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INTERTEXTUAL LABYRINTHS: BORGES AND THE SINO-CULTURAL PARADIGM

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One of the greatest writers and thinkers of the 20th century, the great Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges amazes readers and researchers of his work with an unusually wide range of his cultural interests and knowledge, associations, judgments and generalizations. The conceptual message of Borges's work, the conceptual series that thread through his texts, Borges's ideologemes, cosmologemes, philosophemes, embodied by original and innovative artistic means, were born from a deep immersion in the experience of global culture that has accumulated over thousands of years – spiritual, artistic, intellectual, oral and written. The culture that accumulated in the common home of the human race on all sides of the world, in the West and in the East, in the North and in the South. The richest nutrient medium for Borges – both as a culturologist and as a writer who created his own completely special and very influential, ideological and artistic world, his own aesthetics and poetics – was undoubtedly the culture of the East and, in particular, as he himself calls it in one of his texts, the three-thousand-year-old culture of China.

A series of texts in different literary forms and genres by J.L. Borges, a profound expert of the library, embracing the world literary and culture, reflect a many-sided interest towards China, its history and culture, its religion, myths, folklore, and literature. The present paper observes the main facts and motives in the dialogue between Borges (as writer and poet, intellectual and culture expert) and the classical texts of old and medieval China. In focus are the echoes of the features typical of Borges's texts and, in particular, his short story «The Garden of Forking Paths» in comparison with the famous Chinese classical novel «A Dream of the Red Chamber» by Cao Xue-qin. The author also draws attention to the high statistics of references to Chinese images in the «Book of Imaginary Beings».

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Introduction

When today, in modern literary studies, we talk about Jorge Luis Borges, this name does not need accompanying epithets. The work of Borges – a writer, poet, thinker, culturologist – has already entered the classics of world culture, literature (into their, let's say in Borges's words, «library», «universe»), while presenting an exceptional abundance of classic imagery and concepts, entering into dialogue, echoing with a multitude of manifestations, facts and meanings of world culture created from century to century in the North and the South, in the West and the East.

Borges's numerous, diverse, multi-genre texts – poems, stories, essays, lectures, conversations, hundreds of reviews, compiled anthologies, translations – reflect the universe of world culture with its archetypes, mythology, folklore, religious teachings, branches of philosophical and aesthetic thought, creations of art and artistic words.

Borges's exploration of this universe began with his father's library. «If I were asked to name the chief event in my life, I should say my father's library. In fact, I sometimes think I have never strayed outside that library. I can still picture it. It was in a room of its own, with glass-fronted shelves, and must have contained several thousand volumes»². In his «Preface to the Catalogue of the Exhibition of Spanish Books», Borges mentioned that *everyone imagines paradise in their own way, but for him, paradise, from childhood, was a library, promising the pleasure of rereading – the serene and proud pleasure of the classics – and the pleasant anxiety of discoveries and chance* («Not included in the books: Preface to the catalogue of the exhibition of Spanish books». Buenos Aires, August 9, 1962). Throughout his life, Borges had infinite encounters with real books, book depositories, libraries, and the book-metaphor, the library-metaphor, built the meanings of many of his texts both as a poet and as a prose writer. Borges often said

² Borges J. L., Autobiographical Notes. September 11, 1970, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1970/09/19/jorge-luis-borges-profile-autobiographical-notes> (Accessed 01.09.2024).

about himself in conversations that he was more of a reader than a writer. One of his poems comes to mind: «Let others boast of pages they have written, / I take pride in those I've read»³; and we encounter similar discourse in other poems: «My true lineage is my father's voice that I still hear, commemorating Swinburne's music, and the great volumes that I have browsed, browsed and not read, and that were enough for me, I am what the philosophers have told me»⁴ («Yesterdays»); «I have spent my whole life spelling out the dogmas speculated by the philosophers»⁵ («Forgetting a dream»). And finally we will quote the opening and closing lines of the long poem «The Keeper of Books», which bring us closer to the topic of this article:

*Here they stand: gardens and temples and the
reason for temples;*

.....

*My name is Hsiang. I am the keeper of the books—
these books which are perhaps the last,
for we know nothing of the Son of Heaven
or of the Empire's fate.*

*Here on these high shelves they stand,
at the same time near and far,
secret and visible, like the stars.*

Here they stand – gardens, temples⁶.

Borges, judging by a whole series of his various texts, was well acquainted with the Buddhist East in general, and the Celestial Empire in

³ Borges J. L., A Reader. Translated from the Spanish by Norman Thomas di Giovanni, <https://biblioklept.org/2014/05/07/a-reader-jorge-luis-borges/> (Accessed 01.09.2024).

⁴ ...Mi verdadera estirpe / es la voz, que aún escucho, de mi padre, / con memorando música de Swinburne, / y los grandes volúmenes que he hojeado, / hojeado y no leído, y que me bastan. / Soy lo que me contaron los filósofos... Translated by the author. Borges J. L. Poesía complete, <http://surl.li/wwohvi> (Accessed 01.09.2024).

⁵ Ibid. Me he pasado la vida del etreando / los dogmas que aventuran los filósofos ("Al olvidar un sueño"). Translated by the author. (Accessed 01.09.2024).

⁶ Borges J. L., The Keeper of Books, <https://inwardboundpoetry.blogspot.com/2005/11/11-keeper-of-books-jorge-luis-borges.html> (Accessed 03.09.2024).

particular, including its history, culture, religion, myths, folklore, its sages and books.

Borges' Transcultural Dialogue with Ancient Chinese Cosmologies

In the essay «Borges and I» we read: «Years ago I /.../ went from the mythologies of the suburbs to the games with time and infinity, but those games belong to Borges now and I shall have to imagine other things. Thus my life is a flight and I lose everything, and everything belongs to oblivion, or to him. I do not know which of us has written this page»⁷. It is precisely at the time when Borges's «games with time and infinity» begin in his short stories and essays, when Borges's symbols and metaphors (a book, a library, a garden, a temple, a labyrinth, circles, a cycle, a dream, a mirror – a single thing in endless repetitions, variations, swarms, etc.) are formed and subsequently multiply and mutate, his interest in Chinese «metaphysics», folklore, and literature clearly manifests itself. It is in the Chinese fairy tale (in contrast to the European folklore with its extreme conventionality and correctness) that he finds what corresponds to his own artistic thinking, his own poetics based on the blending of the real with the fantastic, fiction with reality and meaningful «cracks». The violation of the rules, «irregularness» that characterizes the Chinese fairy tale is akin to Borges himself. «It is perfectly symmetrical. Is there anything less like beauty than perfect symmetry? (I do not want to make an apology for chaos; I understand that in all the arts nothing is usually as pleasing as imperfect symmetry...) On the other hand, the Chinese fairy tale is irregular. The reader begins by judging it incoherent. He thinks that there are many loose ends that the facts do not fit together. Then – perhaps suddenly – he discovers the reason for these cracks. He senses that these vaguenesses and these anacoluthons mean that the narrator totally believes in the truth of the wonders he tells. Nor is reality symmetrical nor does it form a drawing»⁸.

⁷ Borges J. L., *Borges and I*, <http://surl.li/dlkdey> (Accessed 20.08.2024).

⁸ Es de una simetría perfecta. ¿Habrá cosa que se parezca menos a la belleza que la simetría perfecta? (No quiero hacer una apología del caos; entiendo que en todas las artes nada suele

At the same time, Borges reads a book by the English sinologist G.J. Waley (and responds to it with a review), introducing three philosophical schools of ancient China, and here his special attention is drawn to the «distant Chuang Tzu», who is, by his own words, much closer to all of us and to him personally than the protagonists of neo-Thomist doctrines or the adelphies of dialectical materialism («Not Included in the Books: Three Philosophical Schools of Ancient China»). In his review, Borges cites the assessments given to this ancient Chinese thinker by European researchers: for some he is a mystic, for others he is the most unique writer of his country, for a third he is a writer who took advantage of the poetic possibilities of Taoist thought. Borges says that no one questions Chuang Tzu's power and ingenuity. One of his dreams has become a well-known proverb in Chinese literature, emphasizing her ability to interpret dreams. Chuang Tzu, 24 centuries ago, dreamed that he had turned into a butterfly. Upon waking, he was unsure whether he was a man who had dreamed of being a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming of being a man (Ibid). The parable about the dream of the Chinese wise man turned out to be so close personally to Borges, so resonated with his philosophical and aesthetic interests⁹, that the Argentine writer not only included it in his «Anthology of

agradar como las simetrías imperfectas...) En cambio, el cuento de hadas chino es irregular. El lector empieza por juzgarlo incoherente. Piensa que hay muchos cabos sueltos, que los hechos no se atan. Después —quizá de golpe— descubre el porqué de esas grietas. Intuye que esas vaguedades y esos anacolutos quieren decir que el narrador cree totalmente en la verdad de las maravillas que narra. Tampoco es simétrica la realidad ni forma un dibujo. Translated by the author. J.L. Borges, Chinese fairy tales and folk tales, traducidos por Wolfram Eberhard. <https://borgestodoelanio.blogspot.com/2017/12/jorge-luis-borges-chinese-fairy-tales.html> (Accessed 21.08.2024).

⁹ Much has been written and is being written both in America and in Europe about Borges's philosophical and aesthetic interests, the structure of his worldview, the uniqueness of his poetics, and the semantics of Borges's symbols and metaphors. In Russian, see, in particular, the preface by I. Terteryan to the first edition of his works in the Soviet Union, a one-volume edition in the Masters of Foreign Literature series (Мастера зарубежной прозы, Москва, 1984, cc. 5-20) and in the prefaces by B. Dubin to each volume of the four-volume edition published in St. Petersburg in 2000-2001: in v. I – "Borges: Prehistory" (Борхес: Предыстория, cc. 5-31; v. II – "Maturity, Blindness, Poetry" (Зрелость, слепота, поэзия, cc. 5-38); v. III – "Symbols and Repetitions" (Символы и повторения, cc. 5-28); v. IV – "The

Fantastic Literature», but also, one might say, *semiotically* built it in as an established metaphor into various of his later texts: for example, in detail – in the philosophical treatise «New Refutation of Time» (the book «New Investigations», 1952) or in abbreviated form – in the poem «Inscription» (from the book «Iron Coin», 1976) with the following epigraph-explanation: «Around 1915, in Geneva, I saw on the terrace of a museum a tall bell with Chinese characters. In 1976 I write these lines»¹⁰:

*Undeciphered and alone, I know
in the vague night I can be a bronze
prayer or a saying in which is encoded
the flavor of a life or of an evening
or Chuang Tzu's dream, which you know already,
or an insignificant date or a parable
or a great emperor, now a few syllables,
or the universe or your secret name
or that enigma you investigated in vain
for so long a time through all your days.
I can be anything. Leave me in the dark*¹¹.

It is worth noting other *Chinese reflections* in the texts of Borges (for example, in his «Book of Imaginary Beings» (1974), a review of Franz Kuhn's German translation of one of the classic novels created in the 13-th century – «Water Margin» (水浒传) by Shi Nai-an¹², an article «On a Chinese Allegory» dedicated to another, also classic, 16-th century novel «Journey to

Book of Peace" (Книга мира, 5-28); the same, with revision, see in the book: Дубин Б., На полях письма, Заметки о стратегиях мысли и слов в XX веке. Москва, 2005, сс. 9-104.

¹⁰ Borges J.L., Iron Coin, 1976, <https://tarnmoor.com/tag/dreams/> (Accessed 25.08.2024).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Borges writes, that this 13th century picaresque novel is no less than its 17th century Spanish counterparts, while in some aspects, such as the complete absence of sermons, oftentimes an epic development of action – in the spaces of castles and towns – in impressive transfers to the supernatural and the miraculous, it even exceeds them. The latter feature of «Water Margin» presents a similarity with the most ancient and the best example of the genre of the novel, «Metamorphoses, or The Golden Ass» by Apuleius («Die Räuber Vomliangschan Moor», 1938).

the West» (西遊記) by Wu Chen-en, acquaintance with «History of Chinese Literature» by G.A. Giles, etc.), but, of course, the novel that made the greatest impression and responded most to Borges the writer was Cao Xue-qin's «Dream of the Red Chamber» (紅樓夢), recognized as the pinnacle of Chinese classical literature, as well as one of the pinnacles of world literature¹³.

Epistemological Echoes: Borges, Cao Xue-qin, and the Aesthetic of Infinite Worlds.

Borges gets acquainted with this, as he himself writes about it, *the most famous novel of the three-thousand-year-old Chinese literature* from the German translation by Franz Kuhn published in 1932, and to get familiarized with this novel means to read no less than two thousand pages. Based on his first impressions of it, he writes a review in which the most significant thing is that Cao Xue-qin's novel clearly stirs Borges' interest when he reaches the fifth, «unexpectedly magical» chapter, and the sixth, where the hero tries to play the game of «clouds and rain» (云雨之欢) for the first time. At that time Borges was preparing to renew the material and structure, plots and meanings of his short stories, to embrace «games with time and infinity» (played out by the writer using a whole system of his own symbols and metaphors). «These chapters instill the conviction that we are dealing with a great writer. This is reinforced by Chapter Ten, worthy of Edgar Allan Poe or Franz Kafka, “where Jia Pao-yu, to his own misfortune, looks at the forbidden side of the Mirror of Wind and Moon”. Let us explain that in the «magical» fifth chapter that captivated Borges, the hero falls into a deep

¹³ About this novel, created in the 18th century and first published in China in 1791, about its plot, history, about the author – Cao Xue-qing (1715-1791), about the editions of the novel and its study in China in the 20th century, about its translations and editions in Europe and Russia, see the preface by Л.Н. Меньшиков in the book: Цао Сюэ-Цинь. Сон в красном тереме. Перевод с китайского В.А. Панасюка, т. 1-2. Санкт-Петербург, 2014, pp. 5-25. It should be especially noted the fact that since 1980 a separate Institute of “The Dream of the Red Chamber” has been organized and operates in Beijing within the system of the Academy of Social Sciences, coordinating the scientific activities of numerous scholars and scientific centers engaged in the study of the novel (in this regard, see pp. 18-21 of the preface).

sleep, and «the reader learns how the soul of Jia Baoyu wandered through the Realm of Heavenly Dreams and how the fairy Jin Huan ordered the song “Dream of the Red Chamber” to be performed»¹⁴. This dream, being in itself a metaphor, is saturated with metaphors – inscriptions (in verse), *talking* objects, drawings, paintings, and finally the «book of change» in twelve eight-line verses, etc. In the novel in general, as Borges notes in the review: «Many dreams: they are especially impressive because the writer does not tell us that they are dreams, and we think that they are reality until the sleeper wakes up. /.../ Abundance of fantasy: Chinese literature does not know of “fantasy novels”, so all the novels there are somewhat fantastic» (see Borges, «Cao Xue-qin. “Dream of the Red Chamber”», 1937).

«Many dreams», «somewhat fantastic» – do not these features of the literature of the Celestial Empire, emphasized here, echo the special interest of Borges the intellectual in the phenomenon of sleep, dreaming, in its nature, in its interweaving with reality¹⁵, and the «dreams» in his poetry (the poems «Sleep» – «If sleep is truce...», «Alonso Quijano Dreams», «Dream» – «Night entrusts the sleeping ...», «Forgotten dream», the miniatures «Someone’s future dream», «Dream, dreamed in Edinburgh» placed among the poems of the 1985 book «Guarantee» as well as the «dream-reality» in the figurative-metaphorical structure of many other poems)? And finally, aren’t the «creative dreams»¹⁶ of Borges some sort of a game, an echo of the symbolic-metaphorical plots and images of the stories that made up his most famous collections, «Ficciones» and «Aleph»? Aren’t these «somewhat fantastic» stories – these «fictions», «inventions», as the writer himself calls them? Aren’t «dream» and «reality» intertwined in them? Do not the games of consciousness, imagination and what is to be in reality interact in the

¹⁴ Меньшиков Л., Роман “Сон в красном тереме” – вершина китайской классической литературы. / Ibid.

¹⁵ See, for example, the essay “Coleridge’s Dream” <http://surl.li/oqfugo>, the lecture “Nightmare” in the cycle “Seven Nights”, <http://surl.li/cafpvk>, “Date in a Dream” in the cycle “Nine Dantesque Essays”, <http://surl.li/vjmecf> (Accessed 10.09.2024).

¹⁶ Alexander Blok’s formula. See his poem “Среди поклонников Кармен...” 1914 (“...Глядит на стан ее певучий / и видит творческие сны”). In book А. Блок, СС. в 8-и томах. I, т. II. Москва-Ленинград, 1960, с. 232.

stories of Borges, expressing the metaphysical meanings embedded in them in the forms and techniques of realistic writing, that is, to use his own words, *as our time demands, beginning with Defoe*, as Borges remarks in the Preface to his poetry book «Guarantee»?

One thing, in any case, is certain: that one of Borges's best «fictions» – the story «The Garden of Forking Paths» – is directly connected with the «somewhat fantastic» novel by the «great writer» Cao Xue-qin. Its importance for the writer is already indicated by the fact that it was this story that he used as the title for the collection of his short stories, published in 1941, which began «playing with time and space» and which, under the same title, formed the first section of the book «Ficciones» of 1944. These books incorporated works created by Borges during the period when, as I. Terteryan writes: «... in his prose, and then in his poetry, a different metaphor appeared – not visual, but intellectual, not concrete, but abstract. Metaphors became not images, lines, but works as a whole – a complex, multi-component, polysemantic metaphor, a metaphor-symbol»¹⁷. It seems that it is not by chance that «The Garden of Forking Paths» both titled and closed (ringed) the cycle of «fictional stories». It perhaps has a particularly polysemantic metaphor-symbol, which has absorbed into its complex composition a whole series of metaphors that realize certain meanings in other «stories» of this cycle – a library, a book, a labyrinth, branches, forks, swarming, circles, repetitions, «rereading», «rewriting», and in the barely noticeable «cracks» also a mirror and a dream. At the same time, the main thing in the story, the deep, playing «with time and space» in metaphors and symbols, has found here a form closest to *our time* – both in terms of genre (detective story) and in terms of the described case (the years of the First World War). But what is also interesting is that the metaphor-symbol of «The Garden...», to which the writer gave both the title and the ring role, consists in a certain approximation, closeness to himself, to his personal life experience. In his «Autobiographical Notes», where Borges calls his father's library the «chief event» in his life, he especially noted Adroque: «During

¹⁷ Тертерян И., Человек, мир и культура в творчестве Хорхе Луиса Борхеса, Хорхе Луис Борхес. Проза разных лет. Москва, 1984, с. 7.

all these years, we usually spent our summers out in Adrogué, some ten or fifteen miles to the south of Buenos Aires, where we had a place of our own – a large one-story house with grounds, two summerhouses, a windmill, and a shaggy brown sheepdog. Adrogué then was a lost and undisturbed maze of summer homes surrounded by iron fences with masonry planters on the gateposts, of parks, of streets that radiated out of the many plazas, and of the ubiquitous smell of eucalyptus trees. We continued to visit Adrogué for decades»¹⁸. Borges will write a long poem about this house with a garden, «Adrogué» (Poetry Collection «Creator»), and the very late Borges the poet will nostalgically recall the past in the poem «Elegy for a Park»:

*The labyrinth disappeared. The measured rows
of eucalyptuses have also vanished,
striped canopies of summer and the eternal
sleeplessness of the mirror, that repeats
every dumbshow of every human face,
every ephemeron. The stopped clock,
the matted tangle of the honeysuckle,
the glorieta with its silly statues,
the other side of evening, a bird's trill,
the tower and the indolence of the fountain,
are all particulars of the past. The past?
If there is no beginning and no end,
if what there is in store for us is only
an infinite sum of white days and black nights,
we already are the past that we shall be.
We are time, the indivisible river,
we are Uxmal, and Carthage, and the broken
wall of the Romans, long since worn away,
and the lost park these lines commemorate¹⁹.*

¹⁸ Borges J.L., Autobiographical Notes, Family, <http://surl.li/wjpoda> (Accessed 01.09.2024).

¹⁹ Borges J.L., Elegy for a Park, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1994/12/22/elegy-for-a-park/> (Accessed 27.08.2024).

The image of the book-garden as a labyrinth and time as a labyrinth in its endless flow, its cycle, merged into one metaphor in Borges' story, just as they are fused in this poem, which recalls the former garden in Adrogue.

Semiotic Crossroads: Borges and the Symbolism of the Chinese Garden

In this regard, let us return to the review written by Borges after reading the most famous Chinese novel, «Dream of the Red Chamber». Characterizing the initial chapters of the novel, he notes, that *it is teeming with secondary characters, and it is difficult to understand who is who. We seem to be wandering in a house with many courtyards* (see Borges, «Cao Xue-qin. "Dream of the Red Chamber"», 1937), and in further reading, for him, «many dreams» and «an abundance of fantasy» stand out. In his review, Borges did not say a word about the fact that the entire action of this novel takes place in an estate that has been transformed into a huge garden – the «Garden of Splendid Spectacles», filled with all the elements of landscape art with its semantics, symbolism, and at the same time naturally absorbing the most diverse aspects of the lives of its numerous and most diverse inhabitants. This «garden» (with its undoubted metaphorical nature) is so described in the novel²⁰, it connects the relationships, feelings, desires, moods, actions and fates of the characters so much that one involuntarily asks oneself: how could it have completely fallen out of the writer's field of attention, in whose life from childhood there was a «house with a garden» in Adrogue, which meant a lot to him and which he kept in his memory until

²⁰ In one or another of the novel's many chapters, the setting for the action is named as the component parts of the "Garden...": palaces, idol temples, the "Xiaoxiang River Pavilion" and the "Wasp Waist Bridge" the "Pavilion of Emerald Drops" and the "Courtyard of Fragrant Herbs" the "Autumn Freshness Study" and the "Pavilion of Reeds under the Snow" the "Warm Fragrance Fence" and the "Red Rue Terrace", "Willow Leaf Dam" and others. It should be noted that today in China you can visit a park on the southern outskirts of Beijing called the "Garden of Splendid Spectacles", planned and executed based on the description of the garden in the novel "Dream of the Red Chamber": everything has been recreated here – from the palace buildings and pavilions with inscriptions on their walls, composed by members of the family living in the garden, to streams, ponds, bridges, to villages on the outskirts of the park, where the servants lived.

the end, a writer whose thinking and poetics are so characterized by metaphorical nature? The answer to this question can be found, as it seems to us, in the story «The Garden of Forking Paths» (which we will discuss further), written some time after the review.

The protagonist of the story is a Chinese, Doctor Yu Tsun (he is named after one of the heroes of the Cao Xue-qin's novel), «a former teacher of English at the Hoch Schule in the city of Qingdao», and now in England engaged in espionage for the German army. The execution of a certain plan («a desperate plan») leads him to «high rusty gates», to a house with a garden («behind the bars one could guess an alley and something like a pavilion»), from where music is heard («the most incredible thing is that it was Chinese») and where he is met and invited into the house by an English scientist-sinologist. From this moment, already prepared by some shades, details, the deep content and meaning of the story emerges from the detective frame to the forefront, close-up. They are revealed in what the Sinologist scientist shares about the *renowned* Chinese sage Qu Pen, about the *garden of books* he conceived, to the creation of which Qu Pen devoted himself for thirteen years, having renounced everything, having locked himself in the Pavilion of Unclouded Solitude, and after his death, «his heirs found nothing there except a pile of drafts». With Yu Tsun, who turned out to be a descendant of the «famous man», the sage Qu Pen, the scientist shares his solution to the meaning of this pile of drafts – it is a «garden of forking paths» and also an «invisible labyrinth of time»²¹.

We will leave it to the interested reader to get acquainted with the details of the «theory of time» developed by the scientist (and close to Borges himself) and pay attention to the echoes of the novel «A Dream of the Red Chamber» that arise in the story. It is not only the name of the hero taken from the novel. It is also the fact that he is «the great-grandson of that Qu Pen, who was the ruler of Yunnan and renounced his former power in order to write a novel that would surpass «A Dream of the Red Chamber» in

²¹ Borges J.L., El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan, <http://surl.li/lzhmq> (29.08.2024). All parts of «The Garden of Forking Paths» are translated from Spanish by the accessed.

terms of its number of people, and to create a labyrinth in which everyone would get lost». Here, facts from the biography of the creator of «A Dream...» - Cao Xue-qin, a descendant of an ancient noble family - are borrowed and combined. The writer's grandfather Cao Yin managed large industries and, as we learn from the preface to the Russian edition of the novel, «became famous not only as an administrator, but also as an outstanding cultural figure, the creator of one of the most extensive private libraries and the organizer of book printing /.../ Cao Yin bought a large piece of land on the outskirts of what was then Nanjing and laid out a magnificent park there, a masterpiece of Chinese garden art /.../ The Cao family park called the «Garden of Splendid Spectacles» was described in detail in the novel «A Dream of the Red Chamber». /.../ Cao Xue-qin grew up in this park, and his perception of the world was largely nurtured by the perfection of the surrounding landscapes»²². And also: the parallel between the book (Cao Xue-qin and Qu Pen) and the garden («Splendid Spectacles» and «Forking Paths») is clearly played out.

Let us recall the lines we cited from Borges's «Autobiographical Notes» about his father's library and about the garden in Adrogué, i.e. two key places in his life, in the formation of his perception of the world. Let us also recall the question about the unmentioned «garden» that arose in connection with Borges's review. It seems that we find something similar to the answer to it in Borges's story: «...finally Stephen Albert asked: – What is the only word that is unacceptable in a charade with the key word “chess?” – I thought for a second and said: – The word “chess”. – Exactly, – Albert picked up. – “The Garden of Forking Paths” is a grandiose charade, a parable, the key to which is time. This hidden reason is what forbids us to mention it. And constantly avoiding a word... this is probably the most expressive way to emphasize it. /.../ I compared hundreds of manuscripts..., translated the book in its entirety – and was convinced: the word “time” does not appear in it even once»²³. One can assume, by analogy, that the key

²² Меньшиков Л., Ibid, p. 13-14.

²³ Borges J.L., El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan, <http://surl.li/lzhmqu> (accessed 29.08.2024).

role of «The Garden of Splendid Spectacles», which embraces everything and everyone in the novel (as a kind of Universe), responded to Borges's perception of the world so much more strongly than the rest that, within the framework of his short review, he refrained from a cursory word about what he attached great importance to. But after a while, the *hidden* manifested itself quite openly in one of his best stories – it was to Cao Xue-qin's «The Garden of Splendid Spectacles» that Borges responded with his «The Garden of Forking Paths».

In his monograph «The Poetry of Gardens», dedicated to the garden and park art of the West and Russia, D.S. Likhachev says in particular: «...the connection of the garden with a certain philosophical and poetic perception of the world is mandatory, but the philosophical and poetic ideas themselves are different. The garden reflects changes in the philosophical and poetic understanding of the world»²⁴, he also says that the meaning of individual forms and motifs of garden art changes in accordance with the «aesthetic climate» of the era, that «the form of the work of art itself has semantic content»²⁵ (in this case, garden art). Thus, the whole semantic difference between the *fictional* metaphorical garden of Borges and, as we have seen, the real, albeit in its own way metaphorical, garden of Cao Xue-qin is clear. It is already evident in the names of these two gardens, one of which suggests space, the other – chaos.

The real background of Borges's philosophical *fiction* is the First World War, and this *fiction* was created when the Second World War had already begun, which determined the meanings that the writer put into the multi-component, multi-layered metaphor of the story under the *telling* title «The Garden of Forking Paths», symbolic in its every word.

Reflections of Chinese Fantastic Zoology in J.L. Borges's «Book of Imaginary Beings»

The aesthetics and innovative poetics of Borges, characterized by some researchers as *magical*, correspond with certain features of Chinese

²⁴ Лихачев Д., Поэзия садов. К семантике садово-парковых стилей. Ленинград, 1982, с. 22.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 9.

literature and folklore, since «there is magic in the ability to analyze the fantastic, the impossible as a true reality, and also because it turns out that the violation of seemingly natural laws is more natural than the preservation of exhausted stereotypes. In the eternal paradox of modern man, the false seems real, while it is false»²⁶.

Especially in the later period of his work, Borges gravitates towards the system of expression inherent in Eastern literature, combining different times, based on both reality and fictional reality.

One of Borges's hobbies was compiling anthologies with his students and friends. In collaboration with Margarita Guerrero, he created the «Book of Imaginary Beings», originally called «Handbook of Fantastic Zoology», under which title it was first published in 1950, subsequently reprinted several times, and revised twice. Here Borges acts as a collector of various legends that have developed among different peoples of the world. At first glance, this book, which alphabetically arranges stories about types of imaginary animals, looks like an encyclopedia. However, in essence, this is a product not only of a purely cultural, but also of a unique writer's concept, according to which information as such is mixed with mystification, reality, the reliability of what is being reported – with the elements, and signs of fiction introduced into the book by its author-narrator himself. This feature of the «Book of Imaginary Beings», the tasks that Borges set for himself and solved as a writer, have been noted by researchers of his work (A. Carter, B. Dubin, etc.). We will pay attention here to the abundance in its composition, in comparison with its other feature – the images of animal images from other Eastern sources, namely the images of Chinese fantastic fauna.

The «Book» contains 120 stories about imaginary animals. Some of these stories reflect the archetypes of folklore and mythology of China, India and Japan – three national worlds that created and spread Buddhism, which attracted Borges's keen interest as a religion that was in many ways related to Christianity. But if the fantastic fauna of India is presented in the «Book»

²⁶ Svanascini O., *Borges y las culturas orientales* Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos, 1992, p. 347.

by four stories, and Japan by only one, then the fantastic fauna of China is presented in it by 11 stories directly, and in another ten (10) – indirectly (in the order of comparison or addition). If we also note that stories of Middle Eastern (Persian, Arabic) origin are generally isolated here, then the dominance of the Chinese element becomes more than obvious. A certain privilege is expressed in the fact that a special (the only one in the East) text «Fauna China» presents a whole list of «amazing animals» (15), taken «from the book “Tai Ping Huang Zhi” (“A detailed list compiled in the era of peace and prosperity”), supplemented in 978 and published in 981»²⁷. It is also expressed in the fact that all four main magical animals in the Chinese tradition – the dragon, the unicorn, the phoenix and the turtle – are not *dissolved* in the general story about how these animals are imagined in the myths and beliefs of different peoples, but are described in sufficient detail in a story with a separate title that distinguishes the Chinese version: after «Eastern Dragon» (1.5 pages), «Western Dragon» (1.5 pages) of the same volume «Chinese Dragon»; after «Unicorn» of the same volume (1.5 pages) especially – «Chinese Unicorn», in the presence of «Phoenix» in general – separately «Chinese Phoenix»; as for the fourth magical animal – the turtle, the story about it is entitled «Mother of Turtles», without specifying «Chinese», since only the Chinese version is given in the book; finally, another story with a distinctive title «Chinese Fox».

More laconic, but at the same time quite expressive in specific details, very entertaining and memorable stories are presented in the book about such amazing animals of Chinese legends and beliefs as «Rain-bearing bird», «Moon hare», «Jiao Dze» (which means *glutton*), «Heavenly deer», «Heavenly rooster», etc.

The images of Chinese mythology's and folklore's fictional (*imaginary*) animals reflect the national system of worldview, consciousness, and thinking. Unlike many hyperfantastic, completely unimaginable, inconceivable animals, they are close to reality, they represent a symbiosis of a real animal and fantastic elements. For example, «In everyday zoology the

²⁷ Borges J.L., Book of Imaginary Beings. <http://surl.li/bbqblf> (Accessed 10.09.2024).

Chinese Fox differs little from other Foxes, but not so in fantastic zoology. Statistics give it a lifespan that varies between eight hundred and a thousand years. The animal is considered a bad omen, and each part of its anatomy enjoys some special power. It has only to strike the ground with its tail to start a fire; it can see into the future; and it can change into many forms, preferably into old men, young ladies, and scholars. It is astute, wary, and sceptical; its pleasures lie in playing pranks and in causing torment. Men, when they die, may transmigrate with the body of a Fox. Its dwelling is close by graves. There are thousands of stories and legends concerning it; we transcribe one, a tale by the ninth-century poet Niu Chiao, which is not without its humorous side»²⁸. The real and the unreal, the rational and the irrational, the natural and the supernatural are also balanced in the ideas about the heavenly rooster or the rain-bearing bird. In general, many Chinese imaginary animals have a pantheistic origin or appear as means of interpreting nature, some are interpretations of not a fictional, earthly reality.

It can be assumed that Borges, a great master of dressing his fictions in the forms of reality, subtly presenting the imaginary as a fact, was impressed by these very features of Chinese legends and beliefs, which is why he devoted so much space to them in his «Book of Imaginary Beings».

Conclusions

A number of pages in Borges' essays («Cao Xue-qin. Dream of the Red Chamber», «Chinese Fairy and Folk Tales», «Three Philosophical Schools of Ancient China») are related to the motifs and images of Chinese folklore and literature; stories such as «The Garden of Forking Paths», «The Wall and the Book», which characterize both the writer's worldview and poetics, are related to the recurring, varying symbols and metaphors in Borges (dream, labyrinth, wall, mirrors, book, etc.). Finally, in one of his most original works in terms of conception and execution, genre and style, and the cultural richness of the creatures – «Book of Imaginary Beings» – Borges abundantly

²⁸ Ibid, p. 44.

involves fantastic animal images that have developed in Chinese mythology, folklore, and stories-beliefs.

As we can see, both the remarks about Chinese literature («a master of seeing dreams», «many dreams», «we think that we are talking about reality», «an abundance of fantasy»), in which his own stylistic preferences shine through, and the appeal to a certain number of symbols, metaphors eloquently indicate that the outstanding Argentine writer of the 20th century drew much that was valuable and instructive for himself from the three-thousand-year-old culture of China. The same is indicated by his characteristics of Chinese fairy tales, and appeals to Chinese stories-beliefs about imaginary beings, which can serve as the subject of an extended special observation in future.

ԻՆՏԵՐՏԵՔՍԱՅԻՆ ԼԱԲԻՐԻՆԹՈՍՆԵՐ. ԲՈՐԽԵՍԸ ԵՎ ՍԻՆՈՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ՊԱՐԱԴԻԳՄԸ

Նատալյա Գոնչար-Խանջյան²⁹

20-րդ դարի մեծագույն գրողներից և մրավորականներից մեկը՝ մեծ արգենտինացի Խորխե Լուիս Բորխեսը զարմացնում է իր ստեղծագործության ընթերցողներին և հետազոտողներին իր մշակութային հետաքրքրությունների և գիտելիքների անսահման լայն շրջանակով, ասոցիացիաներով, դատողություններով և ընդհանրացումներով: Բորխեսի ստեղծագործության հայեցակարգային ուղերձը, կոնցեպտուալ շարքը, որն անցնում է նրա տեքստերի, գաղափարախոսությունների, կոսմոլոգիաների, փիլիսոփայությունների միջով՝ մարմնավորված ինքնատիպ և նորարար գեղարվեստական միջոցներով, ծնունդ է առնում հազարավոր տարիների ընթացքում կուտակված համաշխարհային մշակույթի՝ հոգևոր փորձառության խոր ընկղմումից. գեղարվեստական, մրավոր, բանավոր և գրավոր: Մշակույթի, որը կուտակվել է մարդկային ցեղի ընդհանուր տանը աշխարհի բոլոր ծայրերում՝ արևմուտքում և արևելքում, հյուսիսում և հարավում: Բորխեսի համար ամենահարուստ սնուցիչը՝ և՛ որպես մշակութաբան, և՛ որպես գրող, ով ստեղծել է իր բոլորովին հատուկ, և չափ ազդեցիկ, գաղափարական և

²⁹ Նատալյա Գոնչար-Խանջյանը ԵՊՀ եվրոպական լեզուների և հաղորդակցության ֆակուլտետի արտասահմանյան գրականության ամբիոնի դոցենտ է, ք.գ.թ., էլ.փոստ՝ natalie.goncharkhanjyan@ysu.am, ORCID՝ 0009-0002-5462-8509:

գեղարվեստական աշխարհը, իր գեղագիտությունն ու պոետիկան, անկասկած, եղել է Արևելքի մշակույթը և, մասնավորապես, ինչպես նա ինքն է դա անվանում իր տեքստերից մեկում՝ Չինաստանի երեքիազարամյա մշակույթը:

Գրադարանի խորագիրակ մասնագետ Խ. Լ. Բորխեսի գրական տարբեր ձևերի և ժանրերի տեքստերի շարքը, որն ընդգրկում է համաշխարհային գրականությունն ու մշակույթը, արտացոլում է բազմակողմ հետաքրքրությունը Չինաստանի, նրա պատմության և մշակույթի, նրա կրոնի, առասպելների, գրականության, բանահյուսության և ֆոլկլորի նկատմամբ: Սույն հոդվածում դիտարկվում են Բորխեսի (որպես գրող և բանաստեղծ, մտավորական և մշակույթի փորձագետ) հին և միջնադարյան Չինաստանի դասական տեքստերի երկխոսության հիմնական փաստերն ու շարժառիթները: Ուշադրության կենտրոնում են Բորխեսի տեքստերին բնորոշ առանձնահատկությունների արձագանքները և, մասնավորապես, առանձին տեղ է գրավում «Բաժանվող արահետների այգին» պատմվածքի վերլուծությունը՝ Յաո Սյունցինի «Երազը կարմիր ապարանքում» հայտնի չինական դասական վեպի հետ հարաբերակցությամբ: Հեղինակը ուշադրություն է հրավիրում նաև «Երևակայական էակների գրքում» չինական պատկերների հիշատակումների բարձր վիճակագրության վրա:

Բանալի բառեր՝ Բորխես, Չինաստան, երազ, լաբիրինթոս, այգի, գիրք, երևակայական էակներ

ИНТЕРТЕКСТУАЛЬНЫЕ ЛАБИРИНТЫ: БОРХЕС И СИНОКУЛЬТУРНАЯ ПАРАДИГМА

Наталия Гончар-Ханджян³⁰

Один из крупнейших писателей и мыслителей XX века, великий аргентинец Хорхе Луис Борхес поражает как читателей, так и исследователей его творчества необычайно широким диапазоном своих культурологических интересов и знаний, ассоциаций, суждений и обобщений. Концептуальное послание творчества Борхеса, концептные ряды, прошивающие его тексты, борхесовские идеологемы, космологемы, философемы, претворяемые оригинально-новаторскими художественными средствами, рождаются от углуб-

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ленного погружения в копившийся тысячелетиями опыт общемировой культуры – духовной, художественной, интеллектуальной, устной и письменной. Культуры, копившейся в общем доме рода человеческого по всем сторонам света на Западе и на Востоке, на Севере и на Юге. Богатейшей питательной средой для Борхеса – и как для культуролога, и как для писателя, создавшего свой совершенно особый, причем очень влиятельный, идейно-художественный мир, свою эстетику и поэтику, – явилась, несомненно, культура Востока и, в частности, как в одном из своих текстов сам он ее называет, трижды тысячелетняя культура Китая.

Серия текстов в различных литературных формах и жанрах, написанных Х.Л. Борхесом, глубоким знатоком библиотеки, охватывающей мировую литературу и культуру, отражает многогранный интерес к Китаю, его истории и культуре, религии, мифам, фольклору и литературе. В данной статье рассматриваются основные факты и мотивы диалога Борхеса (как писателя и поэта, интеллектуала и знатока культуры) с классическими текстами древнего и средневекового Китая. В фокусе внимания – отголоски черт, характерных для текстов Борхеса и, в частности, его рассказа «Сад расходящихся тропок» в соотнесении и перекличках с известным китайским классическим романом «Сон в красном тереме» Цао Сюэциня. Автор также уделяет внимание высокой статистике обращений к китайским образам в «Книге вымышленных существ».

Ключевые слова: Борхес, Китай, сон, лабиринт, сад, книга, вымышленные существа

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