

APORETICS OF THE IN-BETWEEN: JORGE LUIS BORGES AND THE LABYRINTH OF UNDECIDABILITY

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ABSTRACT

In his short story 'The House of Asterion', originally published in 1947, Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges turns the protagonist of the Theseus myth from Theseus to the minotaur, Asterion. Borges, herein, prosés labyrinthine design of reality. The house of Asterion denotes a psychic space of memory (mnemotechnic sphere of ambiguity, mourning, despair, hope and melancholia) the doors of which are being unlocked/locked to the experience of the metaphysics of presence (spatiotemporal equation of the labyrinthine characteristic of the house with the 'world'). In this plot, Borges prosés minotaur's relief from the existential pain of the labyrinth/world by the succour of his 'redeemer' (Theseus). The experience of the world, for Asterion, connotes not only an epochal re-treat from markers of exactitude, but also the unconcealment of undecidability. By going through Bataille and Derrida, this paper interprets the aporetic context of the in-between via central tenants of Borges' mythopoetic.

Keywords: Borges, Theseus, Asterion, mythopoetic, in-betweenness, aporetic, undecidability, labyrinth

[Arası(nda)lığın Aporetığı: Jorge Luis Borges ve Karar Verilemezliğin Labirenti]

ÖZET

1947 yılında yayınlanan 'Asterion'un Hanesi' isimli kısa hikayesinde, Arjantinli yazar Jorge Luis Borges, Theseus efsanesinin kahramanını Theseus'tan minotaura, yani Asterion'a çevirir. Burada Borges, gerçekliğin labirente benzer vasfını kaleme alır. Asterion'un hanesi; kapıları, mevcudiyet metafiziğinin tecrübe edilişine (hanenin labirente benzer vasfının 'dünya'nın tecrübesi ile mekânzamansal olarak özdeşleştirilmesine) açılan/kapanan, psişik bir hafıza mekanı (tuhaflığın, yasin, umutsuzluğunun, umudun ve melankolinin mnemoteknik alanı) olarak karşımıza çıkar. Bu hikayede Borges; minotaurun, labirentin/dünyanın verdiği varoluşsal ıstıraptan cezalandırıcısı (Theseus) eliyle kurtuluşunu işler. Asterion için dünyanın tecrübesi, yalnızca, kesinlik işaretlerinden epokhal bir geri çekilmeyi değil; aynı zamanda, karar verilemezliğin açığa serilmesini de ifade eder. Bataille ve Derrida'dan hareketle, bu çalışma, arası(nda)lığın aporetik bağlamını, Borges mitopoetiğinin öne çıkan belirleyicileri itibarıyla değerlendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Borges, Theseus, Asterion, mitopoetik, arası(nda)lık, aporetik, karar verilemezlik, labirent

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“Would you believe it, Ariadne?” said Theseus. “The Minotaur scarcely defended himself”.¹ These are the closing remarks of great Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges’s short story ‘The House of Asterion’. In this story, originally published in 1947, Borges astonishingly drew upon the question of reality by revisiting the Theseus myth.² Borges, herein, stipulated the aporia of being and turned the protagonist from Theseus to the Minotaur, Asterion.³

According to Carl Gustav Jung, ‘the universal hero myth, lot example, always refers to a powerful man or god-man who vanquishes evil in the form of dragons, serpents, monsters, demons, and so on, and who liberates his people from destruction and death’.⁴ By shifting the protagonist of the Theseus myth, Borges revises the mythopoetic appearance of the monstrous. ‘The House of Asterion’ is thus based on a metaphoric double bind. The spiral vein of this double bind might be read via Joseph Campbell: ‘the figurations of myth are metaphorical (as dreams normally are not) in two senses simultaneously, as bearing (*i*) psychological but at the same time (*ii*) metaphysical connotations’.⁵ Borges’ prose comprises the allagmatic of psychic and metaphysical aspects of being and becoming which unconceals the metaphoric corpus of the *in-between* as the spiral plasticity of the immanent and the transcendental.

In the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* Schelling notes that ‘mythology is known in its truth, and thus only truly known, when it is known in the process’.⁶ The double bind of Borges’ prose, firstly, follows Schelling’s definition of the content of mythology assuming that ‘the world lies in the middle between the consciousness in its mere essentiality and the consciousness in its actualization, between the unity merely posited essentially in it and the unity actualized in it’.⁷ Borges’ prose might secondly be read through the nexus of mythical form and mythical

¹ Jorge Luis Borges, ‘The House of Asterion’, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, D. A. Yates, and J. E. Irby (eds.), New York: New Directions, 2007, p. 140.

² Borges’ reading of the Theseus myth is based on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Apollodorus’ *The Library*.

³ Minotaur is a monstrous creature, embodied within the form of a man and with the head of a bull that was named as *Asterion*, or as *Asterius*. In its mythological context, ‘he was the son of Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, and of the bull sent to Minos by Poseidon. Minos commissioned Daedalus, who was then at his court, to build a vast palace (the Labyrinth) comprising such a maze of rooms and corridors that only the architect could find his way. Minos shut the monster in the Labyrinth, and every year he fed it with seven men and seven girls, who were the tribute exacted from Athens. Theseus offered himself as of the victims, and with the help of Ariadne he succeeded not only in killing the beast but also in finding his way out of the Labyrinth’. Pierre Grimal, *A Concise Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 276.

⁴ Carl Gustav Jung, ‘Approaching the Unconscious’, *Man and His Symbols*, New York: Anchor Press, 1988, p. 79.

⁵ Joseph Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth and as Religion*, Novato: New World Library, 2002, p. 29.

⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 151.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

representation, according to Bataille,⁸ which might be defined as an 'exhausting consumption of being'.⁹

According to Edward Ballard; 'myths are the proto-embodiments of our complex drives'.¹⁰ Similarly, for Hélène Cixous, 'literature is the objective of psychoanalytic inquiry'.¹¹ Borges portrays the anxiety of the modern man which is closely associated with not only 'the myth of progress', or, '*vita nuova*';¹² but also, 'the labyrinth of impulses'.¹³ Borges reverbs the functions of imaginary, one of which is defined by Maurice Blanchot as means 'to pacify, to humanize the unformed nothingness pushed towards us by the residue of being that cannot be eliminated'.¹⁴ Borges' prose, in this sense, drips 'the universality and inexhaustible possibilities available in the universe'.¹⁵ By going through 'mythological archetypes'¹⁶ of the aporia of being and becoming, in 'The House of Asterion', Borges inexplicitly narrates a *Lebensphilosophie*.

Aporetic Phantom of the *In-Between*

The relation between Asterion and Theseus divulges Sigmund Freud's context of the '*Heimlich/Unheimlich*',¹⁷ which might be defined as the 'uncanny strangeness'.¹⁸ According to Freud, 'the uncanny [*unheimlich*] is something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it, and that everything that is uncanny fulfills this condition'.¹⁹ Freud refers Schelling's²⁰ interpretation of

⁸ The corpus of this study is posited on Bataillean interpretation of the myth, which primarily entails 'the play of oppositions'. According to Gasché, 'the play that produces opposites within myth was certainly more important for him than a 'depth analysis' in the Jungian sense'. Rodolphe Gasché, *Georges Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmatology*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 109.

⁹ Georges Bataille, 'The Pineal Eye', *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, A. Stoekl (ed.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986a, p. 82.

¹⁰ Edward G. Ballard, *Art and Analysis: An Essay toward a Theory in Aesthetics*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1957, p. 152.

¹¹ Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The "uncanny")', *New Literary History* 7(3), 1976, p. 529.

¹² Ballard, *Art and Analysis*, p. 153.

¹³ Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 30.

¹⁴ Maurice Blanchot, 'Two Version of the Imaginary', *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*, P. A. Sitney (ed.), New York: Station Hill Press, 1981, p. 79.

¹⁵ Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Painting Borges: Philosophy Interpreting Art Interpreting Literature*, Albany: State University of New York, 2012, p. 78.

¹⁶ Carl Gustav Jung, *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster*, London: Routledge, 2004.

¹⁷ According to Freud, 'among its different shades of meaning the word "*heimlich*" exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, "*unheimlich*". What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*'. Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, XVII, J. Strachey (ed.), London: Hogarth Press, 1955, p. 224.

¹⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 182.

¹⁹ Freud, 'The Uncanny', p. 245.

²⁰ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*.

Unheimlich, according to which ‘everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light’.²¹ This relation is portrayed by Borges, as in the form of ‘an immanence of the strange within the familiar’.²² In its Freudian sense, denotes Julia Kristeva, ‘the archaic, narcissistic self, not yet demarcated by the outside world, projects out of itself what it experiences as dangerous or unpleasant in itself, making of it an alien double, uncanny and demonical’.²³

Borges’ aporetic portrayal of the uncanny in “The House of Asterion” might be read in parallel paths to Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* where a close connection between the metaphor of the trial and the archaic court was contemplated.²⁴ In Roland Barthes’ words, ‘Kafka’s allusive system functions as a kind of enormous sign to interrogate other signs’.²⁵ In *The Trial*, protagonist Joseph K.’s experience of the uncanny implies an allagmatic leitmotif of this functioning. By going through this allagmatic, Kafka implies the ambiguity of the law and its disposition as *subjectum*. In this sense, the uncanny guilty of the protagonist in both proses is unconcealed as a delirium of presence which also connotes Martin Heidegger’s notion of ‘the potentiality-for-Being-guilty’.²⁶

Asterion’s uncanny might also be read through Søren Kierkegaard’s *problemata* of the relation between faith and paradox. Asterion upholds his faith through ‘the paradox of life and existence’.²⁷ Regarding the labyrinthine undecidability of Asterion’s faith ‘a paradoxical and humble courage is required to grasp the whole of the temporal by virtue of the absurd’.²⁸ In this sense, ‘the paradox of faith is this, that there is an inwardness which is incommensurable for the outward, an inwardness, be it observed, which is not identical with the first but is a new inwardness’.²⁹ In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard emanates the delirium of the uncanny: ‘whenever the individual after he has entered the universal feels an incapacity to assert himself as the particular, he is in temptation [*Anfechtung*], and he can labor himself out of this only by penitently abandoning himself as the particular in the universal’.³⁰ Asterion reflects this Kierkegaardian *problemata* of ‘teleological suspension’ through his anguishing epokhē.

Drawing upon Aristotle’s *Physics*, Derrida mentions that ‘the word “aporia” appears in person’.³¹ Following Derrida’s reading of *Being and Time*, a parallel path of interpreting the *aporia* of the in-between in ‘the House of

²¹ Freud, ‘The Uncanny’, p. 225.

²² Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, pp. 182-183.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

²⁴ Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

²⁵ Roland Barthes, ‘Kafka’s Answer’, *Critical Essays*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972, p. 137.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. New York: Harper & Row, 1962, p. 353.

²⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Book on Adler*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, p. 38.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³¹ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias: Dying-Awaiting (One Another at) the ‘Limits of Truth’*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, p. 13.

Asterion' might be mentioned. Borges's mythopoetic reversal of Theseus might be interpreted as a manifest imposition of the *aporia* of Being, which is unconcealed by Bataille as 'the composite character of Beings and the impossibility of fixing existence in any given ipse'.³²

Borgesian *aporia* concerns 'the question of the present, of presence and of the presentation of the present, of time, of being, and above all of nonbeing, more precisely of a certain *impossibility* as nonviability, as nontrack or barred path'.³³ Therefore, Asterion's *mourning*, as a critical motif of Borges' 'aesthetic act', implies 'the impossibility of bringing something fully into the present'.³⁴

Impossibility of *re-calling* is derived from the uncanny, or the double bind of the delirium. Yet, it also supplements the '*re-treat of the real*', as the allagma of an eternal recurrence. This is why 'Borges's fictions are full of characters who want to overcome the retreat of the real'.³⁵ Saying in Derrida's sense Borges' text is itself a labyrinth, which constantly turns the reader to face the aporetic undecidability of Being.

The opening pages of 'The House of Asterion' reads, 'it is true that I never leave my house, but it is also true that its doors (whose number is *infinite*) are open day and night to men and to animals as well. Anyone may enter'.³⁶ The doors of the house of Asterion not merely refine the actual closure of the world. Rather they, as the *doors of infinity*, magnify the continuation of the eternal suffering of the minotaur.³⁷

In each moment of melancholia, Asterion is being captured by his own *delirium*. Delirium of Asterion is derived from the spatiotemporal suspension of his *in-between* condition. It entails the possibility of the impossible, or, the invasion of reality through the speculative distillation of *the imago* and *the symbolic*. The grace of Heideggerian *dwelling*, herein, represents the mystery of the Jacques Lacan's big/capitalized *Other* for Asterion.³⁸ The locus of this delirium of such dwelling is Asterion's incomplete individuation. Asterion does hence experience a circuit of despair via the allagma of both *individuation* and *disindividuation*.

Asterion's epochal experience of the *redoubling* qua the in-between inaugurates a *caesural-rhizome* of neither/both epochal totality nor/and the becoming of the nothingness of infinity. Through this *delirium* exacerbated by the rhizoid-in-between of *the imago* and *the symbolic*, Borges converts the locus of *the real* from an onto-theological corpus of spatiality to an

³² Georges, Bataille, 'The Labyrinth', *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, A. Stoekl (ed.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986b, p. 173.

³³ Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 13.

³⁴ Kate Jenckes, *Reading Borges after Benjamin: Allegory, Afterlife, and the Writing of History*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 132.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³⁶ Borges, 'The House of Asterion', p. 138.

³⁷ According to Wilson, 'Borges had been inspired by a 1885 G. F. Watts painting of the Minotaur sadly looking out at the darkening world, first seen in a G. K. Chesterton piece'. Jason Wilson, *Jorge Luis Borges*, London: Reaktion Books, 2006, p. 87.

³⁸ Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', *Ecrits*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006, pp. 75-81.

interior design of labyrinthine temporality.³⁹ This is why, after teasing the absurdity of the rumours voicing that Asterion is a prisoner, says Asterion, 'shall I repeat that there are no locked doors, shall I add that there are no locks?'⁴⁰

Asterion's experience of a 'distant reality' might be read as a reflection of Bruno Latour's notion of 'the strange invention of an "outside" world'.⁴¹ By referring to his unpleasant experience of the exterior world, Asterion signifies an uncanny world to be interiorized. For, magnifying the worlds of Asterion, Borges inaugurates a labyrinth of reality, which prospers through the transductive disposition of an original *ipse* to an annihilated simulacrum. Borges differentiates the labyrinthine design from the locus of chaos. Rather than implying pure despair, accordingly, the metaphor of the labyrinth also implies an uncanny hope.

As being portrayed by the mimicry of infinity without exit, Asterion is narrated by Borges as a prisoner of *topos ouranis* (heavenly place). By revealing the aporia of the world, writes Borges, 'all the parts of the house are repeated many times, any place is another place'.⁴² While narrating the spatiotemporal locus of the existential repetition of the same, or *idem* of Asterion, Borges equates the *house* with the *world*: 'the house is the same size as the world; or rather, it is the world'.⁴³ The infinite repetition for Borges appears as an aporia of being as becoming: 'everything is repeated many times, fourteen [*infinite*] times, but two things in the world seem to be only once: above, the intricate sun; below, Asterion'.⁴⁴ Borges' marking of *fourteen* as a symbol of the infinite is derived from his reading of Achilles⁴⁵ and Zeno⁴⁶ paradoxes.⁴⁷

³⁹ Luis Cruz Azaceta, in his drawing *La casa de Asterión*, has expressed the labyrinthine design of the house. Azaceta draws minotaur within the form of a human and illuminates the aporetic undecidability and plurality of world's labyrinthine *un-concealment*. Azaceta's drawing might be reached at Gracia, *Painting Borges*, p. 91.

⁴⁰ Borges, 'The House of Asterion', p. 138.

⁴¹ Bruno Latour, "'Do You Believe in Reality?'" News from the Trenches of the Science Wars', *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 3.

⁴² Borges, 'The House of Asterion', p. 139.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁵ According to Borges: '*Motion does not exist: Achilles could not catch up with the lazy tortoise... Achilles, symbol of speed, has to catch up with the tortoise, symbol of slowness. Achilles runs ten times faster than the tortoise and so gives him a ten-meter advantage. Achilles runs those ten meters, the tortoise runs one; Achilles runs that meter, the tortoise runs a decimeter; Achilles runs that decimeter, the tortoise runs a centimeter; Achilles runs that centimeter, the tortoise runs a millimeter; Achilles the millimeter, the tortoise a tenth of the millimeter, and ad infinitum, so that Achilles can run forever without catching up. Hence the immortal paradox*'. Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Perpetual Race of Achilles and the Tortoise', *Selected Non-Fictions*, E. Weinberger (ed.), New York: Viking Penguin, 1999a, p. 43.

⁴⁶ For Borges, Zeno paradox 'is an attempt upon not only the reality of space but the more invulnerable and sheer reality of time. I might add that existence in a physical body, immobile permanence, the flow of an afternoon in life, are challenged by such an adventure. Such a deconstruction, by means of only one word, *infinite*, a worrisome word. Borges, 'The Perpetual Race', p. 47.

Afterwards, another aporia follows: 'perhaps I have created the stars and the sun and this enormous house, but I no longer remember'.⁴⁸ Herein, Borges adopts 'Descartes' dream hypothesis'.⁴⁹ Therefore, the *real*, as the sublimation dispositif of *the imago* and *the symbolic*, is revealed as *topoi* ('the house [which] is the same size as the world, or rather it is the world') and memory (mourning, hope and melancholia of Asterion) of meaning, which is impossible to either embody or refrain.

Celestial complex of Asterion's delirium elevates the presentment of a *caesural life* in its own idiosyncrasy. Asterion, in terms of having been disposed to an *existential caesura*, is portrayed by reference to the very nature of the Freudian remark on the suspension of Psyche and the 'non-knowledge' of Asterion. In Jean-Luc Nancy's words, the 'non-knowledge is the very body of Psyche, or rather, it is the body that Psyche herself is. This non-knowledge is not negative knowledge or the negation of knowledge'.⁵⁰

This portrayal of the non-knowledge and Borges's critical narration of Asterion's indifference to *nous* resembles Jacques Rancière's distinction between the 'literary animal' and its 'natural purpose'.⁵¹ In his unique tendency to *anti-grammatization* –as a rejection of not only primary retention but also symbolic concretization– Asterion says: '...nothing is communicable by the art of writing. Bothersome and trivial details have no place in my spirit, which is prepared for all that is vast and grand; I have never retained the difference between one letter and another'.⁵²

Borges' portrayal of the non-knowledge denotes the 'ultimate possibility' of Asterion's inner experience of 'absence' and 'death'.⁵³ Asterion's indifference to knowledge unveils a Bataillean 'knowledge which loses itself in it'.⁵⁴ Borges, herein, plays on Asterion's mimicry of Being as a critique of 'absolute knowledge', which also means the 'definitive non-knowledge' in its Hegelian circular sense.⁵⁵ In Bataille's words, 'the thought of this self-of ipse-could only make itself absolute by becoming everything'.⁵⁶ However, 'nothingness, or the void, or others, are all equally close to an impersonal fullness–which is unknowable'.⁵⁷

⁴⁷ Borges uses the number fourteen as a symbol of expressing infinity. In Borges' words: 'The Eleatic refutation of movement raises another problem, which can be expressed thus: *It is impossible for fourteen minutes to elapse in eight hundred years of time, because first seven minutes must pass, and before seven, three and a half, and before three and a half, one and three-quarters, and so on infinitely, so that the fourteen minutes will never be completed*'. Jorge Luis Borges, 'A History of Eternity', *Selected Non-Fictions*, E. Weinberger (ed.), New York: Viking Penguin, 1999b, p. 124.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁹ William H. Bossart, *Borges and Philosophy: Self, Time, and Metaphysics*, New York: Peter Lang, 2003, p. 134.

⁵⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, p. 199.

⁵¹ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature*, Cambridge: Polity, 2011, p. 83.

⁵² Borges, 'The House of Asterion', p. 138.

⁵³ Georges, Bataille, *The Inner Experience*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1988, p. 111.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁵⁶ Bataille, *The Inner Experience*, p. 108.

⁵⁷ Georges, Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, New York: Urizen Books, 1973, p. 143.

Labyrinth With/out Minotaur: Topos of Undecidability

Labyrinth is the dominant symbol of Borgesian prose. Borges' metaphor portrays *topoi* as a labyrinth of plural possibilities. Borges defines aporetic mode of becoming in relation with the structure of the labyrinth of being. Bataille mentions the gist of this labyrinthine design: 'a particular being not only acts as an element of a shapeless and structureless whole...but also as a peripheral element orbiting around a nucleus where being hardens'.⁵⁸

The labyrinth, the house of Asterion, does refer to the *topos* of actualization, or, the locus of exactitude of *being-towards-death*. By implying a mnemotechnical *repetition*, at first, Borges unmasks the camouflage of exactitude embodied qua the logic of totality of Being. Second, Borges' prosing of Asterion and his redeemer's 'heartily laugh' unveils a connection with 'the violence of spasmodic joy', according to Bataille, which denotes not only 'the heart of death' but also the 'ambiguity' of life and Being: 'The ambiguity of this human life is really that of mad laughter and of sobbing tears. It comes from the difficulty of harmonizing reason's calculations with these tears. With this horrible laugh...'.⁵⁹ In this sense, 'laughter only assumes its fullest impact on being at the moment when, in the fall that it unleashes, a representation of death is cynically recognized'.⁶⁰ Borges narrates the gist of an 'immense laugh'⁶¹ when says Asterion:

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But of all the games, I prefer the one about the other Asterion. I pretend that he comes to visit me and that I show him my house. With great obeisance I say to him: *Now we shall return to the first intersection* or *Now we shall come out into another courtyard* or *I knew you would like the drain* or *Now you will see a pool that was filled with sand* or *You will soon see how the cellar branches out*. Sometimes I make a mistake and the two of us laugh heartily. Not only have I imagined these games, I have also meditated on the house. All the parts of the house are repeated many times, any place is another place.⁶²

Borgesian labyrinth implies not only the locus mythopoetic potentiality and actuality, but also undecidability and irreducibility of Being.

⁵⁸ Bataille, 'The Labyrinth', p. 175.

⁵⁹ Georges, Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989, p. 20.

⁶⁰ Bataille, 'The Labyrinth', p. 177.

⁶¹ Borges' narration might be read in parallel paths to Georges Bataille's interpretation of the universal and nothingness. According to Bataille, '*the universal* resembles a bull, sometimes absorbed in the nonchalance of animality and abandoned to the secret paleness of death, and sometimes hurled by the rage of ruin into the void ceaselessly opened before it by a skeletal torero. But the void it meets is also the nudity it espouses *to the extent that it is a monster* lightly assuming many crimes, and it is no longer, like the bull, the plaything of nothingness in order to tear it apart and to illuminate the night for an instant, with an immense laugh—a laugh it never would have attained if this nothingness had not totally opened beneath its feet'. Bataille, 'The Labyrinth', p. 177.

⁶² Borges, 'The House of Asterion', p. 139.

Borges narrates the labyrinth as an ontological reflection of the *potentia* of 'the inherent totality of "being"', which is also bound by the locus of universality 'incapable of stopping the loss of being with the cracked partitions of *ipseity*'.⁶³ Borges defines the labyrinth as a 'magical symbol' and underpins the double binding of its meaning.⁶⁴ Borges mentions this double bind of the labyrinth in an interview. The first sense Borges uses the metaphor implies the quest for 'wondering'. Borges refers to the reciprocal anxiety of the uncanny:

A man...makes out footprints in the sand and he knows that they belong to the minotaur, that the minotaur is after him, and, in a sense, he, too, is after the minotaur. The minotaur, of course, wants to devour him, and since his only aim in life is to go on wandering and wandering, he also longs for the moment.⁶⁵

Secondly, Borges uses the metaphor in order to illustrate a world without a center. By referring to the centrality of the 'eternal', Borges draws upon 'the idea that there was no minotaur-that the man would go on endlessly wandering'.⁶⁶ According to Borges,

If there's no minotaur, then the whole thing's incredible. You have a monstrous building built round a monster, and that in a sense is logical. But if there is no monster, then the whole thing is senseless, and that would be the case for the universe, for all we know.⁶⁷

Borges narrates a narrow connection between Asterion and his imagined redeemer in *potentia*, 'the other Asterion'. Asterion's cynical recognition of his redeemer, 'the other Asterion', might be read through Bataille's portrayal of 'the monster in the night of the labyrinth'.⁶⁸ Asterion's aim of recognizing his redeemer connotes Borges' aporetic engagement with the universality of reciprocity: 'What will my redeemer be like?, I ask myself. Will he be a bull or a man? Will he perhaps be a bull with the face of a man? Or will he be like me?'⁶⁹

Asterion's experience of the aporia of *idem* and *ipseity* connotes an 'example of undecidability-which could be multiplied ad infinitum'.⁷⁰ By narrating 'undecidability', Borges primarily applies aporetics of Being and nothingness. Borges interplays the double bounding of Asterion and

⁶³ Bataille, 'The Labyrinth', p. 175.

⁶⁴ Mark Frish, *You Might be Able to Get There from Here: Reconsidering Borges and the Postmodern*, Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004, p. 27.

⁶⁵ L. S. Dembo, 'Jorge Luis Borges', *Jorge Luis Borges: Conversations*, R. Burgin (ed.), Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998, p. 86.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁶⁸ Bataille, 'The Labyrinth', p. 177.

⁶⁹ Borges, 'The House of Asterion', p. 139.

⁷⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres and Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, p. 17.

Theseus, as an uncanny *in-between* of the terrestrial. The narration of the minotaur in 'The House of Asterion' might thus be read through Bataille's emphasis on the double bind of terrestrial life: 'vertical sphere' and 'horizontal sphere'.⁷¹ Asterion connotes a mythic symbol of an aporetic life of the *in-between* embodied through transductive dispositions of the 'vertical axis' of vegetal life and 'horizontal axis' of animal life.

Archetypal image of Borges' labyrinthine design is primarily exposed as the locus of a '*vertical labyrinth*'.⁷² By following Jungian portrayal of the mythical self as 'the historical man in us'; Aldo Carotenuto defines the very nature of the 'archetypal motif' of this labyrinthine experience as 'a withdrawal of energy from the outside world'.⁷³ Borges narrates the minotaur not only as an *in-between* being of vertical and horizontal axes; but also as a matter of actualizing the potentiality of humanbeings via 'radical reorientation of their creatureliness from within' through which 'the nonhuman animal becomes an externalised figure of that inner perversity'.⁷⁴

Conclusion

While defining the philosophical asset of his works Borges says: 'I'm neither a philosopher nor a metaphysician; what I have done is to exploit [*explotar*: also to explode, to work], or the explore—a more noble word—the literary possibilities of philosophy'.⁷⁵ Borges's prose might hence be read through Erich Auerbach's *nous* of interpretation: 'the interpretation of reality through literary representation or "imitation"'.⁷⁶ Although, Borges's works have generally been interpreted by following the assumption claiming that 'for Borges the world is unreal'; in terms of magnifying the literary possibilities of philosophy, 'Borges has defined the philosophical conception of the world as a wilful act mediated by language'.⁷⁷

The narrative disposition of the uncanny character of the experience of the world is a critical asset of Borges' prose. This, however, should not be interpreted as hallucination of the world as *de-fault*. Rather, it is related with the delirium of epochal redoubling caused by *auto-affection*. The world, for this reason, is portrayed by Borges as the horizon of irreducible spatiotemporality of *Dasein's* care and unconcealment. It is inaugurated beyond *re-presentation*. Borges's appeal to reality might then be read through the critical continuum of undecidability, not only in terms of the

⁷¹ Bataille, 'The Pineal Eye', p. 83.

⁷² Aldo Carotenuto, *The Vertical Labyrinth: Individuation in Jungian Psychology Studies*, Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Stephen Mulhall, *Philosophical Myths of the Fall*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 83-84.

⁷⁵ Cit. in Johnson, 'Introduction: Borges and the Letter of Philosophy', *Thinking with Borges*, W. Eggington and D. E. Johnson (eds.), Aurora: The Davies Group, 2009, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 554.

⁷⁷ Stephen Gingerich, 'Nothing and Everything: Theoretical and Practical Nihilism in Borges', *Thinking with Borges*, W. Eggington and D. E. Johnson (eds.), Aurora: The Davies Group, 2009, p. 20 and p. 23.

aporetic meaning of signs, but also, as regards to 'enigmatic equivocality'⁷⁸ of the means of signification.

The main characteristic of Borges's prose might be read through *Dasein's* event-structure, or say, via allagmatic of being as becoming which is constantly displayed by aporetics of the *in-between*. Therefore, Borgesian allagmatic assemblage of signs might not merely be seen as a narrative interpretation of being. It also denotes speculum of *re-collection* through modes and modalities of becoming. The hermeneutic locus of this *re-collection* is based on the 'task of tracing', in terms of the association of signs.⁷⁹ According to Ziarek, 'the existence of reality is "fictional"' for Borges.⁸⁰ In its Borgesian sense, 'remaining "true" to reality means not forgetting a single difference, and thus eschewing the mediation of difference entailed by its inclusion into a more general concept'.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 173.

⁷⁹ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

⁸⁰ Krzysztof Ziarek, 'The "Fiction" of Possibility', *Thinking with Borges*, W. Eggington and D. E. Johnson (eds.), Aurora: The Davies Group, 2009, p. 77.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

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