

## CHAPTER TEN

### *Vox in Deserto:* Borges and the Story of Sand

He told me his book was called the Book of Sand, because neither the book nor the sand have either beginning or end.

—Borges, *Libro de Arena*

We would again have to allude to the writing of Borges, considering it a writing *avant la lettre*, insofar as it anticipates and prescribes the imagination and thought determining the historical, political, theoretical, and aesthetic tendencies that define ambivalently the culture of the second half of the last century, finalizing that century, that millennium, and other times. The revelations of his paradoxical vision, the aporias of his incertitudes, the disconcerts of suspended oppositions, the perfection of representations so precise that they obliterate what they represent, copies that surpass their originals, the vanishing of categories and genres, the undrawing of disciplinary limits, the fatality of a writing that does not distinguish although it is sustained by distinction, the progressive introduction of fiction into history, the omission that is another recourse of fiction, the totalitarian absurdity of inventories that impugn invention, the arbitrary enumerations, the incidences of possible worlds that displace known ones, the discontinuous parallelism of the encyclopedias that record or interpret them, the theoretical crises and the hermeneutic rescues of a truth, fragile and in flight, constitute some of the forms of those disparate definitions.

Observing these broken down gnosiological series, the meticulous clarity of rigorous cartographic registers, the iconic solidity of diagrams as valid as they are debatable, the measurable distances according to exact standards, the terminating borders between jurisdictions that tend to confront one another, the orientation of cardinal points as symmetrical as

they are arbitrary, the eventualities of a utopic geography could not cease to be one of the favorite targets at which Borges would aim his negative poetics.

"What are the Orient and the Occident? If they ask me, I do not know. Let us look for an approximation,"<sup>1</sup> Borges replies, but in regional terms, diffusely spatial, to the same question that Augustine formulated about time, and, like the old professor of rhetoric who was a monk before converting, responds by affirming that he knows space and does not know it at the same time. Anterior and similar to the coincidences of the globalized present, Borges's epistemological fiction takes note of this planetary reduction in which the confines, being conventional, do not count; where distances, because of the immediacy of contexts and accelerated imagination, count less; where accidents are no more than accidental; where exotic places appear juxtaposed—because they are neighbors or mythical—to familiar im-mediations where Orient and Occident contract in a common decline that brings them closer to one another. Preceded by the redundancies of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*), a title in which time and space are confounded in one and the same fall,<sup>2</sup> that approximation constitutes a decline in two parts for two reasons: because geographical reason declines (barely a primary topography); because conceptual reason declines (barely a discrete logic).

And how to define the Orient, not the real Orient, which does not exist? I would say that the notions of Orient and Occident are generalizations but that no individual feels Oriental. I suppose that a man feels Persian, feels Hindu, feels Malay, but not Oriental. In the same way, no one feels Latin American: we feel Argentine, Chilean, Orientals (Uruguayans). It does not matter, the concept does not exist.<sup>3</sup>

Between prophecy or provocation, Borges's previsions were those of an epoch in which countries vanish, regionalized into markets; in which deterritorialization turns inside out the definitions of national statutes submitted to the fluctuations of a conceptual stock market in which notions of nation and narration are confounded, and not only because of homophonic occurrences. Borges's imagination mocks borders because, uncertain, they indistinctly unite or separate jurisdictions. They degrade them, running through them by means of personal topology that explodes into contiguities only conceived of in dreams, making of the whole world a *common place*, *topoi koinoi*. More than sites, indisputable arguments, they get by without fortuitous particularities, without the eventualities of history, procuring to discover, beyond idiomatic, idiosyncratic contingen-

cies and the myths of identity that sustain them, the models of a knowledge capable of abstracting them. There the variants of being and knowing stand as instances of a movement, of a voyage that is directed beyond, toward another reality, an *ultrareality* where the eventual does not count; where the voyage is a disputable errancy of permanency in space, where the vision of the whole Earth can be concentrated in a sacred place or ciphered in an initial or initiatory letter that is not less so for spatializing time in writing. Because if the world was made to finish in a beautiful book, the book exists because it is beautiful—*cosmos*, a world—and because it remains, it does not end. . .

It would not be excessive, then, to simplify a parallelism that would implicate textual itineraries and recognize that—according to the genetic analysis of Borges's manuscripts—if the *mihrab* is the place that "gives place" to the *aleph*,<sup>4</sup> associated with an "Arabic geography,"<sup>5</sup> the desert is the place that gives place to Borges's text, an imagination that tries to comprehend in one expression, in one moment, eternity and infinity or, at the same time, to claim them for itself.

This literary claim desires the desert. But, more than *vox in deserto*, more than to speak in the desert or to desire to be heard, Borges speaks—in Spanish—his desire for the desert: between *desire* and *desert*, *decirlos* (to say them) in one sole word. It would be necessary to begin at the beginning, but like the end, the beginning is neither one nor is it certain; there are several, and perhaps for this reason one of the principal beginnings (*principios*)—which is the beginning of Writing—begins with *b* and not with the first letter, as if presuming that something anterior had already preceded it, one conjecture that the theologians have noted only to have it refuted, as they must have noted and refuted a question no longer of letters but of names (*nombres*), a word that means "numbers" in French and "names" in Spanish, encompassing transidiomatically the dualities of a common denominator or of a similar referent.

In this way is posed a brief philological discussion, a first question of translation, of crossed languages, a question or a search for words that Borges would not have avoided and that poetically engages the titles of the books of the Torah with this allure of saying or of that desire of the desert. Once again: instead of to speak (*decir*) in the desert, speak (*decir*) the desert. The first title of the *Pentateuco*, *Genesis*, in Hebrew *Bereshit*, which means "beginning," names the word with which the book of *Genesis* begins. The second title, *Exodus*—from the Greek *exo*, "out of," and *hodos*, "route, voyage, act of leaving"—is the distant translation of the Hebrew *Shemot*, which means "Names," neither emigration nor exile, but rather the Hebrew word with which *Exodus* begins: "These are the names . . ." *Leviticus*, the third title of the Hebrew Bible, refers to the

priests, sons of Aaron, separating itself from the Hebrew *Ve ikra*, which means "and he called," another of Yahweh's ways of saying, with which the book begins. The fourth, *Numbers*—in Hebrew *Ba-midbar*—which is a title adopted by the Septuagint (the Seventy translators of the Torah, or Seventy two, in order to avoid sectarian misreadings). After it, the Vulgate passes over *Ba-midbar*, the title that anticipates the beginning of the book, making allusion to the census of the twelve tribes in place of referring to the place, the desert of Sinai, where Yahweh addresses Moses, speaks to him. *Midbar* claims its close relation with the word: *dibur*, "speech," *diburim*, "talks," "rumors, cheap talk," in modern Hebrew. Words and desert, both voices proceed from the same root, spoken voices rooted in the desert. On the one hand, the name of "words" is omitted to make reference to the voyage to the way of the one who leaves, to the route or path that is abandoned or the one that one tries to rescue (*Exodus*). On the other hand, the place is omitted, the desert, in order to make reference to numbers (*Numbers*). Intersection of voices and ways<sup>6</sup> in the desert: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."<sup>7</sup>

The fifth book of the Hebrew Bible, *Deuteronomy*, adopted from the Greek and Latin meaning "second law," also does not translate the Hebrew *debarim*, "palabras": "These be the words that Moses spake . . . in the wilderness."<sup>8</sup> "In the beginning" of all the books of the Torah is found the word, speech, discourse, voices that are spoken in the desert. More than etymological, more than idiomatic, the profundity of the relation between "word" and "desert" sinks its roots in a mythology of the nothing, in a letteristic, consonant coincidence, *dbr*, originates as minimalist, as if in a previous language, a geography of the void, an empty space that is the origin of the world that, because of the word, remains to be made. Even by opposition, a semantic relation similar but contrary is to be verified in Latin: *desertus*, adjectival past participle of *deserere*, "to separate oneself," "abandon," derives as does *sermo*, "speech, language," from the Latin *serere*: the desert depriving or deprived of the word. Signs cross one another in different languages, exchange signals, the semantic paths leading to a common mystery. Thought in Spanish, in the "language of Borges," they are words that propitiate bilingual, multilingual interlacings, names for numbers and vice versa, words that reflect one another, confronting each other like mirrors, verbal mirages that attract infinite interpretations, dissimulated interior translations, transports, or metaphors of a passing secularization.

When the narrator of "The Theologians"<sup>9</sup> recounts that Aureliano argues in favor of a thesis on circular time, he points out that in the subject of theology there is no novelty without danger, but dealing with the

idea that the thesis he defended was "too unlikely, too amazing for the risk to have been serious," he clarifies, in parenthesis, that "the heresies that we ought to fear are those which can be confused with orthodoxy."<sup>10</sup>

Years before writing this story, in "Circular Time,"<sup>11</sup> Borges had already foreseen its plot. In place of announcing it, he prefers to remit it to the past. The mis-ordered reversibility of this *work in progress*<sup>12</sup> justifies the prolongation of a quote:

(I imagined some time ago a fantastic story, in the style of León Bloy: a theologian consecrates all of his life to confuting a heretic, he vanquishes him in intricate polemics, he denounces him, he makes him burn; in Heaven he discovers that for God the heretic and he consisted of one and the same person.)<sup>13</sup>

This essay precedes, in the *History of Eternity*, "The Translators of the Thousand and One Nights."<sup>14</sup> An obstinate circularity, a regressive succession, series in cycles that repeat themselves *sub specie aeternitatis*, these are the foundations of a doctrine that affirms eternity in the multiplication of possible worlds, as conceived by Borges on the basis of and in the manner of Louis-Auguste Blanqui: like copies that repeat themselves eternally in infinite space. In *Eternity Through the Stars: An Astronomical Hypothesis*,<sup>15</sup> the plurality of facsimilar stars that Blanqui supposes and describes in the reclusion of prison, the slippages of some into others, the recurrence of his astronomical phantasmagorias, the desperate illusion of coincidences and differences, constitute the intellectual substance and constant aesthetic that Borges demands and dispenses in different versions<sup>16</sup>: "Of the three doctrines I have enumerated, the best-reasoned and most complex is that of Blanqui."<sup>17</sup>

Repetitions question continuity, refute succession if it is progressive, procure eternity, "whose shattered copy is time," and also space, since it is measured by time.<sup>18</sup> The coordinates being confused—to designate them somehow—they do not order, they enable melancholic references of a geometrical indefiniteness that the seller of Bibles and of *The Book of Sand*, in *The Book of Sand*,<sup>19</sup> utters in a low voice, as if he were thinking out loud: "If space is infinite, we are in whatever point of space. If time is infinite, we are in whatever point of time."<sup>20</sup> The pages of the book, like sand, are uncountable, "none is the first, none is the last."<sup>21</sup>

The sand, like "the water that in water is invisible,"<sup>22</sup> is lost in the desert, where neither the sand nor the desert is distinguished. In that indefinite or infinite space, similar but opposed to the rigorous precisions traced by the labyrinth, one makes out the primordial "topos," place and theme of a loss, the disorientation that justifies the search for the Borgesian

writing. The Orient is the origin, or vice versa, since in the desert, like the word—let the redundancy stand—are in the beginning and everywhere, although he dedicates several texts to this ubiquity:

“The desert”: Some three or four hundred meters away from the Pyramid I bent over, took up a handful of sand, let it fall silently a little further on, and said in a low voice: *I am modifying the Sahara*. The deed was minimal, but the not ingenious words were exact and I thought that I had needed my entire life to be able to say them.<sup>23</sup>

Borges’s “Thirteen Coins”<sup>24</sup> o “Quince monedas,”<sup>25</sup> as it appears in another edition, comprise a series of very short poems included in a discontinuous way in his different editions. Among these coins of fluctuating number, “The Desert” is the place where time does not count; present, it remains suspended or does not remain, canceled and potential, expectant, it is time in which eternity and the instant coincide, where differences vanish, soil, sun or moon, a battle or two:

Space without time.  
The moon is the color of sand.  
Now, precisely now,  
Are dying the men of Metauro and Trafalgar.<sup>26</sup>

In another “The Desert,” this one a longer poem, I transcribe here only a few verses:

Before entering the desert  
the soldiers drank long of the water from the cistern.  
Hierocles spilt on the earth  
the water from his canteen and said:  
*If we must enter in the desert,  
I am already in the desert.  
If thirst is going to scorch me,  
Let it scorch me!*  
This is a parable.<sup>27</sup>

“The Book of Sand” is not an “Arabic story,” like the *Vathek* of William Beckford, nor does it take place in the desert, although the desert, secretive, is absent and present at the same time. Even if “The Book of Sand” is a relatively brief tale, it refers to an infinite book, like the sand of the desert, without limits, or with invisible edges that extend it beyond the

horizon. To reduce the excesses of that extravagant extension, before the impossibility of defining or of giving a reference to the indefinition, the narrator begins *ad absurdum*, making use of, *more geometrico*, all the recourses of exactitude. Contradictorily, he defines line, plane, volumes as forms of the infinite that are not those of the book, or not even its opposites. Recognizing the convention of all fantastic tales, the narrator affirms, from the beginning, that it is a true book. Given the literary verisimilitude, of that partial truth of writing, he prefers to occult—truth, the book—behind another book that is a fiction of fictions: “He opts for hiding them behind some uncompleted (*descabalados*) volumes of the *Thousand and One Nights*,”<sup>28</sup> a volume that is missing some parts, apparently “incomplete.” Nor is “cabala” foreign to that disorder that the adjective qualifies, nor do the traditions of reading contradict that disperse “reception”: “The Arabs say that no one can/ Read to the end of the Book of the Nights.”<sup>29</sup> In addition to occulting the uncertain truth of other books, *The Thousand and One Nights* is one of his archetypal narratives, the spiral matrix where are produced the mirages of his abyssal imagination, anterior and interior to other books, or to the same book, that take place in the desert. More than the parable of the desert it is the voice in the desert, the word is lost in the word, they are not differentiated, just as the word is not differentiated from the book:

In the book is the Book. Without knowing it  
The queen tells the king the already forgotten  
Story of them both. . . .<sup>30</sup>

From the two books or from them both, the king and the queen? Consisting of its vigils, *The Thousand and One Nights* not only constitutes a book but also a temporal and nocturnal pretext of innumerable stories that figure the literary imagination of its bibliothecological rhetoric: figures of a talisman that protects or dispenses the luck of its erudition prolonged in fictions or in interminable histories that wager against time. Borges disperses in parts (*descabala*) the book: “takes out precise parts in order to construct another [book] which does not claim to be entire (*cabal*) or complete either.”<sup>31</sup> Like a magical inscription that *circulates* in his texts, in more or less transparent quotes or in even more secret *rendezvous* (*cita* in Spanish brings together the two passions in one and the same word: the citation and the sentimental meeting), the book comes and goes in Borges’s oeuvre, a literal and figurative “transport” of his metaphors. In the same way that the genie enclosed in the vessel is not the same one who escapes from Aladdin’s lamp, he only appears “by enchantment,” according to the French translation of *The Thousand and One*

*Nights*. Both play within the pages of Borges, weaving the plot and filtering, in bibliographical references, the autobiographical accidents that fiction reveals.

In "The South,"<sup>32</sup> Juan Dahlmann "had attained, that afternoon, an uncompleted copy of the *Thousand and one Nights*." It is the book with which he travels toward his destiny: the south, his fatality, the displacement in procurement of a double death. In that story, the ciphered and habitual reading postpones the duel, it serves "as if to cover reality,"<sup>33</sup> believing in this way to avoid the challenge and the fight. Like *The Book of Sand*, between whose pages "none is the first; none, the last,"<sup>34</sup> *The Thousand and One Nights* holds mysteries that hold other mysteries; occults the character or occults (from him) reality, like it occulted the Book of Sand on a shelf of the library, insinuating the rigor of an inexorable law: one book occults another, or more.

*The Thousand and One Nights* is, moreover, title and subject of a talk published in *Seven Nights*. The periodical brevity, to which the tutelary title of the book that compiles several other talks refers, appears in counterpoint to the millenary nocturnal fabulation, with the verbliness preceding an enumeration that mocks, because of its scarcity, the enumeration of a series that does not end. "The idea of infinite is co-substantial with *The Thousand and One Nights*,"<sup>35</sup> the narration enables a universe where time and space are confused, where numerical precision makes fun, contradictorily, no longer of the limitations of enumeration but rather of its impossibility. The end in suspense, like in the stories of Sheherezade that suspend the ending, postpone the *sentence*, which is as much the verbal one as the condemnation, death, the end, always interrupted:

I want to pause over the title. It is one of the most beautiful in the world, so beautiful [. . .] I believe that for us the word "thousand" is synonymous with "infinite." To say a thousand nights is to say infinite nights, the many nights, the innumerable nights. To say "a thousand and one nights" is to add one to the infinite.<sup>36</sup>

For this reason Borges prefers that title of numerous narration to the one that it presents in English, "The Arabian Nights," an Oriental, ethnic mention, which, like "the Arabic numerals," do not number the pages of the Book of Sand, which pass from 400,514, even, to 999, odd. Borges's story *The Book of Sand*—two times eponymous—presents the same title for the book that appears in the story and for the book wherein appears the story. Thus the book exists outside of the story and inside of the story, vanishing the limits from both sides, providing entrance or exit to the

dualities of its ambiguous diegetic statute. It belongs to "a world that is made of correspondences, that is made of magic mirrors,"<sup>37</sup> which, facing one another, confuse reality with words, forging images that shed blinding light and are erased in the sand. In others of Borges's stories, the regions, the countries owe their existence to the mentions that figure in an Encyclopedia. This statute would not be unusual in a universe where Sheherezade's life depended on her word, the continuity of the story as well, narrator and narration exist equally with the word. An encyclopedic, literary, or verbal survival dissimulates the differences that no longer oppose life to anything that is not written.

From the beginning, the word is the commencement:

I think we ought not renounce the word Orient, such a beautiful word, since in it, by happy coincidence, there is gold (*oro*) to be found. [and he insists] In the word Orient we hear the word gold (*oro*) because at dawn the heavens look like gold.<sup>38</sup>

Borges discovers affinities between words that, beyond phonetic coincidences, reveal a universe articulated by a different poetic logic: *arena* (sand), *Arab*, *arid*, *ardent*, *arcane*, or more distant, "in the confines of the sand (*arena*) of Arizona,"<sup>39</sup> incipient rhymes, at the beginning, textual bonds are laid out like traps in unforeseen situations.

Although "its semantics has been restricted to places,"<sup>40</sup> for Borges the desert is not only infinite extension but also the place from which "one leaves" and, for this reason, a goal: an origin and a departure, the beginning and the leaving. Its desolation is, moreover, of another nature:

I see that this theme is fecund in Borges since the desert—in any case as it is lived by the Arabs—is the sheer place of loss, of a virtual loss; and frequently, it is there where one loses and refinds oneself; and it is that disposition that brings about the paradigm of the footprint, of its inscription, of its fragility, of its blurring; of its furtive slippage toward the sign, in order to reveal in it the latency of its meaning; that is to say, the testimony of a presence in absence.<sup>41</sup>

Beyond tracing the roots of loss, Borges consecrates the sand as the original substance of space, deserted dust that remains in movement, since sand is not only the infinite sediment of the desert but also the shifting material of fiction in a book of which the narrator, like the mythical narrator, is a prisoner. If "the first metaphor is water," water becomes sand like "those rivers of sand with fish of gold" that, in the first place make us

think of Islam.<sup>42</sup> That becoming would propitiate another experiencing of time by writing: if "the course of time and time are only one mystery and not two,"<sup>43</sup> discourse duplicates it. Emblematic, remote, *clepsydra* names the water and its disappearance, the water stolen by the discourse that is prolonged but, above all, by the word that designates and, at the same time, suppresses what it designates. Through the crystal of the *clepsydra* the water makes transparent twice over the secret order that the passage of time administers but, like a shaker that tosses the die, "the allegorical instrument"<sup>44</sup> turns around and chance returns. "Shakespeare—according to his own metaphor—put in the turn of an hourglass the works of the years,"<sup>45</sup> said Borges more than a half century ago.

If all history, like all story, is uncertain, Borges pushes that uncertainty to its extreme, prolonging it into a *History of Eternity* that tries to recount the impossible history of an eternity that has no time, or sets out to enumerate the moments of the instant, that also does not have it. He recounts, nevertheless, the history of the sand, he tells it two times, the history of the desert and the number, interminably, which is another incessant form of (re)counting. The voice is doubled in the desert or, the other way around, the desert is doubled in the voice, in one same voice or at the same time. It is doubled and comes back to itself, *vox in deserto*, like in a mirror, almost a mirage. In the image of *clepsydra*, Borges exhausts water into sand, exhausts time as it slips toward the end in order to return to the beginning. Fall, that is a symbol of other falls, of equally symbolic fractures, sand decants, meticulous, without pausing, without swerving, like a verse that returns by inversion, turning around itself, in a fragile orb or two, where are passing by, because they wander and disappear, the voices that do not count.

## 10. *VOX IN DESERTO*

1. Borges, "Las mil y una noches," in *Siete noches* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1980), 58.
2. If we attend to the meaning of fall that is designated by both *Untergang* (decline) and *Abendland* (Occident), the title of the book by

Oswald Spengler duplicates the crepuscular condition. Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes; Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1922).

3. Borges, "Las mil y una noches," 67. Those of us born in Uruguay—whose official denomination is "The Oriental Republic of Uruguay," because the country is located, seen from Argentina, to the east of the Uruguay river—are "Orientals." Borges himself, born in Buenos Aires, identified himself as "Oriental" because of having been conceived in the hacienda of the Haedos, in Rio Negro, a province of Uruguay.

4. I am thankful to Salvio Martínez and Jorge Panesi for the information about the manuscript of the story "The Aleph," which Borges had dedicated to Estela Canto, where in place of *aleph* appears *mirhab*, crossed out in all cases.

5. It is the only specific entry that the CD-Rom of the *Encyclopedia Universalis* presents in its extensive reference for "Geography."

6. A homofrancophonic coincidence (*voix*) that I owe to Alfons Knauth, although he refers it to the sea and not the desert. In "Transport poétique par voix maritime. Laforgue entre l'Amérique et l'Europe," in *Lautréamont et Laforgue. La cuestión de los orígenes / La quête des origines* (Montevideo: Academia Nacional de Letras/Embajada de Francia en el Uruguay, 1993), 21–39.

7. Isaias, 40:3, *The Holy Bible*, containing the Old and New Testaments in the authorized King James version (Chicago: Good Counsel Publishers, 1965), 540.

8. Deuteronomy, *ibid.*, 145.

9. Borges, *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1974), 550–556.

10. *Ibid.*, 550.

11. This text appeared under the title "Three Forms of the Eternal Return," in *La Nación* of Buenos Aires, 12/14/1041. The story "The Theologians" was published in 1947 in *Anales de Nuevos Aires*.

12. English in the original.

13. Borges, *Obras completas*, 395.

14. *Ibid.*, 397–413.

15. Louis-Auguste Blanqui, *L'éternité par les astres. Hypothèse astronomique*, ed. L. B. de Behar. (Genève: Fleurion-Slatkine, 1996).

16. Block de Behar, "Conjonctions et conjectures à la limite des mondes parallèles. Une lecture de L.-A. Blanqui," *Pleine Marge* 25 (Paris, 1995).

17. Borges, "El tiempo circular," *Historia de la eternidad*, in *Obras completas*, 393.

18. Borges, "Las mil y una noches," 57.



19. Borges, *Obras completas*, III, 10–73.
20. *Ibid.*, 69.
21. *Ibid.*, 69.
22. Borges, "Otra versión de Proteo," in *Obra poética* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1977), 438.
23. Borges, *Atlas*, with collaboration by María Kodama (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana 1984), 82.
24. Borges, *Obras completas*, 1090.
25. Borges, *Obra poética*, 429.
26. Borges, *Ibid.*, 429.
27. Borges, *La cifra* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1981), 85.
28. Borges, *Obras completas*, III, 70.
29. Borges, *Obra poética*, 512.
30. *Ibid.*, 512.
31. This is the definition of the verb *descabalar* given by the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*.
32. Borges, *Obras completas*, 525.
33. *Ibid.*, 529.
34. Borges, *Obras completas*, III, 69.
35. Borges, "Las mil y una noches," 61.
36. *Ibid.*, 61.
37. *Ibid.*, 73.
38. *Ibid.*, 63.
39. Borges, "Al coyote," in *Obra poética*, 408.
40. "Désert." Alain Rey, *Le Robert: Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1992).
41. Abdelwahab Meddeb, letter to the author of August 28, 1997.
42. Borges, "Las mil y una noches," 64.
43. Borges, "El tiempo y J. W. Dunne," in *Obras completas*, 648.
44. Borges, "El reloj de arena," in *ibid.*, 811.
45. Borges, "Time and the Conways, de J. B. Priestly" (journal *El Hogar*, 10/15/1937), reimpresso in *Textos cautivos. Ensayos y reseñas en "El Hogar" (1936–1939)*, ed. Enrique Sacerio-Garí and Emir Rodríguez Monegal (Buenos Aires: Tusquets Editores, 1986) and in *Obras completas*, IV (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1996), 324.