

JAMES JOYCE, AUTHOR OF "FUNES EL MEMORIOSO"

Patricia Novillo-Corvalán

FUNES AND HIS PRECURSORS

In "Kafka y sus precursores" Borges famously postulated a radical model of reading that dismantled the idea of chronological influence and proposed instead an inverted *modus operandi* in which "cada escritor crea a sus precursores" (2: 89). He argued that Kafka's writings allow the construction of a network of shared idiosyncrasies with a series of pre-existent texts, since it is possible to recognize the voice of Kafka in the writings of Zeno, Han Yu, Kierkegaard, Bloy, Browning and Lord Dunsany. Whilst the later writings of Kafka connect all these heterogeneous pieces, without Kafka, the analogy uniting these literatures from different epochs and places would not have been noticed: "En cada uno de esos textos está la idiosincrasia de Kafka, en grado mayor o menor, pero si Kafka no hubiera escrito, no la percibiríamos; vale decir, no existiría" (1: 89). In effect, Borges's suggestion that texts are not isolated entities recalls the similar conclusion he reached in his 1935 essay "Los traductores de las 1001 Noches", in which he stressed that certain works "sólo se dejan concebir después de una literatura" and, as a consequence, presuppose, "un rico proceso anterior" (1: 411). The richness of this process lies in the conception of a text as the confluence of several pre-existing discourses, a hybrid composite that enters into dialogue with other texts. Furthermore, central to Borges's radical theory

on the subject of literary influence is the assumption that “Kafka y sus precursores” was not created *ex nihilo*, but rather stands as a continuation and development of T. S. Eliot’s seminal essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919), which is duly acknowledged as its main intertextual source (see 2: 90). The main argument uniting both theses is apparent: Eliot postulates an aesthetic principle, through which writers are not read in isolation, but as part of a living tradition in which the new alters the old, the present modifies the past and, as a result, texts are continually re-valued from the perspective of subsequent texts:

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted and this is conformity between the old and the new (15).

If Eliot’s theory is applied not just to art but also to criticism, then Borges’s “Kafka y sus precursores” (the really new) posits a modification to the existing order of Eliot’s literary system of values. But unlike Eliot’s inevitably canonical, Westernised conception of a tradition that strictly comprises “the mind of Europe” (16), Borges’s idea of a tradition is less prescriptive and more wide-ranging, conflating Western, Oriental and marginal discourses alike, insofar as it exposes the perspective of a writer located – as Beatriz Sarlo puts it – “on the limits between cultures, between literary genres, between languages, Borges is the writer of the orillas, a marginal in the centre, a cosmopolitan on the edge” (6). Borges, therefore, irreverently articulates what Eliot’s innovative, yet Eurocentric vision can only insinuate from an inescapably restrictive standpoint. In other words, Borges enlarges, enriches and synthesizes Eliot’s theory in the brief, egalitarian and paradoxical phrase: “cada escritor crea a sus precursores” (2: 89). As a suitable application to his theory he unfolds a concrete case in point, namely a study of Kafka that thoroughly illustrates the idea of a synchronous tradition in which writers may influence both

past and future texts. Thus Borges's anatomy of literary influence obeys neither chronological nor coherently or culturally organized systems of thought. If any similarity prevails in his taxonomy of precursors, this is only justified by virtue of the fact that although the heterogeneous pieces do not resemble each other, they nonetheless resemble Kafka.

When studying the central role that Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" played in the composition of "Kafka y sus precursores" it remains a highly instructive methodology to go back to Borges's earlier writings, particularly to a lesser known essay "La eternidad y T. S. Eliot" (1933), originally published in the Buenos Aires review *Poesía*. In this revelatory journalistic piece, which in turn serves as an avant-text of "Kafka y sus precursores", Borges quotes Eliot extensively signalling, consequently, a vital interpretative process that foregrounds his subsequent use of the essay (*Textos* 1: 49-53). The existence of this article highlights the important assumption that the compositional process of "Kafka y sus precursores" involved a much more complex interweaving of texts. In effect, this is signalled at the beginning of the essay, in which Borges warns the reader about the existence of a preceding series of reflections: "Yo premedité alguna vez un examen de los precursores de Kafka" (2: 88). Such a procedure emphasizes, once again, an integral aspect of Borges's process of reading and writing, which is based on the creation of literary genealogies. Yet Borges's fascination with genealogies is not only concerned with the work of others, but is equally drawn to his own writings, particularly in what Ronald Christ refers to as: "[Borges's aim] at creating in us and awareness of his "sources" or "fuentes"" (133). Just as Borges sets himself the task of constructing a network of Kafka's precursors via Eliot's seminal essay, so he equally subjects his own rhetoric to analogous exercises that aim to undermine the uniqueness of his writing, and instead privileges the activities of citation, rewriting and plagiarism. He prolixly lists his sources and precursors in the explicatory prefaces and afterwords of his fictions, generously mapping influences of the most varied origins. This type of intertextual exercise is similarly foregrounded in his 1941 obituary "Fragmento sobre Joyce", in which Borges seeks to

establish a network of forerunners for his then work-in-progress, "Funes el memorioso". In this manner, he anticipates the literary precepts later postulated in "Kafka y sus precursores" and creates his own precursors by recognizing the voice and mnemonic habits of his character Ireneo Funes in a series of pre-existent texts. With unreserved audacity and customary cheek, he proclaimed Joyce's *Ulysses* and Nietzsche's Zarathustra as the "monstrous" pre-texts of his mnemonic character:

Del compadrito mágico de mi cuento cabe afirmar que es un precursor de los superhombres, un Zarathustra suburbano y parcial; lo indiscutible es que es un monstruo. Lo he recordado porque la consecutiva y recta lectura de las cuatrocientas mil palabras de Ulises exigiría monstrous análogos. (Nada aventuraré sobre los que exigiría *Finnegans Wake*: para mí no menos inconcebibles que la cuarta dimensión de C. H. Hinton o que la Trinidad de Nicea. (*Sur* 168)

For Borges, then, a consecutive, total reading of *Ulysses* demanded the creation of Funes, a fictional character equipped with an infinite memory and, hence, capable of assimilating, in one single reading, the sheer enormity of Joyce's modernist novel. Thus, Borges writes Ireneo Funes as a Joycean fiction or, more precisely, as the ideal reader of *Ulysses*, and endows him with the all-encompassing memory of his predecessor. If Borges's parenthetical addendum is considered part of Funes's precursors, then his network is enlarged by discourses apparently as dissimilar as Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, C. H. Hinton's fourth dimension and the Nicene Creed. Furthermore, as an avid polyglot whose auto-didactical method consists in memorizing entire dictionaries, Funes embodies the Babelized intellect required for the reading of *Finnegans Wake*, and his persistent state of insomnia, finally, turns him into Joyce's ideal insomniac, "as were it sentenced to be nuzzled over a full trillion times for ever and a night till his noddle sink or swim by that ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia" (*Finnegans* 120.12-14). As for Borges's eccentric genealogy of Ireneo Funes it suffices to say that it does not end here. In the contrary, it becomes subsequently expanded in the definitive version of the story that proposes a more extended genealogy, taking on board the names of Pliny the Elder and John Locke. If this is so, Borges's Ireneo Funes acts as

the unifying element without whom the network would not have been possible, therefore serving as the central node in an assembly of highly heterogeneous texts. Thus, my proposed sub-heading "Funes and his precursors" equally aims to unlock Borges's own textual predecessors: James Joyce, Frederick Nietzsche, John Locke and Pliny the Elder: all of which intersect in the mnemonic eccentricity of his nineteenth-century South American hero.

This article explores the pervasive presence of James Joyce in "Funes el memorioso" both in its embryonic and definitive versions. It will demonstrate that in his 1941 obituary "Fragmento sobre Joyce", Borges uncovered a landscape of memory that charted a genealogy of Funes and his precursors, whereby he declared Joyce's Ulysses as the infinite and monstrous precursor of Ireneo Funes, his Uruguayan gaucho endowed with an infinite memory after a fall from a horse. It will argue that Borges's 1941 obituary may be read as an anticipation of the literary precepts later postulated in "Kafka y sus precusores", since Borges searches for the voice and mnemonic habits of Funes in Joyce's *Ulysses*. This article will show, moreover, that the analogies interlinking Funes and Ulysses, particularly in the "Cyclops" and "Ithaca" episodes, are centred on the subject of memory as an encyclopedia and literary archive. At the same time, however, it will raise the central question, how do Borges and Joyce negotiate the remembering/forgetting polarity? This article will offer a number of answers to this question. Among these, it will underline the crucial fact that Borges and Joyce have incorporated alternative narratives in which they emphasize the conflictual forces inherent in any totalization of knowledge by turning the memories of Funes and the catalogues of the "Cyclops" and "Ithaca" episodes respectively into a humorous record of the impossibility and, ultimately, uselessness of a total categorization of knowledge.

JAMES JOYCE AND THE MAKING OF FUNES

In *Borges and His Fiction*, Gene Bell-Villada views "Fragmento sobre Joyce" as "a fascinating documentary record of the artistic transformation of the character Funes in Borges's mind" (99). In-

deed, we have in front of us a multifaceted document that deploys several textual transactions at once: an early draft or pre-text of "Funes el memorioso"; a study in the subject of literary influence; an exercise in comparative literature; an obituary marking the untimely death of James Joyce in Zurich in January 1941; and a journalistic publication in the prestigious Buenos Aires literary review *Sur* for which Borges acted as a regular correspondent. If studied as a work-in-progress of "Funes el memorioso", then, "Fragment sobre Joyce" constitutes a decisive example of genetic criticism, allowing the reconstruction of the crucial textual processes that took place during Borges's gestation of the character Funes. Such a complex exercise validates, furthermore, Borges's recurrent thesis that there is no "texto definitivo" (1: 239) but only a series of "borradores" in an ongoing interpretative process. In effect, the artistic growth of Funes is particularly determined by the several superimposed parchments that emerge as we map out his development from a journalistic column in *Sur* to a fully-fledged story in *Ficciones*. Between the character sketched in the 1941 obituary and the definitive version of the story there is, nonetheless, a fundamental intersection, inasmuch as an extract from "Fragmento sobre Joyce" survives almost verbatim in the 1942 version of the story:

Nosotros, de un vistazo, percibimos tres copas en una mesa; Funes, todas las hojas y racimos que comprende una parra. Sabía las formas de las nubes australes del amanecer del treinta de abril de mil ochocientos ochenta y dos y podía compararlas en el recuerdo con las vetas de un libro en pasta española que manejó una vez en la infancia (*Sur* 167).

Nosotros, de un vistazo, percibimos tres copas en una mesa; Funes, todos los vástagos y racimos y frutos que comprende una parra. Sabía las formas de las nubes australes del amanecer del treinta de abril de mil ochocientos ochenta y dos y podía compararlas en el recuerdo con las vetas de un libro en pasta española que solo había mirado una vez [...] (1: 488).

Nevertheless, we should not be fooled here by the similarities between the two extracts. Indeed, as Borges humorously dem-

onstrated in "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote", even the most ambitious enterprise ever to be envisaged in the history of translation by the French turn-of-the-century writer Pierre Menard: "Su admirable ambición era producir unas páginas que coincidieran — palabra por palabra y línea por línea — con las de Miguel de Cervantes" (1: 446), failed to guarantee, in spite of its strict verbatim rendering, exact textual equivalence. What these nearly identical Funes extracts are foregrounding here is the central fact that the procedure of transferring a passage from a text (A) into another text (B) implies the shifting of meaning into a new context. This process produces, consequently, a certain degree of effacement of the textual circumstances of the original text in relation to the new signification it acquires under its new context. In effect, the 1942 story has been cleansed of its previous associations with the 1941 obituary resulting, thus, in the omission of the preliminary comparison between Funes and Ulysses, as well as the disappearance of the Joycean frame in which Funes had been initially incorporated. This raises important questions such as, for instance, what is the trajectory of Funes as a character from his evolutionary growth in "Fragmento sobre Joyce" to his ensuing development into his own short story, "Funes el memorioso"? Does he, as the finished product of the 1942 story published in *Ficciones*, preserve the layers of meaning of the 1941 obituary it has traversed? And, to what extent the authorial validity of James Joyce, who was subsequently erased from the 1942 version, may become, once again, visible through a retroactive reading of the 1941 obituary?

To begin with, the inclusion of Funes at the beginning of "Fragmento sobre Joyce" cancels a feature common to all obituaries, namely a biographic summary of the late writer. By eschewing Joyce's biographic details and replacing them with the fictional life and memorizing attributes of his own fictional hero, Borges disregards the conventions of the obituary and challenges the distinctive eulogizing features of most necrological notes. In spite of this, the Funes digression functions as a textual analogue, which is employed as a strategy to allude to Joyce indirectly incorporating, then, a parallel discussion from which to examine the work of James Joyce. Let us consider, as a preliminary example, a key

anecdote from Borges's résumé of the brief biography of Funes in "Fragmento sobre Joyce", wherein he offers an interesting snapshot of a juvenile Funes engaging in a pictorial reproduction of two chapters from a school manual: "En la niñez, lo han expulsado de la escuela primaria por calcar servilmente un par de capítulos, con sus ilustraciones, mapas, viñetas, letras de molde y hasta con una errata..." (*Sur* 167). While the ordinary, generalizing memories of school children would only retain selected fragments from a book (or would only be interested in taking a small number of notes to synthesize the main ideas) Ireneo Funes, contrarily, aspires to a reconstruction that will allow him the retrieval of even the most infinitesimal and insignificant details. Herewith, then, Funes is already manifesting his subsequent incapacity for selection and abstraction, an intellectual hindrance that Borges thereafter develops as his main mnemonic flaw in "Funes el memorioso". Moreover, Borges's reference to a precocious Funes, whose capacity for detail and endeavour for exact representation goes back to his boyhood years, bears a striking likeness to an early anecdote recalled by Joyce's father, John Stanislaus Joyce, when his son James was only seven years of age: "If that fellow was dropped in the middle of the Sahara, he'd sit, be God, and make a map of it" (Ellmann *James Joyce* 28). This account of the young James charting at the tender age of seven (and in a god-like manner) the vertiginous landscape of the Sahara Desert, reveals Joyce's future delight in cartography, and – as Richard Ellmann remarks, "his interest in minute detail" (*James Joyce First Revision* 28) Drawing on John Joyce's anecdote, Eric Bulson views this early account as an anticipation of the geographical realism and totalising tendencies of *Ulysses*: "From one of its earliest recorded beginnings, James Joyce's *Ulysses* was a book fated to be written with an encyclopaedic memory and a map" (81). Just as Funes's school anecdote anticipates his future predilection for taxonomies, and absurd catalogues of potentially infinite series, so Joyce's imaginary map of the Sahara foreshadows his fondness for orderly schemes, painstaking detail and naturalistic representation in *Ulysses*.

If Funes stands as the ideal reader of Joyce's epic proportions, namely, as the boundless recipient able to swallow up the whole of

Ulysses, Borges conversely imposes a principle of compression in his capacity to exemplify a reduced or abridged version of Joyce's book. Just as Fritz Senn argues that: "In some sense *Ulysses* is such a radical translation of *The Odyssey*, from ancient Greek into modern Irish" (*Dislocutions* 16) so in "Funes el memorioso" Borges provides in turn his own radical translation of *Ulysses*, from Hiberno-English into River-Plate Spanish and, above all, from Joyce's grand epic scale to a compressed narrative expression. Yet Borges's miniaturized version of *Ulysses* is also constructed as a satirical, compact re-creation of Joyce's gargantuan tendencies. Borges mimics Joyce's endeavour to provide an accurate reconstruction of the Dublin of 16 June 1904, and confers upon Funes the equivalent impulse to provide a round-the-clock reconstruction of an entire day, which in turn demanded another whole day: "Dos o tres veces había reconstruído un día entero; no había dudado nunca, pero cada reconstrucción había requerido un día entero" (1: 488). This parodic effect has been noted by César Augusto Salgado: 'Funes the Memorious' can be interpreted as a parody of the baroque modernist novel in its ultimate forms: *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, and Proust's *Recherche*. Funes's magical, absolute memory recalls Ulysses' attempt at the total recollection of Dublin on Bloomsday" (71). Whereas Joyce dedicated seven years to achieve the colossal scope of *Ulysses*, Borges offers a succinct form of rewriting, a parodic miniature of *Ulysses* that occupies no more than three pages. In the 1941 foreword to *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (significantly written the same year of Joyce's obituary) an unashamed Borges pronounces his aesthetics of abridgment: "Desvarío laborioso y empobrecedor el de componer vastos libros; el de explicar en quinientas páginas una idea cuya perfecta exposición oral cabe en pocos minutos. Mejor procedimiento es simular que esos libros ya existen y ofrecer un resumen, un comentario" (1: 429).

Only Jorge Luis Borges, the acclaimed master of metaphysical brevity, can blamelessly get away with an irreverent résumé of *Ulysses*. At this point Borges exhibits one of the most fascinating readings of Joyce to date, that deliberately distances itself from either unconditional eulogy or disapproving critique, in order to

propose a dual consciousness that reveals two opposite impulses coexisting within the same discourse. He constructs his dialogue with Joyce as a fruitful dialectic that is both fascinated by Joyce's ability to depict a total reality, and severely critical of the sheer magnitude of the book. If from this conflictual process is to emerge any possible synthesis, then Borges's resolution is the depiction of a character equipped with an infinite memory (as a cognate to Joyce's total inclusion) in the most thoroughly concise narrative fashion. This fosters the construction of *Ulysses* as precursor of "Funes el memorioso" or, what is more, if we apply Pierre Menard's "técnica del anacronismo deliberado y de las atribuciones erróneas" (1: 450) readers would be encouraged to read "Funes el memorioso" as though it was written by James Joyce. Further, Waisman has eloquently summarized this complex meeting point between two of the most revolutionary writers of the twentieth-century:

Joyce asks a question: what would a novel look like that tried to account for every aspect of every single moment of a single day. The answer he gives is *Ulysses* for the daytime, and *Finnegans Wake* for the nighttime. Borges takes this same question, in response to Joyce, and answers with *Funes*: a short, clear and concise story that contains a character able to do (because of his perfect memory) what Joyce tried to do. (69)

Just as a total reading of *Ulysses* presupposes the infinite memory of *Funes*, so the myriad details, lists, catalogues and directory entries in *Ulysses* evoke (and exemplify) the teeming world of Ireneo Funes. Since Funes's memory is infallible, unselective and devoid of abstraction, his reading of *Ulysses* would envisage, less an interpretation, than a replication. This totalising gesture recalls the gargantuan enterprise of Borges's obsessed cartographers who produced a map of the Empire "que tenía el tamaño del imperio y coincidía puntualmente con él" (2: 225). Therefore in his transmutation of *Ulysses* into *Funes*, Borges is still at his most Joycean, carrying to an extreme Joyce's often-cited observation to Frank Budgen (whether taken seriously or not): "I want, said Joyce ... to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed

out of my book" (69). If Joyce claims to have reconstructed the myriad aspects that correspond to his conception of Dublin, then Borges engages in a similar procedure by conferring upon Funes not only the mastery of naturalistic representation through his total reconstruction of one day of his life, but also an omniscient and omnipresent supremacy: "Más recuerdos tengo yo solo que los que habrán tenido todos los hombres desde que el mundo es mundo" (1: 488).

In a crucial 1976 interview with a group of writers and scholars, later edited by Richard Burgin, Borges revisited the parallels between "Funes el memorioso" and *Ulysses* that he had publicised in 1941. Relevantly, this testimony emerges by means of another vital link, namely, the persistent insomnia he experienced in the mid-thirties during a long, relentless Argentine summer: "When I suffered from insomnia I tried to forget myself, to forget my body, the position of my body, the bed, the furniture, the three gardens of the hotel, the eucalyptus tree, the books on the shelf, all the streets of the village, the station, the farmhouses. And since I couldn't forget, I kept on being conscious and couldn't fall asleep." (166) Borges then adds that the antidote to his insomniac state lay in his awareness that James Joyce had experienced an analogous situation of acute mnemonic recollection: "Then I said to myself, let us suppose there was a person who couldn't forget anything he had perceived, and it's well known that this happened to James Joyce, who in the course of a single day could have brought out *Ulysses*, a day in which thousands of things happened" (166). The significance of this confession lies not only in the fact that Borges seeks refuge in Joyce as a *consolatio memoriae* but also in his conception of *Ulysses* as a *consolatio infinitus*, a type of boundless book that according to him "contains it all" (166). Hence Borges argues that the conception of *Ulysses* as an infinite book led to the creation of Funes: "I thought of someone who couldn't forget those events and who in the end dies swept away by his infinite memory" (166). At this point Funes and *Ulysses* amalgamate or, more precisely, Borges confers unto Joyce the authorship of Funes. More importantly, this account forges a mutual reciprocity between Argentine and Irish writers; just as Joyce saves Borges

by composing a “monstrous” book that partakes every detail from reality and rescues him from his lucid nights of insomnia, so Borges complements Joyce by creating an equally “monstrous” character who not only serves as the ideal reader of *Ulysses*, but also presages the “ideal insomniac” of *Finnegans Wake*.

Borges’s chronic insomnia and prodigious memory is projected, then, into his fictional creation Ireneo Funes. In “Funes el memorioso” the first person narrator remarks: “Le era muy difícil dormir. Dormir es distraerse del mundo” (1: 490). In the foreword to *Artificios* Borges declared that the story stands as “una larga metáfora del insomnio” (1: 483), thus privileging the insomniac over the mnemonic states, although for Borges total recall and extreme wakefulness are inextricably linked together. Last, but not least, the interrelatedness between memory and insomnia was also a defining feature of Joyce’s creative process, as it has been wonderfully captured by Frank Budgen in *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*:

Joyce’s memory for the words of his own compositions and for those of all writers he admired was prodigious. He knew by heart whole pages of Flaubert, Newman, de Quincey, E. Quinet, A. J. Balfour and of many others. Most human memories begin to fail at midnight, and lapse into the vague and á peu près, but not that of Joyce ... We had been talking about Milton’s *Lycidas*, and I wanted to quote some lines of it that pleased me. My memory gave out, but Joyce said the whole poem from beginning to end, and followed it up with *L’ Allegro*. (181)

PLINY, LOCKE, AND NIETZSCHE: AUTHOR(S) OF FUNES

In “Funes el memorioso” a crippled and socially isolated Ireneo Funes, greets the narrator with a verbatim recitation, in Latin and Spanish, of the twenty-fourth chapter of the seventh book of Pliny the Elder’s *Historia Naturalis*:

Ireneo empezó por enumerar, en latín y español, los casos de memoria prodigiosa registrados por la *Naturalis historia*: Ciro, rey de los persas, que sabía llamar por su nombre a todos los soldados de sus ejércitos; Mitrídates Eupator, que administraba la justicia en los

22 idiomas de su imperio. Simónides, inventor de la mnemotecnia; Metrodoro, que profesaba el arte de repetir con fidelidad lo escuchado una sola vez. Con evidente buena fe se maravilló de que tales casos maravillaran. (1: 488)

Not insignificantly, the subject matter of the passage is memory. Herein, Pliny offers an inventory of outstanding cases of memory which, nonetheless, seem utterly insignificant to the arrogant Funes. Yet this exempla of mnemonic prodigiousness has been much admired throughout history, as Frances Yates states in *The Art of Memory*: "[Pliny's] little anthology of memory stories in his Natural History [was] constantly repeated in the memory treatises of after times" (41). Regarding Borges's inclusion of Pliny, Bell-Villada asserts that the narrative device proposes: "a typical hall-of-mirrors effect: someone with a perfect memory reciting from memory a passage on memory" (97). Just as Pliny offers a testimony of exceptional memories of the classical world, so Borges presents his own South American mnemonic curiosity, insofar as the first-person narrator of "Funes el memorioso" informs us that his account of Funes will integrate a volume on the Uruguayan prodigy: "Me parece muy feliz el proyecto de que todos aquellos que lo trataron escriban sobre él; mi testimonio será acaso el más breve y sin duda el más pobre, pero no el menos imparcial del volumen que editarán ustedes" (1: 485).

If Borges uses Pliny's treatise as a Chinese box insertion from which to draw parallels and contrasts with Funes, in a larger scale Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* stands as a metaphor of "Funes el memorioso". An ambitiously exhaustive catalogue of facts, or "history" of natura as the universe, Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* stands as a totalising attempt to integrate a wide range of knowledge and physical phenomena in the confines of a single volume. In a conversation with Roberto Alifano, Borges commented: "I believe that the first inventor of the encyclopaedia was Pliny, the author of *Historia Naturalis*, in which he compiles in thirty-seven volumes a record of the knowledge of his time and the most diverse materials..." (84). In this sense, "Funes el memorioso" stands as a parodic commentary of *Historia Naturalis*, turning the principles of cataloguing, classifying and recording every possible aspect of the world

into a *reductio ad absurdum*. Just as Funes stands as a successor of Pliny's encyclopaedic impulse, so Joyce's *Ulysses* stands as another avatar of Pliny, another Book as World, as Marilyn French puts it: "Joyce literally set out to create a replica of the world – not a metaphor for it—but a copy of it—reproducing with it all the coincidences, mysteries, and incertitude that pervade actual life" (26). Similarly, Umberto Eco insists that: "Joyce thus conceived of a total work, a Work-as-Cosmos ... The book is an encyclopedia and a literary summa" (33). Therefore, Borges and Joyce modelled Funes and *Ulysses* respectively according to totalising encyclopaedic impulses that aimed to incorporate the whole world in their categorization of knowledge. Yet as the leading parodists of the twentieth century, Borges and Joyce transgress the taxonomical logic that prevails in the supposedly all-inclusive, ordered catalogues in an attempt to underline, among other things, their inadequate claim for completion. In *The Fictional Encyclopaedia*, Hilary Clark highlights this dialectic between a desire for totalization and the inevitable limitations of the enterprise:

Over history, the encyclopaedic enterprise has been characterized by a drive to encircle or include all there is to know. However, this drive has always encountered problems, limitations built into the enterprise itself. No matter how much faith the encyclopaedist(s) may have in the possibility of mastering and communicating the body of knowledge at hand, the totality of this body is an elusive thing. The desire to comprehend knowledge is an erotics recognizing a loss at the very limit of its reach. (20)

As direct descendants of this encyclopaedic tradition, Borges and Joyce are both allured to the magnitude of an enterprise that seeks to embrace all forms of knowledge, and aware that such projects are condemned to failure in their unavoidable incompleteness. Consequently, both emphasize the conflictual forces inherent in any totalization of knowledge by turning the encyclopaedic endeavour for completion into an unavoidable, yet humorous, anatomy of incompleteness. For instance, in the "Cyclops" episode of *Ulysses* the gigantic catalogues that irrupt into the narrative no longer fulfil any principles of systematic relevance, and instead include arbitrary and disconnected series. In this vein, the epic

catalogue of "many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity" (U 12.176) lists legendary Celtic figures such as Cuchulin and the soldier Owen Roe, side by side a worldwide taxonomy of other historical, literary and biblical counterparts, ranging from Dante Alighieri, Christopher Columbus, Napoleon Bonaparte, to Tristan and Isolde, and Adam and Eve. As Karen Lawrence argues: "What begins as a principle of ordering becomes a vehicle of illogic; the category of Irish heroes that commences with Cuchulin suddenly includes the world" (108). The creation of a catalogue based on absurd and illogical laws of categorization is also one of Borges's pet themes, particularly in "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins". Just as the catalogue of "Cyclops" incorporates any random element from the universe, so the disparate numerical system devised by Funes comprises a nonsensical nominal labelling for each number: "En lugar de siete mil trece, decía (por ejemplo) Máximo Pérez; en lugar de siete mil catorce, *El Ferrocarril*; otros números eran *Luis Melián Lafinur, Olimar, azufre, los bastos, la ballena, el gas, la caldera, Napoleón, Agustín de Vedia*" (1: 489). Funes's "rapsodia de voces inconexas" (1: 489) resembles the arbitrary lists of "Cyclops", insofar as in their all-inclusive accumulation of details any possible element may be validly incorporated into their endless catalogues. What is at stake in Borges's and Joyce's projects, ultimately, is the need to draw attention to the fact that absolute forms of reasoning are condemned to partiality, henceforth emphasizing the arbitrariness of all systems of thought. As Borges concludes in "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins": "no hay clasificación del universo que no sea arbitraria y conjetural" (2: 86).

Towards the end of "Funes el memorioso", in an attempt to turn Funes's memory into an even more unusual prodigy, the narrator extends the list of "precursors" of his imaginary character. Thus the next mnemonic analogy is linked to the nominalistic language postulated by the British philosopher and empiricist, John Locke. The first person narrator of the story reports thus: "Locke, en el siglo XVII, postuló (y reprobó) un idioma imposible en el que cada cosa individual, cada piedra, cada pájaro, y cada rama tuviera un nombre propio" (1: 489). But for Funes, even Locke's impossible language in which every particular thing would re-

quire a particular name seemed, also, far too general; insofar as he would have devised an even more accurate nomenclature to describe the world: "Funes proyectó alguna vez un idioma análogo pero lo desechó por parecerle demasiado general, demasiado ambiguo" (1: 489). John Locke's nominalistic idiom ironically proves unsuitably wide-ranging for the supra-empiricist Funes. At any rate, Locke participates in the dissemination of a Western mnemonic tradition and, in doing so, proposes an impossible language which, three hundred years later, would be refuted by Ireneo Funes in his nineteenth-century "arrabal sudamericano" (1: 490). Funes transcends Locke's nominalistic idiom by virtue of his ability to remember "[no sólo] cada hoja de cada árbol de cada monte, sino cada una de las veces que la había percibido o imaginado" (1: 489). Funes, then, refutes Locke with an even more unfeasible and impractical language which is bound to the flux of time, since any minuscule temporal modification would demand, in turn, a further denomination. These undetected modifications in the perception of average memories, reports "Borges", highly irritated Funes: "No sólo le costaba comprender que el símbolo genérico perro abarcara tantos individuos dispares de diversos tamaños y diversa forma; le molestaba que el perro de las tres y catorce (visto de perfil) tuviera el mismo nombre que el perro de las tres y cuarto (visto de frente)" (1: 490).

In "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1873), the second essay in a collection entitled *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche postulates "a meditation on the value of history", whereby he condemns Western scientific-historical systems of knowledge for their "costly superfluity and luxury" and their "inability to serve life" (59). As a substitute to this historical overflow, Nietzsche proposes a form of unhistorical living that turns its back to the surplus of historical information which has greatly contributed towards the imprisonment of the individual. Therefore, the excesses of history can only be overcome through the opposite phenomenon of active forgetfulness; a redeeming process that is conceived as the amnesiac antidote to the superabundance of knowledge or excessive remembering. Nietzsche's assault on history, however, should not be understood as a total denial of

the importance of history to life. Rather, what is at stake here is that a defunct history, over-burdened with useless facts should give way to a living history infused with the power to serve the individual. In this respect, Edward S. Casey has convincingly argued that Nietzsche, alongside Heidegger, Ebbinghaus and Freud, belong to a twentieth-century philosophical tradition that approaches "remembering through the counterphenomenon of forgetting" (7). This tension underlines the significant fact that the act of remembering only exists through its antithetical relationship to oblivion; Mnemosyne (the Greek goddess of remembering) gives way to Lesmosyne (the goddess of forgetfulness). In a similar vein, in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Paul Ricoeur examines the long-lasting dialectic of remembering and forgetting:

The extraordinary exploits of the ars memoriae were designed to ward off the misfortune of forgetting by a kind of exaggerated memorization brought to the assistance of remembering. But artificial memory is the great loser in this unequal battle. In brief, forgetting is lamented in the same way as aging and death: it is one of the figures of the inevitable, the irremediable. (426)

A vindication of forgetfulness overturns the Western binary opposition of memory/forgetting, in order to privilege the second term. In this vein, Nietzsche proposes his own ars oblivionalis through active forgetfulness, in what he regards as an indispensable condition for the livelihood of humanity: "Forgetting is essential to action of any kind, just as not only light but darkness too is essential for the life of everything organic" (62). Thus, Nietzsche offers the chilling parable of a man who was unable to forget:

Imagine the extremest possible example of a man who did not possess the power of forgetting at all and who was thus condemned to see everywhere a state of becoming: such a man would no longer believe in his own being, would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flowing asunder in moving points and would lose himself in this stream of becoming. (62)

It is thus clear that Nietzsche's vision of a man condemned to a persistent memorious state anticipates Borges's Funes. But at this point it is equally relevant to ask, how familiar was Borges with

Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*? Roxana Kreimer has demonstrated that Borges was far more than just familiar with Nietzsche's essay. She has proved that a copy of *Untimely Meditations* was found in his personal library, bearing significant underlining and annotations on the margins with his own handwriting (189). Following this decisive evidence it is possible, as a result, to identify a further confluence between Borges and Nietzsche, which is based on the ultimate moral of Nietzsche's parable: "[while] it is possible to live almost without memory [it is] altogether impossible to live at all without forgetting" (Nietzsche 62). Unable to exercise any form of *ars oblivionalis* and overwhelmed by his unrelenting powers of recollection, Ireneo Funes seeks refuge in death as the ultimate form of oblivion. As Salgado puts it: "The story of Borges's disabled genius of memory helps Borges illustrate the empowerment, so crucial to the Nietzschean idea of the Will, that forgetting can bestow" (72). Furthermore, Borges confers on Funes the main side effect of insomnia that Nietzsche assigns to his memorious being: total recall is paid with the higher price of a constant state of wakefulness. Nietzsche states: "A man who wanted to feel historically through and through would be like one forcibly deprived of sleep" (62). Consequently, this by-product of insomnia becomes an off-shoot of the state of total recall. Moreover, this insomniac feature is indeed what unites Borges and Joyce and, more precisely, Funes as reader of Joyce, since Joyce believes that a total reading of *Finnegans Wake* could only be achieved with the abstinence of sleep. But if Joyce's Ulysses and "Funes el memorioso" embody the excesses of remembering in their totalising attempt to encompass the whole of universal culture, how do they in turn negotiate the memory/forgetting polarity? In other words, is it possible to recognize in Borges and Joyce an alternative discourse that is centred neither in total recollection nor in absolute oblivion, but aims to achieve a higher synthesis out of the interaction of the two conflicting forces? Or, as Paul Ricoeur asks: "Could forgetting then no longer be in every respect an enemy of memory, and could memory have to negotiate with forgetting, groping to find the right measure in its balance with forgetting?" (415).

THE ART OF FORGETTING IN FUNES AND "ITHACA"

In this final section I will argue that in broad opposition to the surplus of readily available data that prevails in the totalising archives of Funes and Ulysses, particularly in the mathematical catechism of "Ithaca", are positioned the non-encyclopaedic memories of the first-person narrator of "Funes el memorioso", and the strenuous recollection processes of Leopold Bloom. In this manner Funes may be said to resemble the meticulous catechist of "Ithaca", the narrative mind who processes, collects, and classifies large quantities of data throughout the episode. Funes and the catechist intersect in their compulsive creation of taxonomies, endless lists, and in their larger endeavour to overmaster Western knowledge. What, above all, unites Funes and "Ithaca" is their industrious self-employment as archivists of an infinitely divisible reality. Whereas most conventional narratives strive towards a foreseeable end, Funes and the catechist ignore the art of closure and would carry on their mnemonic gymnastics *ad infinitum*. Only with an early death of, ironically, pulmonary congestion is Funes's recording engine finally switched off, and only with the sacrificial act of cancelling an answer to the question "Where?" (17. 2331), which is followed by a bowdlerized orthographical dot, the catechism of "Ithaca" is finally stopped. But in opposition to the mnemonic tour de force lavishly displayed by Funes and the catechist, we can detect an alternative narrative that struggles to counteract the excesses of memory with the opposite phenomenon of active and selective recollection. In "Funes el memorioso" the first-person narrator raises a fundamental problem in a story about a protagonist with an infallible memory: "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, irre recuperables ahora. Prefiero resumir con veracidad las muchas cosas que me dijo Ireneo." (1: 487-88). In other words, how to recount and rearrange, in the level of discourse, a sequence of events that constitute the story of a man endowed with an infinite memory? This pattern reappears in "El Aleph" wherein "Borges" faces the analogous

task of describing the infinite aleph, a point in space that contains a universe (1: 625). At this crucial juncture in both stories, Borges foregrounds the limits of language and representation in a form of meta-commentary that brings the narration to a halt in order to examine its own fictional laws and procedures. These remarks also function as a narrator's apologia that highlights their mutual ineffability to capture in words, and through imperfect recollection, their infinite revelations. This narrative impasse, however, is reciprocally resolved through the acceptance of the impossibility to attain a total reconstruction of the events. The infinite qualities of Funes, writes Sylvia Molloy, "only exist in perception itself; it cannot be told. While Funes's undistracted attention is busy summoning terms, the narrator wishing to transcribe the series must 'clear a space' for narration if he wished to refer the experience — the enumeration of an infinite series — ever so partially" (118). The counter-narratives of "Funes el memorioso" and "Ithaca" are accomplished, thus, through active remembering and a self-confessed quota of forgetfulness. For "Borges" and for Bloom, the telling of the tale implies, inevitably, an incomplete and imperfect report of the principal facts. Therefore, their deliberately flawed accounts may be re-branded, justifiably, within the sphere of creative recollection.

In "Ithaca" the catechist stresses that the Hebrew-Celtic cultural exchange between Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom culminated in Bloom's partial intonation of the Zionist hymn: "Why was the chant arrested at the conclusion of this first distich?", asks Joyce's catechist. The reply goes thus: "In consequence of defective mnemotechnic" (17. 761-66). Herewith, "mnemotechnic" should not be read as another word for memory, but as an artificial device for the aid and improvement of natural memory. His "defective" answer notwithstanding, Bloom gets away by substituting the missing information with "a periphrastic version of the general text" (17.767-68). Whereas the catechist would have presented a full version of the hymn, Bloom seeks refuge, instead, in the paradigmatic axis of language that enables him to substitute one word for another. The act of lapsing into an instance of forgetfulness forges a wide gamut of linguistic and creative possibilities,

inasmuch as a lacuna simultaneously takes away meaning but also strives to replace the missing layer with a new parchment. Moreover, later in the episode, with the imperative command "catalogue these books" (17. 1361) the catechist provides a minute inventory of Bloom's shelves. This sequence generates a further series of questions about the polarity of memory and forgetfulness,

Which volume was the largest in bulk?

Hozier's History of the Russo-Turkish War.

What among other data did the second volume of the work in question contain?

The name of a decisive battle (forgotten), frequently remembered by a decisive officer, major Brian Cooper Tweedy (remembered).

Why, firstly and secondly, did he not consult the work in question?

Firstly, in order to exercise mnemotechnic: secondly, because after an interval of amnesia, when, seated at the central table, about to consult the work in question, he remembered by mnemotechnic the name of the military engagement, Plevna (17. 1414-26).

The redeeming power of amnesia offers, once again, the possibility to fill in a space, to effectuate through the art of memory the recollection of a particular fact. Therefore, Bloom's memory is inevitably affected by "the access of years" and by "the action of distraction" (17. 1916-20). What this makes clear, principally, is the crucial fact that the ordinary memory of Leopold Bloom is condemned (or gifted) with the distortion and partial recollection of facts, like the memory of the first person narrator of "Funes el memorioso". Hence Bloom's memories are dissolved by a combination of lack of attention and the inevitable passing of time, inasmuch as they will be gradually swept away by the inexorable current of that mighty usurper of Memory: Time. Similarly, Borges proposes a testament to oblivion at the end of "El Aleph": "Nuestra mente es porosa para el olvido; yo mismo estoy falseando y perdiendo, bajo la trágica erosión de los años, los rasgos de Beatriz" (1: 628). The only antidote to the mystical revelation

of the three-dimensional Aleph is the remedy of forgetfulness, since the potent effects of infinity may only be overcome with an inevitable, yet necessary, void. Moreover, it is death, that other guise of oblivion, the redeeming force that finally rescues Ireneo Funes from his infallible powers of recollection. Just as Borges clears up the excesses of memory with death and forgetfulness, in "Ithaca" Joyce proposes a similar redemption by means of a non-heroic formula that merges forgetfulness with forgiveness. If Joyce argued that "[Ithaca] is in reality the end as Penelope has no beginning, middle or end" (*Letters* 1: 172), then, the longest day in literature, 16 June 1904, culminates with a weary Leopold Bloom breaking free from his Homeric counterpart as he opts for a pacifist acceptance of Molly's infidelity rather than a bloodthirsty revenge on her suitor (Blazes Boylan). This forgiving attitude can only be achieved through forgetfulness, in other words, through the sentiment of "abnegation" that, as the catechist states, exceeded "jealousy", just as the sentiment of "equanimity" surpassed "envy":

Why more abnegation than jealousy, less envy than equanimity?

From outrage (matrimony) to outrage (adultery) there arose nought but outrage (copulation) yet the matrimonial violator of the matrimonially violated had not been outraged by the adulterous violator of the adulterously violated (17. 2195-99).

After kissing the "plump mellow yellow smellow melons" (17. 2241) of Molly's rump, a worn out Bloom loosens himself to the forgetfulness of sleep, while the restless Molly begins her insomniac recollection, so that the book can remember itself infinitely.¹

Patricia Novillo-Corvalán
Birkbeck College, University of London

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