina, “A Note on Sir Thomas Browne and Jorge Luis Borges”, *The Antigoniash Review* 2 (1971), pp. 33–40.

¹⁰ Cynthia Stephens, “Conflicting Interpretation of Language and Reality in Borges’s Narrative”, *The Modern Language Review* 85 (1990), 65–76.

¹¹ *O.C.*, p. 639.

¹² *O.C.*, p. 809.

¹³ *O.C.*, p. 1017.

¹⁴ *O.C.*, p. 854.

¹⁵ Christ, p. 197. (Sir Thomas Browne, *The Major Works*, edited by C. A. Patrides (Oxford, 1981), pp. 66–67 (with slightly altered text). Hereafter *Major Works*.)

¹⁶ *Major Works*, p. 270 and 439.

¹⁷ *El Aleph*, p. 41.

¹⁸ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 275.

¹⁹ *Major Works*, p. 101.

²⁰ *Major Works*, p. 311.

²¹ *El Aleph*, p. 7.

²² Francis Bacon, *Essays*, edited by Michael J. Hawkins (London, 1972), p. 168.

²³ *El Aleph*, pp. 28 and 7.

²⁴ Plato, *Phaedo*, translated with an introduction and commentary by R. Hackforth (Cambridge, 1972), p. 66 (72E). (Hereafter *Phaedo*.)

²⁵ *Phaedo*, p. 66 (73E).

²⁶ *Phaedo*, p. 59 (70C).

²⁷ *El Aleph*, p. 23, and *Phaedo*, p. 62 (72A–72B).

²⁸ George R. Mc. Murray, *Jorge Luis Borges* (New York, 1980), p. 84.

²⁹ *El Aleph*, p. 27.

³⁰ Robert R. Cawley, “Sir Thomas Browne and his Reading”, *Publications of The Modern Language Association* 48 (1933), 426–70.

³¹ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 5.

³² *El Aleph*, p. 7.

³³ George Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge, 1941), p. 382.

³⁴ Sir Edmond Gosse, *Sir Thomas Browne*, (London, 1905), p. 108. (Hereafter, *Sir Thomas Browne*.)

³⁵ Basil Anderton, *Sketches from a Library Window* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 170.

³⁶ *El Aleph*, p. 8.

³⁷ Lytton Strachey, *Books and Characters French and English* (London, 1922), p. 37. (Hereafter *Books and Characters French and English*.)

³⁸ *El Aleph*, p. 8.

³⁹ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, pp. 597 and 562.

⁴⁰ Hayman Maccoby, “The legend of the ‘Wandering Jew’”, *Jewish Quarterly* 20 (1972), 3–8 (p. 3). (Hereafter Maccoby.)

⁴¹ Maccoby, p. 3.

⁴² *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 597.

⁴³ Maccoby, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *El Aleph*, p. 8.

- ⁴⁵ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 579.
- ⁴⁶ *El Aleph*, p. 25.
- ⁴⁷ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 493.
- ⁴⁸ *El Aleph*, pp. 8 and 9.
- ⁴⁹ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 442.
- ⁵⁰ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 501.
- ⁵¹ *El Aleph*, p. 19.
- ⁵² *Sir Thomas Browne*, p. 108.
- ⁵³ *El Aleph*, p. 36.
- ⁵⁴ *Sir Thomas Browne*, p. 109.
- ⁵⁵ *El Aleph*, p. 27.
- ⁵⁶ *Major Works*, p. 306.
- ⁵⁷ *Major Works*, p. 307.
- ⁵⁸ *Books and Characters French and English*, p. 43.
- ⁵⁹ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p. 542.
- ⁶⁰ *El Aleph*, p. 27.
- ⁶¹ Bernard Shaw, *Back to Methuselah: A Metabiological Pentateuch*, (London, 1931), p. 199.
- ⁶² *El Aleph*, p. 20.
- ⁶³ Ruth M. Vande Kieft, "'When Big Hearts Strike Together': The Concussion of Melville and Sir Thomas Browne", *Papers in Language and Literature* 5 (1969), 39-50 (p. 42).
- ⁶⁴ *El Aleph*, p. 7.
- ⁶⁵ Charles Tomlinson, *Poetry and Metamorphoses* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 50.
- ⁶⁶ *Major Works*, p. 66.
- ⁶⁷ I would like to express my thanks to Lorna Close of New Hall, Cambridge, for her help with this article.

Books Received

AIKEN, SUSAN HARDY. *Isak Dinesen and the Engendering of Narrative*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press (Women in Culture and Society), 1990. xxvi + 323 pp. £37.95 (hardback); £15.95 (paperback). Both sympathy with modern critical procedures and feminist convictions are prerequisites for enjoying this book. All the talismanic terms of late twentieth-century criticism are here in abundance: discontinuity, *misnaming*, duplicity, calling into question, play of transformations, problematic, decentering, ludic and, inevitably, subversion. Sign, signifier, significantly and assign appear in one sentence. An apparent compulsion to demonstrate acquaintance with "the literature" dams the flow of argument: "As Mary Douglas has observed . . ."; "As Judith Thurman puts it . . ."; "In Eric Johannesson's phrase . . ."; "As Helen Cixous . . ."; "As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatari . . ."; "As Ellen Moers . . ."; "As Judith Wilt . . ."; "As Dorothy Granfield . . .". This sort of thing is better for the citation index than the reader. The study is principally concerned with *Seven Gothic Tales* and *Out of Africa* and is very much for the professional reader. We are, for example, invited to recognise "An echoic dialogue" between texts published twenty-five years apart. Symptomatic of the view taken here is a gloss on a passage from one of Karen Blixen's letters which explains that what she meant was that, "All contracts between men and women become varieties of prostitution". What Karen Blixen has to offer is available more directly and more forcefully in her own work.

Barrès: *Une tradition dans la modernité*. Ed. André Guyaux, Joseph Jurt & Robert Kopp. Paris: Honoré Champion (Travaux et recherches des Universités rhénanes 5), 1991. 331 pp. The thirty-odd contributions to the 1989 Mulhouse/Bâle/Fribourg Barrès conference are divided here into three sections. "L'Amateur d'âmes" includes essays on themes and preoccupations in his novels and other works: Joan of Arc, women, landscape, the visual arts, youth, the theatre, the ideology of the early novels and, most originally, for Barrès' art as a novelist has been neglected, on the genesis of *Les Déracinés* (M.-O. Germain). The second section addresses his politics. M.-F. Guyard studies the ambiguities of Barrès' view of the Revolution, E. Roussel corrects long-standing misinterpretations of his relationship to the Action Française, and J.-M. Domenach contributes an authoritative assessment of his consular republicanism. There are two interesting essays on *Colette Baudoche*, one, by J. Flower, on the interplay of language and political viewpoint. The final section groups "affinities" – with Renan, Proust, Péguy, Rouveyre – and "voyages": Barrès on Spain, Italy, Greece and the Orient. In all, the volume offers insights across the whole range of Barrès' work, and confirms the view expressed in A. Guyaux's *avant-propos*, that a much delayed revival of interest in Barrès is well under way.

BASSNETT-McGUIRE, SUSAN. *Translation Studies*. Revised edition. London: Routledge (New Accents), 1991. xxi + 168 pp. The same text as the 1980 edition, apart from the odd minor correction (although *Jérôme* and *appétit* still tend to lack their accents), an ebullient added preface outlining the great progress made in Translation Studies during the 80s, and a much-expanded bibliography taking in, notably, over 100 books and articles on the subject published during that time. An already excellent book is still further enhanced this time round by being stitched, so that it can now doubly safely be entrusted to student hands.

BATCHELOR, JOHN. *Virginia Woolf: The Major Novels*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (British and Irish Authors: Introductory Critical Studies), 1991. xviii + 157 pp. £25 (hardback); £8.95 (paperback). Equipped with a selective but solid bibliography and written in straightforward prose, Batchelor's *Virginia Woolf* is a readable and useful introduction to Woolf's novels of the twenties and thirties. However, even as a general introduction, this book is somewhat bland. Batchelor returns to earlier approaches to Woolf by selecting from her work only those novels which he can interpret as "beautiful and selfsufficient work(s) of art" (p. 147). In an obvious attempt to rescue Woolf from the clutches of feminist criticism, he concentrates on her method and thus manages to present her yet again as the sensitive impressionist artist, somewhat aloof from history, but intuitively capturing the essence of the modern mind, and above all as "a fragile person who [. . .] cannot take risks"