

UNREADING BORGES'S LABYRINTHS

LAWRENCE R. SCHEHR
University Of South Alabama

Poor intricate soul! Riddling perplexed
labyrinthical soul!

John Donne

Pour WFM avec mes amitiés

I

In the past few decades, the narratives of writers such as Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, and Jorge Luis Borges have succeeded in challenging normative generic readings by posing fundamental questions about the theory and practice of narrative. The short stories of Borges in particular develop not only an explicit aesthetics, but also, and more importantly, an implicit critical stance and theoretical position of and for narrative.

Even a cursory reading of a few Borges stories quite clearly yields two repeated figures: the text and the labyrinth. They are not just fetishized objects, obsessively described, but narrative figures that move the text along syntagmatically and paradigmatically: tropologically. They motivate, inform, reform and undo the stories. Both figures function at the surface level of plot, but they inform deeper levels of system and structure as well, thereby calling into question norms of style, genre, and form. At a basic level of straightforward reading, certain thematic paradoxes come to light: the labyrinth that is not a labyrinth ("Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto" [Ibn-Hakkan al Bokari, Dead in His Labyrinth]), the non-labyrinth that is a labyrinth ("Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos"

["The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths"]), the text that is a labyrinth ("El libro de arena" ["The Book of Sand"]), the labyrinth of texts ("La biblioteca de Babel" ["The Library of Babel"]).

Before proceeding, we must discuss a question of method. The quantity of articles published annually about Borges is staggering, and a number of them deal, either implicitly or explicitly, with these two figures. But in general critics have opted for a point of view that is normative, be it psychoanalytical, metaphysical, or even structuralist. That is to say, the questions of labyrinth and text are first thematized and then, through this thematization of the figure, brought back from their ex-centric position, returned to the fold, and explained as components of a normative structure. This essay proposes an alternative method: it is an attempt to view these figures as fundamental disruptions of and within narrative and as the trace (the readable inscription) of the irreducible paradox of representation in narrative.¹

II

One Borges story in particular valorizes these two figures by positing an identity between them: "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" ("The Garden of Forking Paths"), published in 1941 in the collection of stories of the same name. Not just analogy or metaphor as in "La biblioteca de Babel" from the same collection, nor association or metonymy as in "Abenjacán el Bojarí" (1949), the relation here between text and labyrinth, both as figures and as topoi, is one of identity. The text is the labyrinth just as the labyrinth is text. This identity is most apparent on the level of plot. Ts'ui Pên is said to have written a book and to have built a labyrinth. As the reader soon discovers, the two are one and the same. The labyrinth is the myriad possibilities offered at any locus of a narration: the book of Ts'ui Pên presents all possibilities for every point of the text:

En todas las ficciones, cada vez que un hombre se enfrenta con diversas alternativas, opta por una y elimina las otras; en la del casi inextricable Ts'ui Pên, opta—simultáneamente—por todas.

In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with divers(e) alternatives he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pên, he chooses—simultaneously—all of them.²

The story pushes the reader toward an initial reading that is non-diachronic, an intertextual reading that follows the “divers(e) alternatives.” This is necessary if only to avoid having a tautological conclusion to one’s reading, to wit, that text is identical to labyrinth. It is thus strategically helpful to detour (always to the left) to other texts, where difference, not identity, is the rule, to return, finally, to make the “casi inextricable” text more “extricable.” Two works in particular seem to provide a suitable path to follow in an initial investigation: “Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto” and “Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos.” “Abenjacán,” in particular, is a striking frame tale and from its frames may be extracted one story of a labyrinth that is told in the labyrinth. In a text about a labyrinth, a tale is told about a labyrinth: “la historia de un rey a quien la Divinidad castigó por haber erigido un laberinto” (p. 601; “the story of a king whom the Divinity punished for having built a labyrinth”). The tale is implicated within—at the heart of—“Abenjacán,” yet it stands outside it as the next text in *El Aleph*, “Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos.” Inside and outside are confused: the stories appear to be the written forms of a Klein bottle or a Möbius strip. Yet nothing is more appropriate, even if we no longer know where one text begins and another ends. Successful completion of a labyrinth depends on staying outside of it, on not being enclosed by it. Topologically, one remains outside while physically being inside. More subtly and more importantly, a text depends on the same conflation of outside and inside: the reader must somehow abandon himself to the text, be “absorbed” by and in it. At the same time, the text must somehow reach toward a level of referentiality (exteriority) outside the text’s own signifiers.

In “Abenjacán,” and for that matter in many other texts, the physical labyrinth (even if it is a labyrinth of words) is always framed by text. More precisely, the labyrinth is textualized, only existing as text and not as an independent object. Abenjacán’s labyrinth is enclosed within the story of itself; the physical labyrinth is subsumed by an encompassing textuality that is in fact actualized by the telling of the tale: both the *énoncé* and the *énonciation* are the recounting of stories.

"Abenjacán," along with "El jardín de senderos," underscores another point about the physical labyrinths: they are not totally labyrinthine. One undoes them by "doblando siempre a la izquierda" (p. 601; "turning always to the left"). The center of the labyrinth is attained by a concerted, logical process of deconstruction, where every step undoes what is already there. This turning to the left is a process of un-reading—our reading being always to the right—that is followed in order to "un-win." For the goal, the center of the maze, is finally just an empty (null) point; it is not the solution to the system but its dissolution, its death.

The physical labyrinth of "El jardín de senderos" is textualized as well, like that of "Abenjacán" and "Los dos reyes." Even the words are the same: "El consejo de siempre doblar a la izquierda me recordó que tal era el procedimiento común para descubrir el patio central de ciertos laberintos" (p. 475; "The advice to turn always to the left reminded me that such was the common procedure for discovering the central point of certain labyrinths"). Thus it is a question of textual primacy: the labyrinth is already solved in the "consejo." The labyrinthine nature of the physical maze is a priori done away with, as the aphorism gives all the necessary information on how to come to the end—or the center—of the physical maze. And certainly, if that is all that is necessary, there is not much to the maze that could be considered labyrinthine. But if the labyrinth is solved a priori, the text is not; no sure metatexts exist, like the "consejo," to solve the text's labyrinth. No metatexts, but a maze of intertexts.

There is no clarity at the beginning, no sure starting point, but a cloud of intertexts, one part of which depends on a question of codes (*langue, lingua*), the other, on a question of message (*parole, habla*). The first part of this intertextuality is a question of inter-coding: we read, in Spanish, of "el doctor Yu Tsun, antiguo catedrático de inglés en la *Hochschule* de Tsingtao" (p. 472; "Dr. Yu Tsun, former professor of English at the *Hochschule* of Tsingtao"). A reading of the story is immediately subjected to a protraction of its code into at least four more or less mutually exclusive codes: Spanish, Chinese, English, and German. The message tends to be multiplied, the signifiers linked in different semiotic chains, in a process that moves in retrograde fashion away from the discovery of the text's meaning. We are faced with a palinodic Pentecost. All the labyrinthine possibilities are there at once, and Spanish, English, German, and Chinese interfere to create a plethora of connotations and a dearth of

denotative meaning. The game takes precedence over the goal of straightforward meaning.

More important than intercoding however, is a text-to-text intertextuality. Borges's story begins: "En la página 242 de la *Historia de la Guerra Europea*, de Liddell Hart" (p. 472; "On page 242 of Liddell Hart's *History of World War I*"). The remainder of the Borges story is ostensibly an explanatory footnote to this page of Liddell Hart. The footnote however is not complete: "Faltan las dos páginas iniciales" (p. 472; "The first two pages are missing"). Liddell Hart's text is a replacement for these missing two pages. As history that defines a period as beginning and ending (World War I), Liddell Hart's book, supposedly canonic, provides the necessary beginning for the story. In so doing, the need for a justified, fictionally endemic beginning is obviated. The necessarily arbitrary nature of the beginning of a fiction is replaced by a determined point of origin, deemed non-arbitrary, and hence, the justifiable genetic origin for the pages that follow, given in the form of scholarly explanation. Thus, Liddell Hart's history is not only a replacement and justification for the missing first two pages of the story that follows, it is also a pretext for the story. Yet Liddell Hart is no more than a pretext for an origin as well; it refers to other texts, earlier origins, that in turn refer to still others *ad infinitum*: history is not written in a vacuum, there is always one more background text to be read, cited, written about.

The beginning of the Borges story thus founders in a wash of implied intertextual references, origins, beginnings; and the reader is hopelessly caught in the textual maze. Nevertheless, he remains aware of this continual double intertextuality of codes and messages. The fact that he is forced to occupy the position of a meta-reader saves him from total perdition in a sea of references. But the double coding continues: "la voz que había contestado en alemán" (p. 472; "the voice that had answered in German"). And the message dissolves into a phantasmagoria of other messages: "la guía telefónica me dio el nombre de la única persona capaz de transmitir la noticia" (p. 473; "The telephone book gave me the name of the only person capable of transmitting the message"). Thus the text creates a labyrinth of words: what could be more labyrinthine than the telephone book, whose only clear links are alphabetic ones? The story produces a textual (linguistic) labyrinth into which the physical labyrinth is merely inserted. Or, more exactly, the physical labyrinth is lost in the textual one: "el laberinto perdido" (p. 475; "the lost labyrinth"), as

the text becomes a labyrinth of labyrinths: "Pensé en un laberinto de laberintos, en un sinuoso laberinto creciente que abarcara el pasado y el porvenir y que implicara de algún modo los astros" (p. 475; "I thought of a labyrinth of labyrinths, of one sinuous spreading labyrinth that would encompass the past and in some way involve the stars").

The reader is thus endlessly reminded that the physical world is only secondary to the world of text: the former is framed by, and inscribed in, the latter. This is a textuality that is all-encompassing, an insistence on the letter; questions of reality, symbol, meaning, and imagination do not pertain here. All is text, whether it "is" or not:

Llegamos a una biblioteca de libros orientales y occidentales. Reconocí, encuadernados en seda amarilla, algunos tomos manuscritos de la Enciclopedia Perdida que dirigió el Tercer Emperador de la Dinastía Luminosa y que no se dio nunca a la imprenta. (p. 476)

We came to a library of Eastern and Western books. I recognized, bound in yellow silk, several handwritten volumes of the Lost Encyclopedia, edited by the Third Emperor of the Luminous Dynasty but which were never printed.

Lost, yet found; written text, yet not printed; recognized, yet never before seen: the world itself—"orientales y occidentales"—is subsumed under all-encompassing text. And thus, the plot itself, having circumscribed the physical world within a textual one, begins to focus on a specific text, *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, the book of Ts'ui Pên that pretends to a position of omnipresence: "*El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* es una imagen incompleta, pero no falsa, del universo tal como lo concebía Ts'ui Pên" (p. 479; "*The Garden of Forking Paths* is an incomplete, but not a false, image of the universe as Ts'ui Pên conceived of it"). It pretends to plenitude, but it is incomplete and fragmentary. Yet, despite this fragmentation, there is still an attempt to order it, to organize it, to establish an origin for it, even though this origin, founding moment for the text, is always absent:

He confrontado centenares de manuscritos, he corregido los errores que la negligencia de los copistas ha introducido, he

conjecturado el plan de ese caos, he restablecido, he creído restablecer, el orden primordial. . . . (p. 479)

I have compared hundreds of manuscripts, I have corrected the errors that the negligence of the copyists has introduced, I have guessed at the plan of this chaos, I have re-established—I believe I have re-established, the primary organization.

The absence of origin and the fact of incompleteness and fragmentation announce the nature of the text more precisely. It is not a question of justifying some arbitrarily determined beginning as origin by obfuscating the arbitrary nature of this beginning. It is rather a search for a missing (transcendental) signifier in a world where there is no origin given a priori. In a sense, then, there is no original construction of a system and hence, there is no “deconstruction” of the system to be performed by the reader: the text has already done it. Instead, there is an endlessly deferred zero-point, a search for a missing signifier that will make sense of everything:

Sé que de todos los problemas, ninguno lo inquietó y lo trabajó como el abismal problema del tiempo. Ahora bien, ése es el *único* problema que no figura en las páginas del *Jardín*. Ni siquiera usa la palabra que quiere decir *tiempo*. ¿Como se explica usted esa voluntaria omisión? . . . *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* es una enorme adivinanza, o parábola, cuyo tema es el tiempo; esa causa recóndito le prohíbe la mención de su nombre. Omitir *siempre* una palabra, recurrir a metáforas ineptas y a perífrasis evidentes, es quizá el modo más enfático de indicarla. (pp. 478-79)

I know that of all problems, none disturbed him nor so greatly worked upon him as the abysmal problem of time. Now then, this is the *only* problem that does not figure in the pages of the *Garden*. He does not even use the word that means *time*. How do you explain this willfull omission? . . . *The Garden of Forking Paths* is an enormous riddle, or parable, whose theme is time; this recondite cause prohibits its being mentioned by name. To omit a word *always*, to resort to inept metaphors and to obvious periphrases, is perhaps the most emphatic way of indicating it.

But this "hidden term" is much like the labyrinth that is solved before it is even conceived, by the application of the "consejo." Here the substitutions are "evidentes," and the missing word is not really missing at all. But "time" is not the word that produces meaning in the text. The missing signifier is never found, just like in "La biblioteca de Babel." What is found is the destruction of meaning, the Minotaur at the center of the labyrinth, death, the body in the maze. This term not only informs the system, it also destroys it:

. . . he comunicado a Berlín el secreto nombre de la ciudad que deben atacar. Ayer la bombardearon; lo leí en los mismos periódicos que propusieron a Inglaterra el enigma de que el sabio sinólogo Stephen Albert muriera asesinado por un desconocido, Yu Tsrún. El Jefe ha descifrado ese enigma. Sabe que mi problema era indicar (a través del estrépito de la guerra) la ciudad que se llama Albert y que no hallé otro medio que matar a una persona de ese nombre. No sabe (nadie puede saber) mi innumerable contrición y cansancio. (p. 480)

. . . I have communicated to Berlin the secret name of the city they must attack. They bombed it yesterday; I read it in the same papers that offered to England the mystery of the learned sinologist Stephen Albert, who was murdered by a stranger, Yu Tsun. The chief has deciphered the mystery. He knows that my problem was to indicate (through the uproar of the war) the city called Albert, and that I found no other means to do so than to kill a man with that name. He does not know (no one can know) my innumerable contrition and weariness.

The meaning lies at the maze's center and the system collapses because of the discovery of the meaning: a signifier has been paired with the signified: death. Ultimately, the transcendental signifier of the text that gives meaning is identical to that of the physical maze: an empty, null point, an abyss at the center into which everything dissolves. The missing signifier does not provide the solution, but, once again, the dissolution. Death then is at the center of both figures, but chains are endlessly spun to cover both death and the tropic (figural) movement toward death. To cover death, texts are generated. A riddle is generated from the point of absence, which is neither time nor simply "death," but rather abysmal absence. The solution of the

riddle is obviously its dissolution, its death: a solved riddle is no longer a riddle. Hence the solutions shows the original absence.

The riddle most often takes the form of a textual web that is spun around death. In "Abenjacán," for example, Dunraven's story is a mystery, a riddle without a solution: it is a labyrinth whose missing term is the identity of the murderer, that is to say, death. A chain of signifiers is generated in lieu of the missing nucleus that is the solution to the murder mystery. In "La muerte y la brújula" ["Death and the Compass"] (1944), there is an even more subtle generation of signifiers. An imaginary labyrinth of clues is built largely on written texts, on chance, and on false signifieds elaborated by a murderer. The killer forces the creation of the textual labyrinth and of its solution; this solution is both the undoing of the labyrinth and the death of the solver, Lönnrot.

III

Is this the position of the reader as well? For in solving the text, does he not dissolve it, reducing its complexity to the dead-end of a tautological solution, killing whatever textual desire there was along the way? If the text itself shows a definite proclivity to self-deconstruction—that is, to a profound awareness of its own arbitrary and ambiguous foundation and status as fiction—the reader seemingly can do nothing more than parrot this in some dead language, at a locus that is already implied within the text. And perhaps this self-deconstruction is what defines a modern text, for which reading becomes more an unraveling than an unfolding (ex-plication). It is however possible, faced with the nihilistic thematic solution, to elaborate a theoretical position that, at worst, would as a method, have a propaedeutic function, and, at best, requestion the position and status of both text and reader. Procedurally this can be accomplished by a requestioning of every nodal point of the deconstruction: intertextuality, the sign and its generation, and finally, ultimately, death at the position of the abyss.

In Borges, intertextuality depends on reference to codes and messages that are outside the text proper, but not on the transformation of these intertexts for his own use. He does not take another text

and re-form it by a new context. The context for him is almost always that of direct quotation, but without integration. What is implied then is a return to original context, to other texts, and eventually, the generation of the infinite text in the form of a library of reference books. One other means used to attain this end is macaronic prose: whole languages at a time, with their indigenous literatures, are implied in one sentence. The reader has to consider whole chains of signifiers outside the "proper" sphere of the code (Spanish) and message. The text draws the reader into a multiplicity of paradigmatic pathways that themselves form a labyrinth of mixed codes, but this labyrinth is seemingly insoluble.

In addition to the macaronic prose is Borges's strategic use of quotation. Seldom is there just a quoted sentence; more often, there is a title, a series of titles, or a fragment (clause or phrase). The title is a code word, calling into play a whole set of signifiers; the use of the title is thus homologous to the use of macaronic prose: whole systems are encapsulated in one word. More often employed, and more interesting, is the use of the fragmentary quotation: this is not a whole set, but rather a part, with its own missing signifiers. In "Abenjacán," we find: ". . . son comparables a la araña, que edifica una casa" (p. 600). But what is or are comparable is or are missing, and what is implied is, once again, death (the spider's web). Similar epigraphs are found in "Las ruinas circulares": "And if he left off dreaming about you . . ." (p. 451); in "La biblioteca de Babel": "By this art you may contemplate the variations of the 23 letters . . ." (p. 465); in "La busca de Averroes" ["Averroes' Search"]: "S'imaginant que la tragédie n'est autre chose que l'art de louer . . ." (p. 582). In "Funes el memorioso," there is only one quotation aside from references to titles, and it too, in this world of complete recall, is only a fragment: "La materia de ese capítulo es la memoria; las palabras últimas fueron: *ut nihil non iisdem verbis redderetur auditum*" (p. 487; "The subject of that chapter is memory; the last words were . . .").

The use of the fragment, more than that of any other intertextual mode, implies a tension in the text as well as a theory of the sign. And opposition appears on a general level between presence and absence, an opposition that is never (re)solved. But this is just a general category for its various forms, among which can be noted: generated text/hidden signifier; fragment/context; macaronic message/contextual code(s), and so forth; finally then: signifier/signified, the sign itself. But it is not really a question of a signified, at least in the way this word was understood by Saussure and by the

structuralists who appeared in his (belated) wake: the "idea" behind the word. What the signifier signals in Borges is another signifier and not a signified, and this signifier signals another, and another, and so on. In fact, there is a constant refusal of a pure signified in these stories (except for death, the abysmal zero point), concomitant with a rejection of any pure presence transparently signified. There is rather a constant reinforcement of the signifier as signifier, by references to code and to con-text (other texts), by metaphors and circumlocutions, by periphrasis: "metaforas ineptas y . . . perifrasis evidentes" (p. 479).

Thus the famous line in the Saussurean sign separates, for Borges, signifier from signifier and not from signified. And this displaced system, within the texts themselves, generates or explains other figures. Both the one-sided disc or the center page of an all-encompassing book, to note two recent forms of the figures of labyrinth and text, are representations *en abyme* of the problem of the sign. Borges provides two means of overcoming the line of division in the sign. The first is loss: in "El Disco" ["The Disc"], the one-sided disc is lost because its one side (its presence) faces down and only its absence is "showing." In "El Libro de Arena" ["The Book of Sand"] (1975), the narrator loses the book too.³ Borges gives himself no choice. He is constrained to have the book lost, for, as the all-encompassing text, it necessarily contains all the missing signifiers and those cannot be found.

The solution is loss of the object or loss in the object: death. When Lonnröt solves the mystery in "La muerte y la brújula," when he unweaves the web and arrives at its center, he is murdered by the travesty of Ariadne, Red Scharlach. When present and absent are made neatly to coalesce in the desert of "Los dos reyes," the Babylonian king dies. When the center is reached and the mystery solved in "Abenjacán," it is only then that the murdered man has actually been murdered—before, his death had been only virtual. And in "La escritura del dios" ["The God's Script"] (1949):

Vi el dios sin cara que hay detrás de los dioses. Vi infinitos procesos que formaban una sola felicidad y, entendiéndolo todo, alcancé también a entender la escritura del tigre. . . . Que muera conmigo el misterio que está escrito en los tigres." (p. 599)

I saw the faceless god behind the other gods. I saw infinite processes that formed one single felicity and, understanding all of

it, I was able to understand the script of the tiger as well. . . . May the mystery written on the tigers die with me.

What then of the reader? The reader must regard the text as being an infinite series of transgressions actualized by the process of reading. At each moment of a syntagmatic chain, there is a movement that attempts to transcend the division between presence and absence that corresponds to a transgression by the signifier. These transgressions are hedges against death, nothingness, absence; they are attempts to fill the void of the signified. But they are also hedges against the imposition of transcendental meaning, for such an imposition would also imply a rigidity of structure, system, and form, the *rigor mortis* that is anathema to Borges's textual project.

Paradigmatic chains are set up and interwoven (inter-text), but these evanescent intertextualities—evanescent because they can never be followed from one end to the other—never completely coalesce, for that would imply one non-labyrinthine meaning. The signifier continually and necessarily escapes. To replace it, to cover its absence, and to compensate for it, there is a constant interplay between presence and absence, between text and context, between signifier and supposed signified, between labyrinth and solution. And this interplay generates the *jouissance* of the Borgesian text, the pleasure of the work that is never fixed and always displaced along chains of signifiers that are enigmatically proposed as the solution to the text. The non-solution is the solution and the constantly deferred desire, be it that of the author, the narrator, the text, or the reader, is protracted through a polyvalence of (polymorphously perverse) detours from the main road of definite, hard, solidified, rigorous—dead—meaning.

NOTES

1. The most important theoretical discussion relevant to this article is J. Hillis Miller's masterful deconstructive reading of labyrinths in "Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and the Narrative Line," *Critical Inquiry*, 3 (1976), 57-77. There are several noteworthy studies of Borges's prose that go beyond a specific or general thematics and

which, by and large, refuse the temptation to thematize writing itself as a metaphysical construct. Among these are David W. Foster, "Para una caracterización de la *Escritura* en los relatos de Borges," *Revista Iberoamericana*, 43 (1977), 337-55; Eduardo González, "Borges Marginal," *Revista Iberoamericana*, 43 (1977), 705-11; Ricardo Gutiérrez-Mouat, "Borges and the Center of the Labyrinth," *Romance Notes*, 21, No. 3 (1981), 287-92; Alicia Borinsky, "Repetition, Museums, Libraries: Jorge Luis Borges," *GLYPH*, 2 (1977), 88-101, an article that provides insights into a possible deconstruction of Borges's work, and underlines the undecidability of locus and of presence/absence in many of the texts; Jaime Alazraki, *Versiones. Inversiones. Revisiones: El Espejo como modelo estructural del relato en los cuentos de Borges* (Madrid: Ed. Gredos, 1977), a work that provides many interesting insights into the structure of Borges's stories, despite a thematization of the mirror as a construct and a tool for reading the stories. Noteworthy as well is Stephen Rudy, "The Garden of and in Borges's 'Garden of Forking Paths,'" in *The Structural Analysis of Narrative Texts*, ed. Andrej Kodjak et. al. (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1980). Rudy's note on Borges's (mis)use of Liddell Hart deserves to be quoted in full, as it succinctly provides another instance of labyrinthine and deconstructive (inter)textuality for the story: "Borges refers in various places to Liddell Hart's book under the titles *History of the 1914-1918 War*, *History of the European War*, *A History of the World War* (cf. Ronald Christ, *The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion*, New York: New York Univ. Press, 1969, p. 136). He seems clearly to have in mind *A History of the World War 1916-1918* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), which is the second, enlarged edition of Liddell Hart's *The Real War* (1930). The page references to Liddell Hart given in the two English translations differ: p. 22 according to *Ficciones*; p. 212 according to *Labyrinths*. Neither has anything to do with the Battle of the Somme" (p. 141). Both Christ's book mentioned by Rudy and his article entitled "Forking Narratives," *Latin American Literary Review*, 14 (1979), 52-61, are noteworthy as well.

2. Jorge Luis Borges, "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1974), p. 478. Subsequent quotations from Borges's work will be to this edition, unless otherwise indicated, and will be given by page number in the text. For the English translation, I have relied on Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (Harmondsworth, Mx.: Penguin Books, 1971), modifying the translations where necessary.

3. Jorge Luis Borges, "El Disco" and "El Libro de Arena," in *El Libro de Arena* (Madrid: Emecé Editores, 1975).