UDC: 821.134.2(82).09 Borhes H. L.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18485/beoiber.2024.8.2.7

Maria Dabija[1]
Harvard University
United States of America

THE GARDEN OF INTERSECTING PATHS: JORGE LUIS BORGES AND HIS VISIONARY INTERTEXTS

Abstract

Jorge Luis Borges's Aleph, a tiny point in space that reflects the whole universe, has a truly global lineage, a fact acknowledged by the author himself at the end of his story. Claiming that he quotes from one of Captain Richard Burton's manuscripts, he lists a whole series of similar optical devices, which appear in texts as different as *One Thousand and One Nights*, Lucian of Samosata's *Vera Historia*, and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. In this paper, I propose to complicate this intertextual network by adding a medieval source that has been overlooked in scholarship on Borges: the allegorical poem *Le Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, which tells the story of a Lover who enters a wonderful garden in his sleep and starts the quest for his Rose, allegory of the beloved. Perhaps the main reason why critics have ignored *Le Roman* lies in Borges's essay "De las alegorías a las novelas" (1949), where he calls it "laberíntico" and dismisses the whole allegorical art as stupid, frivolous, and intolerable for a contemporary reader. My argument is that, in fact, he owes it much more than he would like to admit. In both Borges's poetry and fiction, his lifelong obsession with rose symbolism is tied to de Lorris and de Meun's poem as well. I will pay particular attention to the episode of Narcissus's pool, which prefigures the workings of his Aleph. To mediate this medieval connection, I will bring up two other sources that had a great influence on Borges's thinking: T.S. Eliot's cycle of poems *Four Quartets* and H.G. Wells's short story "The Door in the Wall," both with a vision of a magical garden at heart. The (re)discovery of this literary tradition should provide new insight into Borges's attitude towards allegorical method, questions of memory, and the nature of the visionary experience itself.

Keywords: Jorge Luis Borges, *Le Roman de la Rose*, T.S. Eliot, allegory, visionary tradition.

[1] mariadabija@g.harvard.edu
ORCID iD: Maria Dabija https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2926-3464

EL JARDÍN DE SENDEROS QUE SE CRUZAN:
JORGE LUIS BORGES Y SUS INTERTEXTOS VISIONARIOS

Resumen

El Aleph de Jorge Luis Borges, un minúsculo punto en el espacio que refleja todo el universo, tiene un linaje verdaderamente global, hecho reconocido por el propio autor al final de su relato. Afirmando que cita uno de los manuscritos del capitán Richard Burton, Borges enumera toda una serie de dispositivos ópticos similares, que aparecen en textos tan diferentes como *Las mil y una noches*, *La Historia verdadera* de Luciano de Samósata y *La Reina Hada* de Edmund Spenser. En este artículo, propongo complicar esta red intertextual agregando una fuente medieval que ha sido pasada por alto en los estudios sobre Borges: el poema alegórico *El Roman de la Rose* de Guillaume de Lorris y Jean de Meun, que cuenta la historia de un amante que entra mientras duerme en un maravilloso jardín y emprende la búsqueda de su Rosa, alegoría de la amada. Quizás la razón principal por la que los críticos han ignorado *El Roman* radica en el ensayo de Borges «De las alegorías a las novelas» (1949), donde lo llama «laberíntico» y descarta todo el arte alegórico como estúpido, frívolo e intolerable para un lector contemporáneo. Mi argumento es que, de hecho, le debe mucho más de lo que le gustaría admitir. Tanto en la poesía como la ficción de Borges, su obsesión de toda la vida por el simbolismo de la rosa está ligada también al poema de De Lorris y De Meun. Prestaré especial atención al episodio de la fuente de Narciso, que prefigura el funcionamiento de su Aleph. Para mediar en esta conexión medieval mencionaré otras dos fuentes que tuvieron gran influencia en el pensamiento de Borges: El ciclo de poemas de T. S. Eliot, *Cuatro cuartetos*, y el cuento de H. G. Wells, «La puerta en el muro», ambos con la visión de un jardín mágico. El (re)descubrimiento de esta tradición literaria debería proporcionar una nueva visión de la actitud de Borges hacia el método alegórico, las cuestiones de la memoria y la naturaleza de la experiencia visionaria misma.

Palabras clave: Jorge Luis Borges, *Le Roman de la Rose*, T. S. Eliot, alegoría, tradición visionaria.

Jorge Luis Borges's *oeuvre*, which bristles with dreamlike narratives, allegorical meanings, and esoteric symbols, is the product of visionary writings from all over the world, featuring allusions to Buddhism, Kabbalah, and Sufism as well as to Christian mysticism. Prompted by Borges's own interpretive suggestions, there has been a growing body of scholarship on his creative engagement with all these religious discourses, such as Edna Aizenberg's *The Aleph Weaver: Biblical, Kabbalistic and Judaic Elements in Borges* (1984), Luce López-Baralt's chapter "Islamic Themes" in *The Cambridge Companion to Jorge Luis Borges* (2013), or, more recently, Dominique Julien's monograph *Borges, Buddhism and World Literature* (2019). However, just as Borges himself teaches us that the word "chess" should be avoided in a riddle whose answer is that very word (see Borges 1974e: 479), it is equally important to consider those visionary texts that he purposefully chooses to dismiss. One of them is the 13th-century Old French poem *Le Roman de la Rose*, started by Guillaume de Lorris circa 1230 and completed by Jean de Meun forty-five years later,

which tells the story of a Dreamer who enters a walled garden in his sleep and embarks on a long quest to conquer his Rose, allegory of the beloved. Perhaps the main reason why critics have ignored *Le Roman* lies in Borges's essay "De las alegorías a las novelas" (1949), where he calls it "laberíntico" and writes off the whole allegorical art as stupid, frivolous, and intolerable for a contemporary reader (1974a: 745). Given Borges's lifelong fascination with both labyrinths and roses, this brief critical mention may conceal as much as it reveals. In this paper, I am going to explore this unacknowledged lineage, with particular attention to the prevalence of roses in Borges's poetry and fiction. I hope to show that Borges owes much more to *Le Roman* than he would like to admit, and I will argue that Borges's keen interest in mystically tinged roses should lead us to see his relationship to allegory in a new light.

To demonstrate that de Lorris's and de Meun's garden is a site of meaningful intertextual encounters, I will (re)trace Borges's footsteps through two other influential sources: T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and H.G. Wells's short story "The Door in the Wall," both with the vision of a magical garden at heart. My aim is not only to situate Borges in this visionary tradition but also to highlight how he reinvented it, very much in the spirit of his famous claim that "cada escritor *crea* a sus precursores" (1974h: 712). With this analysis of literary influences, I both challenge and tap into Borges's understanding of tradition, which interrogates the circulation of ideas according to a direct line of descent and turns the spotlight on the creative contribution of the reader. David Damrosch will later echo Borges in his third definition of world literature, speaking not of "a set canon of texts" but of "a mode of reading" (2003: 281). As we will see, the ways in which Borges the author uses his artistic heritage depends on how playful and unpredictable Borges the reader is. A sci-fi writer like H.G. Wells could engage in a simultaneous dialogue with T.S. Eliot, who was highly critical of his utopian outlook, and *Le Roman* only in such an eclectic mind as Borges's. A proud Argentinian, who is aware that his "outsideness" from tradition can be a vantage point, Borges approaches Western literature with a casualness and irreverence he deems indispensable in "El escritor argentino y la tradición" (1974d: 273).

1. The (other)worldly roses

The rose, a ubiquitous and ambiguous symbol par excellence, constantly resurfaces in Borges's imaginary world. For him, its perfectly shaped corolla with multilayered petals becomes one of the more powerful representations of the infinite and the ineffable, two qualities associated with divinity. Analyzing it in relation to other key concepts from his works, Luce López-Baralt shrewdly observes that the rose forms a perfect triad with the enigmatic objects in two of Borges's stories from the 1940s, "El Aleph" and "El Zahir,"

where the former is a tiny translucent sphere reflecting the whole universe and the latter is a mysterious twenty-centavo coin, whose two sides "Borges," the narrator of the story, wants to see at the same time (see López-Baralt 2013: 74-8). Although López-Baralt specifically discusses Islamic tropes and themes, she begins her chapter by saying that "Borges mastered with uncanny ease the literature of both the West and the East, and set them, like shifting mirrors, into an unexpected dialogue" (López-Baralt 2013: 68). As is the case with "El Aleph" and "El Zahir," fictions whose plots echo each other in invoking mourning for the beloved and the experience of mystical plenitude, Borges's poetry is structured according to the same "mirroring" effect; it not only connects the author's texts into a cohesive pattern, but also brings together his interests in both Western and Eastern cultures. With its wonderful adaptability and polysemous meaning, the rose has a major role to play in these cross-cultural encounters.

Borges's 1975 poem "La rosa profunda" opens with two contrasting acts of beholding, which – as the narrative goes – occurred five hundred years ago in the wake of the Hegira: while Persia was looking down from its minarets on the invasion of the desert lances, the poet Attar of Nishapur was contemplating a rose. The allusion to emotional strain and looming chaos, implied by a shared visual experience of military attack, is eclipsed by the poet's philosophical meditation. The poem's focus suddenly switches from outward turmoil, which is collectively experienced, to an individual state of inner peace and absolute calm. We gain access to what is happening in Attar's mind's eye, where the real flower he is holding in his hands transforms into an abstract object, a suggestion of divine revelation: "rosa profunda, ilimitada, íntima, / que el Señor mostrará a mis ojos muertos" (Borges 1977: 92). Like the crystal sphere of the Aleph, it is described as a "vaga esfera," whereas the all-encompassing definition at the end, claiming the rose to be an umbrella term for "música, firmamentos, palacios, ríos, ángeles" (Borges 1977: 92), is reminiscent of the Zahir, which has taken different shapes throughout history: a vein in a piece of marble, a tiger, a brass astrolabe, and many other things. It is not a matter of chance that, in the latter story, Borges quotes a verse from Attar's *Asrar Nama* (*The Book of Things Unknown*) saying that "el Zahir es la sombra de la Rosa y la rasgadura del Velo" (1974f: 594). Read through the lens of Sufism, the shadow rose "points to the mystic's experience of the material" and gives way "to the Infinite Rose the instant God rends his Veil" (López-Baralt 2013: 76). Although directly connected to the Persian poet's literary heritage, the choice of Attar for this poem is also motivated by a pun hidden in his very name, which Borges's keen ear couldn't have missed: the word "attar," with its etymological roots stretching as far as the Arabic *'itr* (perfume), means a fragrant essential oil, typically made from rose petals. Thus, Attar is more than a historical figure in this context; he himself turns into a linguistic sign endowed with mystical overtones. This idea is particularly striking in the following verse, which evokes the rose's overpowering scent: "La incesante pleamar de tu fragancia / sube a mi vieja cara que declina" (Borges 1977:

92). On closer inspection, the protagonist of this text is not Attar the poet, but Attar the Word, becoming one with the ideal, spectral rose he envisions. Although López-Baralt doesn't discuss Attar's name, she rightly points out that, under the literary mask of the Persian poet, "Borges is invoking the fragrant rose that language saves from oblivion, and that could take any shape or color in the reader's mind" (2013: 74). For Borges, this could also resonate with Mallarmé's ideal of finding a universal poetic language that would make every reader see the same rose he himself was seeing. In the poem "Toast funèbre," a eulogy to Théophile Gautier, he makes the rose and the lily embody "le mystère d'un nom": "Le Maître, par un œil profond, a, sur ses pas, / Apaisé de l'éden l'inquiète merveille / Dont le frisson final, dans sa voix seule, éveille, / Pour la rose et le Lys, le mystère d'un nom" (Mallarmé 1914: 85).

To highlight Attar's role as Borges's alter ego, López-Baralt also brings up the question of the Persian poet's blindness, which isn't historically accurate. As López-Baralt further explains, Borges rather refers to Attar's symbolic blindness, an important motif in his *The Secret Books* (see 2013: 74). She invokes a Sufi understanding of epiphany, when the mystic leaves behind both the corporeal vision of the rose and its more lasting literary counterpart for the eternal Rose beyond language (López-Baralt 2013: 74).

In the same vein, Jason Wilson's chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Jorge Luis Borges* identifies blindness and aging as two overarching topics of Borges's late poetry. Seeing in them both a biographical and literary experience, Wilson notices that Borges felt particularly drawn to Milton toward the end of his life; the main reason behind this "elective affinity" was blindness, which the author of *Paradise Lost* treated not as "a sin or a calamity, but rather [a] chance to pierce 'things merely of their colour and surface'" (Wilson 2013: 189). Even though Wilson talks about the poems "La rosa profunda" and "Una rosa y Milton" in the same section of his text, he never reads them together. Once brought into conjunction, they reveal that Attar and Milton are not only each other's double, but also Borges's own reflection in the mirrors of the West and the East.

In "Una rosa y Milton," Borges's own favorite of his poems, the lyrical "I" is granted the privilege of choosing "la postrera Rosa que Milton acercó a su cara, / Sin verla" (1972c: 144). Strikingly similar to Attar's globular flower, which can take on different colors from the whiteness of the sun or the moon's gold to the crimson stain, Milton's invisible rose displays a chameleonic nature as well: "O tú, bermeja o amarilla/O blanca rosa de un jardín borrado" (Borges 1972c: 144). Instead of being colorless, as its apparent non-visual aspect would imply, invisibility renders the corolla essentially polychromatic and impossible to pin down. The rose is obviously an abstraction, but not one that lacks any personality. With such an ever-shifting palette at play, it encompasses all the possibilities from both real and potential worlds, becoming an apt metaphor for the infinite. Like God, the flower has multiple faces without ever ceasing to be faceless; it

belongs to the realm of literature, where everything is eternal: "Deja mágicamente tu pasado / Immemorial y en este verso brilla" (Borges 1972c: 144). Enhancing the acuity of spiritual senses, it is Milton's blindness that endows the rose with a literary aura and makes it invisible in a mystical way.

In an early poem by Borges on this theme, simply entitled "La rosa," this wonderful flower is once again a meeting point between the West and the East: "la rosa de los persas y de Ariosto" (Borges 1972b: 254). Unlike the above-mentioned texts, where both Attar and Milton couldn't see the bud in their hands, this poem features a rose that is itself blind. Therefore, its metaphysical meaning is not just a projection of a visionary mind but something inherently characteristic of the object itself. The poem doesn't end with the idea of a fulfilled revelation, namely the unveiling of the rose before the poet's "dead eyes," since the rose in question turns out to be "incalcanzable." Not glowing forever in poetry like its Miltonic counterpart, this rose ends up transcending the boundaries of language: "la ardiente y ciega rosa que no canto" (Borges 1972b: 254). Its close association with fire, a symbol of passion and divine inspiration, goes back to a previous line, in which it is said to be born again "por el arte de la alquimia" out of tenuous ash (Borges 1972b: 254).

This phoenix-like resurrection links the poem to Borges's "La rosa de Paracelso," one of the best-known parables of his late period, underscoring the coherence of his artistic project. It tells the story of a young disciple, Johannes Grisebach, who challenges Paracelsus, the famous Swiss physician, alchemist, and philosopher of the German Renaissance, to burn a rose to ashes and make it emerge again. If the miracle works out, the novice promises to give his entire life to serving his master. Upon hearing this condition, Paracelsus burns the rose and admits that his famed magic art is a mere fraud, a confession that bitterly disappoints his young guest. As he leaves Paracelsus's house, the sage puts out the lamp, pours the fistful of ashes from one hand into his other palm, and whispers a single word, making the rose miraculously reappear.

Borges himself invites a Kabbalistic interpretation of this tale. Referring to his magical tools, Paracelsus explains to the skeptical neophyte: "Hablo del que usó la divinidad para crear los cielos y la tierra y el invisible Paraíso en que estamos, y que el pecado original nos oculta. Hablo de la Palabra que nos enseña la ciencia de la Cábala" (1989: 391). As Jaime Alazraki (1972: 240-267) argues, this set of esoteric teachings greatly informs Borges's outlook, proving his good acquaintance with the doctrine through such canonical works as Erich Bischoff's *Die Elemente der Kabbalah*, Stehelin's *Rabbinical Literature* or Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. The logocentric dimension of Kabbalistic hermeneutics, according to which God created the universe through the Hebrew language and through the Torah, was particularly appealing to Borges, who believed that the "whole world is merely a system of symbols, that the whole

world, including the stars, stood for God's secret writing" (Barnstone 1982: 82). Brought back to life, Paracelsus's rose perfectly illustrates such a creative power of the Word.

Although Borges's parable is deeply rooted in the tradition of Jewish mysticism, it also contains some unacknowledged references to a more immediate literary context. To quote Borges's fictional reviewer from the short story "El acercamiento a Almotásim," "a nadie le gusta (como dijo Johnson) deber nada a sus contemporáneos" (1974b: 417). For Borges, one such contemporary rival was T.S. Eliot.

2. Borges and T.S. Eliot: a telling misquotation

Scholars have often drawn parallels between Borges and Eliot, either in terms of their essayistic activity or regarding Borges's creative rewriting of *The Waste Land* in "El inmortal." José Luis Venegas's article "Eliot, Borges, Tradition, and Irony" (2006) combines these two approaches, exploring how the Argentine author radically revised Eliot's very classicist understanding of tradition, which has the model of Greek Antiquity at heart, in both his criticism and fiction. However, the influence of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, a set of four meditations published between 1936-1942, has never been raised in current scholarship on these two writers.

Borges himself once mentioned this cycle of poems in his class on the Anglo-Saxon Bestiary, part of the larger course on English literature that he taught at the University of Buenos Aires:

> There is an expression I have never been able to figure out, and perhaps you can help me solve it. It is a verse from Eliot, I think it is in his *Four Quartets*. It says: 'Came Christ, the tiger.' Now, I don't know if Eliot's identification of Christ with the tiger is based on some memory he has of an ancient Saxon text that identifies Christ with the panther (which is a tiger), or if Eliot is simply seeking to evoke surprise – though I don't think so, for that would be too easy. (Borges 2013: 58)

What makes this reference even more interesting is that it is a misquotation; in fact, the line in question is fished from T.S. Eliot's 1920 poem "Gerontion," not his *Four Quartets*, as the professor Borges assumed. More than just a small inaccuracy, it proves that the Argentine author was familiar with both texts, whose religious aura kept lingering in his memory and haunting his imagination. It is precisely their mystical character that made Borges's encyclopedic mind confuse one with the other. Given Borges's fascination with tigers and panthers, two animals that occupy a special place in his fictional bestiary, it is no wonder he found Eliot's identification of Christ with the tiger

so productive and thought-provoking. In like manner, the all-pervading rose symbolism in *Four Quartets* should have made the same powerful impression on him.

2.1 Circular roses and timeless gardens

The seeds of Borges's Paracelsian rose are scattered throughout T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding," the closing poem of *Four Quartets*. In the first stanza of section II, one can discover Borges's entire story in a nutshell: "Ash on an old man's sleeve / Is all the ash the burnt roses leave. / Dust in the air suspended / Marks the place where a story ended" (Eliot 1971b: 60). It's not difficult to glimpse Borges's Paracelsus in the figure of the old man whose sleeves are sprinkled with ash. This anonymous sage will reappear as the ghost of a dead master, whom the poet meets "[n]ear the ending of interminable night… between three districts whence the smoke arose" (Eliot 1971b: 52). Note that the past simple of the verb "to arise" ("arose") can be read as "a rose" in this context, especially when coupled with smoke. Though initially Eliot wanted to identify the old man with Yeats or Brunetto Latini, as Helen Gardner convincingly argues (1978: 65), he abandoned this idea in favor of a "compound ghost" made out of different literary figures, from Dante and Yeats to Swift, Milton, and many others. Through Borges's reinterpretation, Paracelsus joins this illustrious group.

But where is the promised resurrection of the rose? In the above-quoted stanza, it is dust in the air that crowns the story, the very ending that Paracelsus's might-have-been disciple witnesses. On the level of prosody, however, these rhymed couples conjure up the rhythm of an incantatory formula. This view is supported by Julia Maniates Reibetanz's close reading of section II, in which she points out the effect of directness and spareness as well as "the pattern of heavily end-stopped, two-line units" (1983: 150). Thus, these lines both encapsulate the story Borges retells and reenacts Paracelsus's incantation itself. Although Eliot later claims that "[i]t is not to ring the bell backward / Nor is it an incantation / To summon the spectre of a Rose" (Eliot 1971b: 56), the truth is just the opposite. On closer examination, the way in which the whole cycle rounds out upon itself tells the same never-ending story of the rose's consummation and subsequent revival: in the finale of "Little Gidding," the mystical union of the rose and the fire is supposed to bring us back to the image of rose-garden in "Burnt Norton," the opening poem of *Four Quartets*. With the participle "burnt" in the title, the latter heralds the imagery of fire and burning roses in "Little Gidding." Obsessed with "circular ruins" and Nietzsche's idea of "eternal return," Borges couldn't have failed to notice the ouroboros-like structure of *Four Quartets* and the association of the rose with cyclical time.

An idyllic yet quite elusive *topos*, the rose-garden becomes an allegory of eternity. Described as just a "moment," it is in fact timeless, effacing not only the difference between "time present and time past" (Eliot 1971a: 13), but also between "what might

have been" and "what has been" (Eliot 1971a: 13). This vision resonates with Borges's conception of the universe, as presented in "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" through Ts'ui Pen's novel of the same name, which features "diversos porvenires, diversos tiempos, que también proliferan y se bifurcan" (1974e: 478). Eliot's rose-garden stands for a continuous present ripe with *all* possibilities, blurring the line between actual fact and many other, equally valid, potentialities. This becomes even more obvious in the remark that the memory of the garden can be accessed only through "the passage which we did not take" and "the door we never opened" (Eliot 1971a: 13). It implies the recollection of something that once happened with the suggestions of unexplored paths, a sort of memory in the future.

The mention of a magic door, which would lead to such a miraculous and longed-for park, might hint at H.G. Wells's short story "The Door in the Wall," first published in the *Daily Chronicle* in 1906, a story that Borges also cherished for "un matiz alegórico que no es habitual vincular al nombre de Wells" (Borges 1984: 11). Its protagonist, Lionel Wallace, is obsessed with a distant memory of a near-mystical experience he had as a five-year-old boy, when he opened a green door and suddenly found himself in a beautiful garden. There he met two panthers, many welcoming people, and a "sombre dark woman, with a grave, pale face and dreamy eyes" (Wells 1980: 11), who gave him the book of his life to read. Once he reached the very point where he'd discovered the door, the enchanted garden vanished, leaving the boy back in the street. The rest of the story recalls a series of missed opportunities to access this delightful world again because of more pressing matters, such as getting to school on time, seeing his father on his deathbed, or discussing important political issues. Already a grown-up man, Wallace had bitterly regretted not taking advantage of all these occasions until his corpse is discovered at the bottom of an excavation near East Kensington Station, which had a small doorway leading to it. In spite of this anti-climactic, almost tragicomic death, the narrator renders it very ambiguously, opening up new vistas for interpretation:

> You may think me superstitious if you will, and foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he had in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something – I know not what – that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you thought the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination. We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger and death. But did he see like that? (Wells 1980: 24)

Did this door *actually* exist, or it was nothing more than a mere vision? If we accept the latter hypothesis, was the vision true or false? Does this distinction matter? We will

come back to this discussion with Borges's "El Aleph," which pushes the question one step further. Similarly, the garden in "Burnt Norton" describes a liminal condition par excellence: neither a fully-fledged memory nor a totally unreal event. Filled with children's laughter, like the garden of childhood in Wells's story, it simultaneously triggers a state of absolute happiness and of wistful longing. Along with immense joy, the fixation it provokes can be traced back, via Wells, to the Garden of Pleasure from *Le Roman de la Rose*, itself modeled on the Garden of Eden and the "hortus conclusus" from the *Song of Songs* ("a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse").

In *Le Roman*, the narrator – Guillaume de Lorris himself – records a wonderful dream he had when he was twenty years old. As he writes at the beginning, "onques riens où songe n'ot / Qui avenue trestout ne soit/Si cum li songes recontoit"[2] (1878: 4). Reconstructed from the past as a prophecy of the future that has already been fulfilled, it unsettles the conventional boundaries of time, very much in the spirit of how Eliot prefaces the garden episode: "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future / And time future contained in time past" (Eliot 1971a: 13). In the dream, the visionary narrator wakes and chances upon a beautiful garden, whose walls are covered with paintings representing all kinds of vices, from Hate and Cruelty to Baseness and Avarice, forever excluded from the world of delight. Desperate to enter the garden, the Dreamer finally finds a gate guarded by Idleness, who welcomes him inside and introduces him to allegoric characters like Love, Beauty, Wealth, and Largess. Having danced and enjoyed their company, he goes for a walk and stumbles upon the pool of Narcissus, known to be a "miréoirs périlleus" (1878: 104) because it tricked and killed Narcissus. Daring and curious, the Dreamer resolves to look into its running water, where he sees two crystals shining at the bottom. Endowed with some miraculous powers, they gradually reveal the whole garden, so there "n'i a si petite chose, / Tant reposte, ne tant enclose, / Dont démonstrance n'i soit faite, / Cum s'ele iert es cristaus portraite"[3] (1878: 104). This is a turning point in the poem since he also glimpses a beautiful rose in this reflection, falling head over heels in love with her. With the rose as both a source of pleasure and an irremediable obsession, a long quest lies ahead of the dreaming lover.

In "Burnt Norton," T.S. Eliot (1971a: 14) rewrites the garden imagery from *Le Roman* down to the episode of Narcissus's pool:

> So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
> Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
> To look down into the drained pool.
> Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,

[2] "there was nothing in the dream that has not come true, exactly as the dream told it" (1994: 3)
[3] "there is nothing so small, so secret, or so hidden that is not displayed there, as if it were etched in the crystal" (De Lorris and de Meun, 1994: 25)

And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.

At first dry, then suddenly filled with sunlight as if with water, and empty again, Eliot's pool has something illusory about it. Like the crystals in the Medieval text, it reflects the roses and "other echoes" that inhabit the place. An equivalent of the Rose itself, whose sight the Dreamer catches in the water's mirror, a quiet lotus comes up to the surface. Leonard Unger rightly points out the flower's sexual significance (1966: 80), which reinforces its connection to the erotic allegory from de Lorris and de Meun's poem. For Unger, the very moment of the rose-garden should be read through Eliot's essay on Dante (1929), in which he discusses Dante's experience of childhood ecstasy coinciding with his sexual awakening, as it is described in *La Vita Nuova*. Eliot emphasizes that, in order to understand Dante's ecstasy upon meeting Beatrice, it is important to find meaning "in the *final causes* rather than in origins," and this final cause "is attraction towards God" (Unger 1966: 70). In Eliot's (re)vision of *Le Roman*, the erotic feeling always has a transcendental goal because, ultimately, "Burnt Norton" is about "the spiritual quest, the constant endeavor to interpret the experience and thus to relive it" (Unger 1966: 79). Developing this idea, Robert D. Wagner argues that the rose garden illustrates the tension between original experience and its subsequent recollection, when we are no longer "at one with reality" and recover it "in a different form" (1954: 26). As he further explains, that's why the episode of the pool ends with the bird's conclusion that "human kind / Cannot bear very much reality," followed by the expulsion from the garden (Wagner 1954: 26). This is a lesson we also learn from Borges's Aleph: the revelation of the whole universe can be truly unbearable for us. In the remainder of my essay, I will show how Borges draws inspiration from both Narcissus's pool and its modern counterpart in Eliot's rose-garden, rethinking the question of memory and the nature of the visionary experience itself. In view of his poem "Los espejos," where Borges muses on his deep-rooted fear of mirrors, including the one that reflects "una vaga rosa" (1974i: 814), this intertextual trajectory shapes up even more distinctly.

3. The Aleph: a non-allegorical vision of the world

A story about a revelatory moment, like Eliot's rose-garden, "El Aleph" sends us back to Dante's *La Vita Nuova* too. It begins with Borges's protagonist, his alter ego, mourning the death of his beloved, Beatriz Viterbo - a narrative that evokes Dante's

absolute devotion to the memory of Beatrice Portinari. Every year, Beatriz's birthday is a pretext to visit her house on Garay Street, where he can carefully study all her photographs. In this way, on these "aniversarios melancólicos y vanamente eróticos" (1974c: 618), "Borges" comes into the confidence of Carlos Argentino Daneri, Beatriz's cousin and a mediocre poet, who is working on a boring and pompous epic called *La Tierra*. One day, Daneri confesses that a business is attempting to demolish his house, which is crucial for the creative process: there is an "Aleph," a point in space that contains all other points, in its cellar; everything he writes is copied from this vision. Suspecting him to be mad, the narrator goes down to the cellar and gets the chance to experience the Aleph firsthand: all the objects, faces, and things appear before his eyes in an "instante gigantesco" (Borges 1974c: 625). The descent to the basement, followed by such an extraordinary insight, repeats Dante's pilgrimage in *Divina Commedia*, when he has to go through Hell and Purgatory to finally contemplate the court of Heaven in the form of the "now-always rose," with Beatrice in its heart. Although only partially reproduced, Borges's account manages to convey the overwhelming quality of this "event":

> Cada cosa (la luna del espejo, digamos) era infinitas cosas, porque yo claramente la veía desde todos los puntos del universo. Vi el populoso mar, vi el alba y la tarde, vi las muchedumbres de América, vi una plateada telaraña en el centro de una negra pirámide, vi un laberinto roto (era Londres), vi interminables ojos inmediatos escrutándose en mí como en un espejo, vi todos los espejos del planeta y ninguno me reflejó… (Borges 1974c: 625)

The vision includes everything from a Persian astrolabe and a set of "cartas obscenas, increíbles, precisas que Beatriz había dirigido a Carlos Argentino" (Borges 1974c: 626) to the circulation of his own blood and a sunset in Querétaro "que parecía reflejar el color de una rosa en Bengala" (Borges 1974c: 625). Finally,

> vi el Aleph, desde todos los puntos, vi en el Aleph la tierra, y en la tierra otra vez el Aleph y en el Aleph la tierra, vi mi cara y mis vísceras, vi tu cara, y sentí vertigo y lloré, porque mis ojos habían visto ese objeto secreto y conjetural, cuyo nombre usurpan los hombres, pero que ningún hombre ha mirado: el inconcebible universo. (Borges 1974c: 626).

Such a totalizing vision of the world, condensed in a tiny point, has a long history behind it. In Cicero's "Somnium Scipionis," the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus is visited by his dead grandfather, Scipio Africanus, in a prophetic dream that predicts his glorious destruction of Carthage. Protecting him from megalomania, the elder Scipio shows his successor the vast universe, in which the entire earth is a just small and insignificant dot (see Cicero 1998: 86-94). Similarly, in *A Revelation of Love*, the medieval English anchoress Julian of Norwich records how she saw "a little thing the quantity of

an haselnot, lying in the palme of my hand," which turned out to be "all that is made" (2006: 139). Perceived as a "hazelnot," where "not" is a pun on "nought," the world here (both everything and nothing) prefigures Borges's "Aleph," which has the following quote from *Hamlet* as its epigraph: "O God I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a King of infinite space" (Borges 1974c: 617). But the Aleph also has the quality of an "esfera tornasolada, de casi intolerable fulgor" (Borges 1974c: 625), acting like a peculiar optical instrument. In the story's postscript, which claims that the Aleph of Garay Street was false, Borges lists a whole series of such devices in texts as different as *One Thousand and One Nights*, Lucian of Samosata's *Vera Historia*, Capella's *Satyricon*, and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Borges 1974c: 627). An important source he chooses to conceal is *Le Roman de la Rose*, which claims an all-embracing nature from the introductory couplet: "Ci est le Rommant de la Rose / Où l'art d'Amors est tote enclose" (1878: 2). Considering Jean de Meun's alternative title "Miroir aux amoureux," *Le Roman* is such an Aleph-like mirror that shows us *multum in parvo*.

At first glance, the little crystals in Narcissus's pool, conceived as a *mise en abyme*, have the same marvelous properties: revealing the whole garden, so that there is "n'i a si petite chose, / Tant reposte, ne tant enclose, / Dont démonstrance n'i soit faite, / Cum s'ele iert es cristaus portraite"[4] (De Lorris et de Meun 1878: 104), they bring the Dreamer to a supreme moment - the revelation of his Rose. Although truly impressive, the crystals' workings are gradual, not simultaneous:

> Ainsinc cum li miréors montre
> Les choses qui li sunt encontre,
> Et y voit-l'en sans coverture
> Et lor color, et lor figure;
> Tretout ausinc vous dis por voir,
> Que li cristal, sans décevoir,
> Tout l'estre du vergier accusent
> A ceus qui dedens l'iaue musent:
> Car tous jours quelque part qu'il soient,
> L'une moitié du vergier voient;
> Et s'il se torment maintenant,
> Pueent véoir le remenant.[5] (De Lorris et de Meun 1878: 104)

[4] "there is nothing so small, so secret, or so hidden that is not displayed there, as if it were etched in the crystal" (De Lorris and de Meun 1994: 25)

[5] "Just as things placed in front of a mirror are reflected in it, and their appearance and colour are seen quite plainly, exactly so, I assure you, does the crystal truly disclose the whole of the garden to him who gazes into the water. For whichever side he is on, he can always see half of the garden, and by turning he is at once able to see the remainder." (De Lorris and de Meun 1994: 24-25)

In the second part of *Le Roman*, closer to the end, this fact prompts Jean de Meun to dismiss the pool in de Lorris's version as misleading:

> Au fons, ce dist, a cristaulx doubles,
> Que li solaus, qui n'est pas troubles,
> Fait luire quant ses rais I giete,
> Si cler que cis qui les aguiete,
> Voit tous jors la moitié des choses
> Qui sunt en cel Jardin encloses:
> Et puet le remanant véoir,
> S'il se vuet d'autre part séoir,
> Tant sunt clers, tant sunt vertueus;
> Certes ains sunt troble et nueus.
> Quant li solaus ses rais i lance,
> De toutes les choses ensemble?
> Par foi qu'il ne puéent, ce semble,
> Por l'oscurté qui les obnuble…[6] (1879: 282-4)

In contrast, the real spring is "utterly lovely" (1994: 315), with an incandescent carbuncle sparkling in its waters. This amazing stone doesn't need any source of light; by emitting rays on its own, it replaces the sun in the park and creates the everlasting day that is "[s]ans fin et sans commencement, / Et se tient en un point de gré"[7] (1879: 290). On top of that, those who turn towards the spring and look at their own faces can

> Tous jors de quelque part qu'il soient,
> Toutes les choses du parc voient,
> Et les congnoissent proprement,
> Et eus-méismes ensement;
> Et puis que là se sunt véu,
> Jamès ne seront déceu
> De nule chose qui puist ester,
> Tant i deviennent sage mestre.[8] (1879: 290)

[6] "At the bottom, he says, are two crystals of such power and radiance that when the rays of the unclouded sun fall upon them, they shine so brightly that anyone looking at them can always see half of the things that are enclosed in the garden, and can see the remainder by stationing himself on the other side. But it is certain that they are cloudy and murky. Why, when the sun's rays fall upon them, do they not reveal everything at once? By my faith, it seems to me that they cannot, because of the gloom that shadows them." (1994: 314-5)

[7] "[has] neither ending nor beginning and of its own accord remains fixed at one particular point" (1994: 316)

[8] "see, and rightly to understand, all the things in the part and themselves as well. Once they have seen themselves there, they become such wise masters that nothing that exists will ever be able to deceive them" (1994: 316)

The Aleph, capable of reflecting everything at once, appears to be the immediate descendant of de Meun's carbuncle rather than of de Lorris's crystals. Yet Borges wouldn't be Borges if he didn't complicate this intertextual game. Modeled on what de Meun calls "the real spring," the Aleph of Garay Street ends up being declared false, a situation not very different from what happens to the pool of Narcissus from the first half of *Le Roman*. Playful with the notions of true and false visionary experiences, the Argentine author makes the boundary even more fluid. In spite of this inherent ambiguity, a careful analysis of the Narcissus pool scene can lay bare whose rendering, de Lorris's or de Meun's, Borges himself privileged.

Claire Nouvet has astutely argued that the crystalline speculum from the first half of *Le Roman* functions as a "highly inventive apparatus," which allegorizes the mirror of allegory and "retroactively defines perception itself as thoroughly allegorical" (2000: 357). According to her explanation, even though this mirror claims to disclose everything around it, it refracts solar light into different colors, where "colors" stand for "rhetorical tropes that allegory uses in order to veil its meaning" (Nouvet 2000: 362). Even the gradual unfolding of the garden illustrates the idea that allegory always develops in time, temporalizing – as she says after St. Augustine – "that which should be apprehended all at once" (Nouvet 2000: 267). But why, asks Nouvet, must the Dreamer contemplate in a mirror the garden that he has already seen with his naked eye? Here is her answer: "The speculum of the pool mirrors the mediation of his own previous 'naked' vision. The truth that the mirror 'reveals' is that, when the lover saw the garden with his naked eye, he was already seeing '*per speculum*,' that is, through the speculum of allegory" (Nouvet 2000: 367). It follows that Jean de Meun's "perfected" version of Narcissus's pool is just the opposite, a sort of non-allegorical mirror, and so is the Aleph. Borges underscores its ineffability and synchronic character, which can never be communicated because language itself is successive. What we gather from this visionary account is the view of a hyperreal world, even if it is recorded after the fact: the narrator sees all things, both huge and minuscule, in full detail, ranging from the teeming sea and the multitudes of America to Beatriz's rotted bones and every living ant. He even sees the Aleph from every point and angle as well as his own face and the face of his reader. Highly metatextual, such a reflection is still not allegorical, a difference that can be better understood through Borges's earlier text "Funes el memorioso" (1942).

In this short story, the narrator – another alter ego for Borges – recalls how he met Ireneo Funes, a Uruguayan boy with a prodigious, infallible memory: incapable of generalities, he remembered every individual entity in its absolute uniqueness, from the shape of each cloud to every grape that had been pressed into wine, with all the stalks and tendrils of its vineyard. Since he could perceive every crack in the wall, no matter

how small, he was deprived of sleep. "Dormir," Borges writes, "es distraerse del mundo" (1974g: 490). Although the young man accurately captured every object or perception, the narrator suspected that he was unable to form coherent thoughts, because "[p]ensar es olvidar diferencías, es generalizar, abstraer. En el abarrotado mundo de Funes no había sino detalles, casi inmediatos" (Borges 1974g: 490). In 1889, at the age of 21, he died of pulmonary congestion.

Read from a comparative perspective, the Aleph is a momentary and visual representation of Funes's all-encompassing memory. Borges himself invites such a parallel since both narrators use similar terms to confess the impossible task of expressing their experiences through words:

> Arribo, ahora, al más difícil punto de mi relato. Este (bueno es que ya lo sepa el lector) no tiene otro argumento que ese diálogo de hace ya medio siglo. No trataré de reproducir sus palabras, irrecuperables ahora. . . . El estilo indirecto es remote y débil; yo sé que sacrifice la eficacia de mi relato; que mis lectores se imaginen los entrecortados períodos que me abrumaron esa noche. ("Funes el memorioso", Borges 1974g: 488)

> Arribo, ahora, al inefable centro de mi relato; empieza, aqui, mi desesperación de escritor. Todo lenguaje es un alfabeto de símbolos cuyo ejercício presupone un pasado que los interlocutors comparten; ¿cómo trasmitir a los otros el infinito Aleph, que mi termerosa memoria apenas abarca? ("El Aleph", Borges 1974c: 624)

In both cases, we realize that, to quote Eliot once again, "human kind / Cannot bear very much reality" (1971a: 14). Not only serious parables about infinity – whether of space, memory, or time -, the two stories are also parodies that have a specific philosophical doctrine as their target. Jon Stewart (1996: 68-86) shows that "Funes el memorioso" represents Borges's refutation of nominalism, the view that universals and abstract objects are mere labels or names without an actual ontological existence. To use Borges's own example, nominalists believe that the concept "dog" can't account for all the individual dogs on the planet because each of them is absolutely unique. Funes's "inútil catálogo mental" (Borges 1974g: 489), which makes room for all such particulars, represents a caricature of this philosophy. On closer inspection, Borges himself makes his critique of nominalism explicit when he says that the Uruguayan genius was "casi incapaz de ideas generales, platónicas" (Borges 1974g: 490). Although Stewart doesn't go as far as the discussion of Borges's 1949 essay "De las alegorías a las novelas," such a reading will strengthen his argument and even push it one step further.

In this text, Borges begins by saying that, for all of us, allegory is an aesthetic mistake. It seemed "alguna vez encantador," he asserts, giving a parenthetical mention of *Le Roman de la Rose*, but "ahora es intolerable. Sentimos que, además de intolerable, es estúpido y frívolo" (1974a: 745). In fact, his comment is secretly rewriting C. S. Lewis's

chapter on *Le Roman* in his *Allegory of Love*, a 1936 book that sparked new interest in the poem. In the first paragraph, Lewis says:

> The allegorical love poem, as I confessed at the outset, makes little natural appeal to a modern reader. It is foreign to us not only in its sentiment but also, and more radically, in its form. In order to read it justly – to give the poet his chance, and with him to give most of the literature of the fifteenth century *its* chance – it was necessary to 'remount the stream of time.' (1959: 112)

A fierce adversary of presentism, Borges follows this advice and delves deep into history to explain the obsolescence of allegorical art. In light of Coleridge's observation that all men are born either Platonists or Aristotelians, he speaks of a never-ending antagonism between them across latitudes and epochs; the first kind are realists, used to thinking in abstract categories, whereas the latter are nominalists. Since allegory is a "fábula de abstracciones" (Borges 1974a: 746), the whole of allegorical literature derived from such a Platonic outlook, which defined the medieval mentality (if there is such a thing as a unified "medieval mentality" at all): "Tratemos de entender, sin embargo, que para los hombres de la Edad Media lo sustantivo no eran los hombres sìno la humanidad, no los individuos sino la especie, no las especies sino el género, no los géneros sino Dios" (Borges 1974a: 746). Little by little, nominalism has replaced Platonic realism, so that today no one declares himself a nominalist because no one is anything else: the novel, the product of this transition, has left no space for allegory. At first glance, Borges seems to poke fun at the allegorical method, writing it off as old-fashioned, yet it is important to keep in mind that, in fact, the genre he always resisted was the novel. Contrary to what he explicitly postulates, there is a longing for the lost allegorical art because Borges himself is a Platonist at heart.

Like Funes's memory, the Aleph represents the author's hyperbolic illustration of the nominalist doctrine; all the more so if we take into consideration that the world-containing object is named for the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet: it is the name of naming itself. As Borges clarifies, "[p]ara la Cábala, esa letra significa el En Soph, la ilimitada y pura divinidad; también se dijo que tiene la forma de un hombre que señala el cielo y la tierra, para indicar que el mundo inferior es el espejo y es el mapa del superior" (1974c: 627). But it is Platonism, not nominalism, that conceives our world as a reflection of the higher order. Nominalism rejects any transcendental frame of reference: "el lenguaje no es otra cosa que un sistema de símbolos arbitrarios" (Borges 1974a: 745). In his 1958 poem "El Golem," Borges mentions Plato's *Cratylus* to talk about names as archetypes of things: "En la letras de *rosa* está la rosa/Y todo el Nilo en la palabra *Nilo*" (1972a: 110). He believes in the existence of some Name encoding God's essence, which had been accessible to Adam in the garden of Eden before the Fall. Retelling the legend

of how Rabbi Judah Loew made the Golem, a mere "simulacrum" of God's creation through the Word, Borges draws our attention to the limitations of the human-created system of language and signs. Though the Golem is as fake as the Aleph, Borges never stops pining for the lost Name, whose exact syllables and letters could frame God's Omnipotence (1972a: 110-111).

A nominalist revelation, the Aleph of Garay Street is false because it reflects only what is visible and "real" in a purely empiricist sense. Stripping reality of deep spiritual layers, it can produce only third-rate texts in Daneri's style. It's not a matter of chance that, after the experience, the narrator struggles with insomnia for a couple of days. With no sleep, he can't see any dreams, and therefore loses access to the invisible world beyond our everyday perception; the apparent richness he witnesses leaves him impoverished. When analyzed more closely, dreams are also a form of allegory: they aim to unveil something in a veiled way. As we're told in the first paragraph of *Le Roman,* "[c]ar li plusors songent de nuitz / Maintes choses couvertement / Que l'en voit puis apertement"[9] (1878: 2). Thus, the Aleph blocks vision rather than triggering it. The only salvation lies in forgetfulness, which has a special role to play in Borges's story.

4. Forgetting the Rose

Having seen the mysterious Aleph, the narrator was afraid that nothing would ever surprise him again. Happily, as he claims, after a few sleepless nights he was visited by oblivion, which liberated him from Funes's fate. Not only did he lose the full memory of the Aleph, but he also failed to recall Beatriz's features. The last sentence says: "Nuestra mente es porosa para el olvido; yo mismo estoy falseando y perdiendo, bajo la trágica erosión de los años, los rasgos de Beatriz" (1974c: 628). It is not hard to observe that Beatriz is the equivalent of the Aleph; what the latter is for Daneri, the former is for "Borges": an incurable obsession. At the beginning of the story, the narrator confesses that the fact of Beatriz's death pained him because "vasto universo ya apartaba de ella" (1974c: 617). To counteract the constantly renewing force of the universe, he decides to commit himself to remembering her. For him, "to remember" means to raise a monument, to "freeze" time. That's why, upon visiting her house, he never misses the chance to study her photographs, trying to imprint every little detail upon the wax tablet of his memory. The reason for his interest in the Aleph is also inseparable from Beatriz, as Daneri easily guesses: "Baja; muy en breve podrás entablar un diálogo con *todas* las imágenes de Beatriz" (1974c: 624). Given such absolute devotion, why does "Borges" calmly accept the destruction of the house and the gradual forgetting of Beatriz's face? In this attitude, the

[9] "many people dream many things secretly, at night, which are later seen openly" (1994: 3)

Argentine writer radically departs from T.S. Eliot, who can only long for the irrecuperable moment of the rose-garden.

Perhaps the non-allegorical mirror of the Aleph taught him that true memory is inconceivable without forgetting. Albeit Borges speaks of "la trágica erosion de los años" (1974c: 628), the ability to forget comes as a great relief here. With the face of his beloved becoming an abstraction – or, in other words, an allegory – he can play with it at will. Across many epochs, philosophers have tended to link memory with imagination. One might think of Bartholomeus Anglicus, who in the Book 3 (chapter 10) of his compendium *De proprietatibus rerum* calls "memorativa" a virtue of the mind that "holdiþ and kepiþ in þe tresour of mynde þingis þat beþ apprehendid and iknowe bi þe yaginatif and *racio*"[10] (1975: 98). Similarly, the narrator realizes that, instead of being static, memory should be shapeshifting and inventive; only this way it can defy death. But there is something more than that. Borges had always been worried about his failing vision, a health issue that ran in the family. As forgetting the look of a face is a classical trope of loss after the death of the beloved, there is a strong bond between oblivion and blindness, from both autobiographical and literary perspectives. If Borges the lover looked into Narcissus's pool and glimpsed his Beatriz, she wouldn't be the same flower that de Lorris's and de Meun's dreamer had seen. Faceless in a productive sense, she could be everything at once: the purely erotic rose from *Le Roman*, the erotic and mystical Rose from Dante's *Paradiso*, Eliot's Rose refined by fire, and the endless Rose that appears before the "dead eyes" of Attar and Milton in Borges's poetry. Singular and plural at the same time, like Goethe's idea of "das Ewig-Weibliche" (eternal feminine), she is the *real* Aleph that Borges, in spite of his creeping blindness, could see in his mind's eye. Not just Beatriz the woman, whom he hopelessly wooed all his life, but also her most ideal representations that go beyond any earthly desires and the destructive powers of time, guilty of transforming her once tempting flesh into a handful of rotted dust and bones.

Ultimately, what Borges implies about memory can be extended to literary tradition as well. The point is not to be as faithful as possible, raising a monument for worship, but to make it dynamic, to deliberately unlearn and forget. Open about H.G. Wells's influence on him, especially when it comes to the short story "The Crystal Egg," Borges asserts that he owes his "Aleph" to "una *vaga memoria* de esas páginas" (Borges 1984*:* 11-12, my emphasis). Similarly, his misquotation of Eliot's verse "Came Christ, the tiger," which he wrongly assumed to be from *Four Quartets*, betrays more creative potential than an accurate citation would do. And *Le Roman* itself, intolerable because of its unbridled, overwhelming eloquence, can be approached only when you forget most of it, which is why the following generations tend to reduce this medieval poem to the image

[10] "holds and keeps in the treasure of the mind things that are apprehended and known by imagination and *reason*" (my translation)

of the rose garden with a magical pool in it. In Harold Bloom's terms, tradition is "a map of misreading" (see Bloom 1975), and the visionary paths that we've seen intersecting in the garden are essentially forgotten paths. As Eliot put it in "Little Gidding": "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time" (1971b: 59). A tireless explorer who believed in both novelty and repetition, Borges himself couldn't agree more.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alazraki, Jaime. «Borges and the Kabbalah.» *TriQuarterly* 25 (1972): 240-267. Web. 1 Jun. 2024.

Anglicus, Bartholomeus. *On the Properties of Things*. Translated by John Trevisa. Vol. 1. London: Oxford University Press, 1975. 118. Print.

Barnstone, Willis (ed.). «But I Prefer Dreaming» (interview). *Borges at Eighty: Conversations*. Indiana University Press, 1982. 79-89. Print.

Bloom, Harold. *A Map of Misreading*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975. Print.

Borges, Jorge Luis. «El Golem.» *Selected poems 1923-1967*. Edited, with an introduction and notes by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1972a. 110-115. Print.

Borges, Jorge Luis. «La rosa.» *Selected poems 1923-1967*. Edited, with an introduction and notes by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1972b. 254. Print.

—. «Una rosa y Milton.» *Selected poems 1923-1967*. Edited, with an introduction and notes by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1972c. 144. Print.

—. «De las alegorías a las novelas." *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974a. 744-746. Impreso.

—. «El acercamiento a Almotásim." *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974b. 414-419. Impreso.

—. «El Aleph.» *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974c. 617-628. Impreso.

—. «El escritor argentino y la tradición.» *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974d. 267-274. Impreso.

—. «El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan.» *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974e. 472-480. Impreso.
—. «El Zahir.» *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974f. 589-595. Impreso.
—. «Funes el memorioso.» *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974g. 485-490. Impreso.
—. «Kafka y sus precursores.» *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974h. 710-712. Impreso.
—. «Los espejos.» *Obras completas: 1923-1972*. Edición dirigida y realizada por Carlos V. Frias. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1974i. 814-815. Impreso.
—. «La rosa profunda.» *The Gold of the Tigers*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977. 92. Print.
—. «Prólogo.» H. G. Wells. *La Puerta en el muro*. Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1984. 9-12. Impreso.
—. «La rosa de Paracelso.» *Obras completas: 1975-1985*. Buenos Aires: Emecé editores, 1989. 389-392. Impreso.
—. «Class 7: The Two Books Written by God. The Anglo-Saxon Beastiary. Riddles. 'The Grave.' The Battle of Hastings.» *Professor Borges: A Course on English Literature*. Edited by Martín Arias and Martín Hadis. New York: A New Directions Books, 2013. 57-70. Print.
Cicero. «The Dream of Scipio.» *The Republic and The Laws*. Translated by Niall Rudd. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. 86-94. Print.
Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?*. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003. Print.
De Lorris, Guillaume, and Jean de Meun. *Le Roman de la Rose*. Édition accompagnée d'une traduction en vers par Pierre Marteau [Jules Croissandeau]. Tome I. Orléans: H. Herluison, 1878. Impression.
—. *Le Roman de la Rose*. Édition accompagnée d'une traduction en vers par Pierre Marteau [Jules Croissandeau]. Tome IV. Paris: Paul Daffis, 1879. Impression.
—. *The Romance of the Rose*. Translated by Frances Horgan. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Print.
Eliot, Thomas Stearns. «Burnt Norton.» *Four Quartets*. The centenary edition. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971a. 13-20. Print.
—. «Little Gidding.» *Four Quartets*. The centenary edition. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971b. 49-59. Print.
Gardner, Helen. *The Composition of "Four Quartets"*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1978. Print.

Julian of Norwich. *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: "A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman" and "A Revelation of Love*." Edited by Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006. 121-381. Print.

Lewis, Clive Staples. «The Romance of the Rose.» *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. 112-156. Print.

López-Baralt, Luce. «Islamic Themes.» *The Cambridge Companion to Jorge Luis Borges*. Edited by Edwin Williamson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 68–80. Print.

Mallarmé, Stéphane. «Toast funèbre.» *Poésies*. 8th edition. Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française, 1914. 83-86. Print.

Nouvet, Claire. «An Allegorical Mirror: The Pool of Narcissus in Guillaume de Lorris' *Romance of the Rose*.» *Romanic Review* 91.4 (2000): 353–74. Web. 31 May. 2024.

Reibetanz, Julia Maniates. *A reading of Eliot's "Four Quartets"*. Ann Arbor: UMI Search Press, 1983. Print.

Stewart, Jon. «Borges' Refutation of Nominalism in 'Funes El Memorioso.'» *Variaciones Borges* 2.2 (1996): 68-86. Web. 31 May. 2024.

Unger, Leonard. *T.S. Eliot: Moments and Patterns*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966. Print.

Venegas, José Luis. «Eliot, Borges, Tradition, and Irony." *Symposium (Syracuse)* 59.4 (2006): 237–255. Web. 1 Jun. 2024.

Wagner, Robert. D. «The Meaning of Eliot's Rose-Garden.» *PMLA* 69.1 (1954): 22-33. Web. 31 May. 2024.

Wells, Herbert George. «The Door in the Wall.» *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories*. Boston: David R. Godine, 1980. 5-24. Print.

Wilson, Jason. «The late poetry (1960-1985).» *The Cambridge Companion to Jorge Luis Borges*. Edited by Edwin Williamson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 186-200. Print.

Fecha de recepción: 2 de junio de 2024
Fecha de aceptación: 26 de septiembre de 2024