

# Did Somebody Say “Cy-Borges?”

The purpose which guided him was not impossible, though it was supernatural. He wanted to dream a man: he wanted to dream him with minute integrity and insert him into reality. This magical project had exhausted the entire content of his soul; if someone had asked him his own name or any trait of his previous life, he would not have been able to answer.<sup>1</sup>

For good or for ill (probably for both) the era of posthuman possibilities is beginning. To deny it is dangerous. To recognize it is to begin to understand, perhaps even control, our postmodern present and the political future of our cyborg society.<sup>2</sup>

This is no longer the earth on which man lives.<sup>3</sup>

In her foreword to *Embodying Technesis*, Katherine Hayles explains that for Mark Hansen “technology is the primary determinant of the human lifeworld and has been so for thousands of years.”<sup>4</sup> It seems therefore “particularly ironic,” she continues, “that contemporary critical theory has consistently treated technology as a trope or representation rather than a physical reality in the world.” Hansen calls this “technesis” or “the putting-into-discourse of technology.” The current need for theory is thus to find an adequate outlet for the resistance to “reduce technology from material reality to discourse,” a realisation that technology “is not just embedded in language but *erased* by language” (viii), and to find theoretical tools it “can adapt to give a robust account of technology in its irreducible materiality that exists beyond discourse and representation” (vii). Against this “culturally engrained logocentrism” (52) Hansen proposes to set a “bodily hermeneutic” that uses “our mimetic bodily ‘sense’ as the primary *medium* for living through technology’s experiential impact” (52). Key words in the vocabulary of this new (anti-phenomenological) form of experiencing technoculture rather than merely talking about it (as practised in so much contemporary “techno-thinking” and “techno-criticism”) are: embodiment, affect and mimesis.

As interesting and as compelling as this rather persuasive but of course intensely discursive call for a return to empiricism and “lived technoculture” might sound, it is first of all a strategic intervention in the turf wars over the growing and fiercely embattled discursive “space” one could call “posthumanism.” This space had been neatly staked out by Katherine Hayles as early as 1995:

For some time now there has been a rumor going around that the age of the human has given way to the posthuman. Not that humans have died out, but that the human as a concept has been succeeded by its evolutionary heir. Humans are not the end of the line. Beyond them looms the cyborg, a hybrid species created by crossing biological organism with cybernetic mechanism. Whereas it is possible to think of humans as natural phenomena, coming to maturity as a species

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<sup>1</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, “The Circular Ruins,” *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (London: Penguin, 1970), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizen: Politics in the Posthuman Age* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger, “‘Only a god can save us’: *Der Spiegel*’s Interview with Martin Heidegger,” in: Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 106.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Hansen *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), vi.

through natural selection and spontaneous genetic mutations, no such illusions are possible with the cyborg. From the beginning it is constructed, a technobiological object that confounds the dichotomy between natural and unnatural, made and born.<sup>5</sup>

What Hayles (inspired by Donna Haraway) interests about cyborgs – which are both technological objects and discursive formations – are the “new modes of subjectivity” they provide. In particular, Hayles explains, “[s]tanding at the threshold separating the human from the posthuman, the cyborg looks to the past as well as to the future... it is precisely this double nature that allows cyborg stories to be imbricated within cultural narratives while still wrenching them in a new direction” (158). By linking Borges’s work with this idea of the cyborg, we would like to demonstrate that Hayles’s “anachronistic” view, namely the historical janus-facedness of the cyborg, in connection with the idea of the posthuman, can also be followed to the letter, as it were, not only to the digit. Similar to Lyotard’s notion of the postmodern (as that which the modern has always already repressed), it could be argued that ever since the “invention” of the human, there will have always been (more or less repressed) “posthuman” subjectivities available for and under “construction.”

It is therefore not only “the latest revolutions in biotechnology... in brain research and psychopharmacology, and in digital technologies” that explain the posthuman but long before hypermodern technologisation there exists a kind of posthumanism that might not only serve as a genealogical precursor but also as a critical companion to current imaginations and realisations of posthuman scenarios.<sup>6</sup> This is what we mean by “critical posthumanism” without technology and before the advent of “technoscience” or “technoculture.”<sup>7</sup> This is not a question of technophobia or technophilia but involves a philosophical investigation into the “non-human,” as Daniel O’Hara explains: “no one, however enhanced by modern technology, can ever know the whole (much less pretend to judge its value), and so no one can ever become the post/human god that the administrative imaginary of global capitalism is busy producing simulacra of even in the harshest discourses of its severest critics.”<sup>8</sup> This is not to deny the importance of science and technology in contemporary culture but if the cyborg is both technobiological reality and discursive construction (or science-fiction) there is no inevitability in the posthuman future being technological.

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<sup>5</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, “The Life Cycle of Cyborgs: Writing the Posthuman,” in: Jenny Wolmark, ed., *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace* [first published in 1995, *The Cyborg Handbook*] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 157. Before the articulation of the future as decidedly “posthuman,” in her introduction to *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), Hayles was focusing on the relationship between literature and science by seeing “science as a repository of tropes that can be used to illuminate literary texts” (20) – a general view that was to spark a great deal of controversy in the so-called “Sokal Affair,” in which scientists in the main sought to argue precisely against the metaphorical use of science in literature and “theory.” For an overview see Lingua Franca, eds., *The Sokal Hoax: The Sham That Shook the Academy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Daniel T. O’Hara, “Neither Gods nor Monsters: An Untimely Critique of the ‘Post/Human’ Imagination,” *Boundary Two* 30:3 (2003): 109.

<sup>7</sup> What this collection aims to extend and amplify is thus not only the nature of Borges studies, but also to provide important assessments of the manner in which issues pertaining to the posthuman, to virtual reality, and to cyberculture might be discussed within Humanities departments. It is intended as an example of the kind of “critical posthumanism” which we had called for, in another volume, *Discipline and Practice: The (Ir)Resistibility of Theory* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004) and other works (see bibliography).

<sup>8</sup> O’Hara, “Neither Gods nor Monsters,” 121.

As a result it might by now have become a little less outrageous to coin this strange non-phrase, this oxymoron, this punning concept: “Cy-Borges,” and impose a link between contemporary techno-posthumanism and such a clearly non-technological (“fantasy”) writer as Jorge Luis Borges. If what is most striking about today’s posthumanism – its obsession with technology, its mostly unquestioned technological determinism – does not apply to Borges’s writings, what allows this link with the posthuman? What comes to the fore when not only all the technesis but also all the technology is stripped away from posthumanism is arguably a much more radical and fascinating idea – a posthumanism without technology: the precariousness of the “human” not so much as threatened by “his” technology but by “its” very humanity, imagination, ex-sistence. This is what Borges contributes to posthumanism, a memory of cyborgs long before the invention of cybernetics.

Borges could also be seen as a prime example of a “literary philosopher,” as the editors of *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco* argue.<sup>9</sup> In their introduction they explain that “these three authors are united not only by a taste for philosophy but by their fascination with areas of philosophy not often broached in fiction: epistemology, metaphysics, and logic” (2). The idea that philosophy is a “kind of literature” is what places many of their works within the vicinity of the “fantastic,” the “mythological” and the “postmodern,” on the one hand, and science fiction and the posthuman, on the other. Their shared concerns lie in an engagement with the “problem of the one and the many, of personal identity through time, of induction of purpose from pattern” (2). Deliberate confusions between reality and illusion, self and other, individuality and self-effacement, choice and predetermination, knowledge and ambiguity, systematicity and randomness, almost automatically lead to a “taste for the secret,” a predilection for labyrinths, gnostic mysticism, and general playfulness. Given the speculative projections of past, present and future and the attempt to philosophise through the medium of fictionality, in Borges and his followers, Calvino and Eco, it is no wonder that he should often be cited strategically at the beginning of posthuman thought experiments, whether critical, fictional or philosophical.

In a sense, and quite ironically, Borges himself encourages the idea of his “prefiguring the posthuman.” It is the very logic of “precursivity” (for example to contemporary forms of posthumanism) that is problematised in Borges’s writing and which thus allows for the kind of anachronism that the idea of “Cy-Borges” plays with. The topos that one man is all men, that one human is both the archetype, essence and the “end” of all humanity is ubiquitous in Borges’s fictional and critical essays. For the writer this means that the logic of “engendering” works backwards rather than merely causationally “forwards.” This is most clearly expressed in “Kafka and His Precursors” where Borges concludes by saying that “every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. In his correlation the identity or plurality of the men involved is unimportant.”<sup>10</sup> This idea is in fact the most powerful determinant of the future of humanity, as is hinted at in “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*.” “Every man

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<sup>9</sup> Jorge J.E. Gracia, Carolyn Korsmeyer, Rodolphe Gasché, eds. (2002) *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*, London: Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Borges, “Kafka and His Precursors,” *Labyrinths*, 236.

should be capable of all ideas and I understand that in the future this will be the case” (*Labyrinths*, 70).<sup>11</sup>

Given this vision of “posthuman” humanity in which the entire history of humanity will be “present” within every “human” – this “posthuman” memory (or indeed a memory of the posthuman to come) – it is maybe no longer that surprising that on a large number of occasions, Borges is named, or “created,” as a “precursor” and influence by posthumanist thinkers. Let us take merely one, rather iconic, example: in Katherine Hayles’s groundbreaking volume *How We Became Posthuman*,<sup>12</sup> Borges makes several crucial appearances. First, on page 8, he is named as one of a number of “thinkers” and precursors to the cybernetic notion of “reflexivity:” “When Jorge Luis Borges in ‘The Circular Ruins’ imagines a narrator who creates a student through his dreaming only to discover that he himself is being dreamed by another, the system generating a reality is shown to be part of the reality it makes.” However, if Hayles had been prepared to take Borges’s writing a little more “seriously,” i.e. beyond a mere analogy between fiction as precursor to “modern-day” reality, the “im-pli-cation” of this reflexively understood, “dreamed” reality could easily be extended into the very “posthuman” condition her strategic intervention is attempting to critically embrace. It would be difficult to ignore the parodistic anticipation of some of the more “naïve” creationist scenarios circulated in posthumanist or transhumanist circles, in Borges’s story: “The purpose which guided him was not impossible, though it was supernatural. He wanted to dream a man: he wanted to dream him with minute integrity and insert him into reality. This magical project had exhausted the entire content of his soul; if someone had asked him his own name or any trait of his previous life, he would not have been able to answer.”<sup>13</sup> It may come as no surprise that this “stranger” willing to bring about posthuman “dreamexistence” is a professor dreaming up a multitude of “silent students” in what could only be the interdisciplinary “(post)humanities of the future:” “The man was lecturing to them on anatomy, cosmography, magic; the countenances listened with eagerness and strove to respond with understanding, as if they divined the importance of the examination which would redeem one of them from his state of vain appearance and interpolate him onto the world of reality” (73). The dreamer-demiurge’s narcissistic choice of one single student he singles out (“with sharp features which reproduced those of the dreamer,” 74) in the end fails, and after that he reverts to dreaming merely something proto-Deleuzian like a “body-without-organs” instead (“he dreamt of a beating heart... in the penumbra of a human body as yet without face or sex,” 75). In order to bring this altogether non-technological “artificial intelligence,” this “Adam of dreams,” to life, the Frankensteinian dreamer invokes the “monstrosity” (not the electricity) of the gods.

There is thus something eerily cyborgian about the dreamed phantom in “The Circular Ruins” and something eminently “posthuman” in the insight that the dreamer in the end realises that he himself is merely the phantom of another dreamt reality, or, in analogy, that humans have “always already” been cyborgs, contaminated with their own “posthumanity.” What Borges thus “prefigures” is not only the phantasm of the posthuman but also its very impossibility, which justifies including his writing within “critical posthumanism.” Our claim is that this is what, through a more serious

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<sup>11</sup> *Labyrinths*, 70.

<sup>12</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Borges, *Labyrinths*, 73.

engagement with Borges's texts, posthumanists like Hayles would have to admit if their fixation with technology did not necessarily lead to disavowal.

Monsters, according to Zamora,<sup>14</sup> are part of Borges's "lifelong exploration of the status of the real, and more particularly, his exploration of the relations of philosophical idealism and literary form" (48). This monstrous "*zoología fantástica*" plays an important part in the gradual "dehumanisation" of the individual human as part of Borges's "intellectual teratology" (56). Zamora claims that for Borges monstrosity "is a state of being that he defines as the unnatural combination of natural parts, the possible permutations of which, he tells us, 'border on the infinite'" (58). In the way Borges's "monsters" challenge "the Western binarism between nature and culture" and "inhabit at once the realm of nature and artifice" as a "man-made species," they clearly prefigure Donna Haraway's cyborg, who "has no origin story... The cyborg skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature in the Western sense. This is its illegitimate promise that might lead to subversion of its teleology as star wars."<sup>15</sup>

But "Cy-Borges" – this puncept, this non-phrase – does not only stand for the idea of Borges being one of the precursors of contemporary "cyberculture," but also for the idea that Borges's writing could be understood as a kind of "cyborg writing" which problematises the idea of a self-conscious writing self in charge of the meaning it produces but rather thinks of itself as "a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self."<sup>16</sup> What Haraway's feminist recuperation of the cyborg in its technological and less technological forms and Borges's writings have in common is the suspicion of the (liberal, Western) self. Both also see the breaking away from a strong idea of personality or selfhood as a liberation; and both see this liberation at work in "textuality" or an ontological view of writing: "Cyborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man. Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other" (33). While Haraway is of course mainly concerned with "liberal technologies" and their "phallogocentric origin stories" to arrive at something like cyborg (or "posthuman") writing, Borges's critique of identity and origin as a basis for humanist metaphysics obviously takes a more longterm historical and spiritual view, thus bypassing "modern" technologies. If "writing is pre-eminently the technology of cyborgs, etched surfaces of the late twentieth century" (34), then, anachronologically, Borges will have been among the cyborgesian writers of that late twentieth century (and beyond). The challenge of the "troubling dualisms" in Western tradition ("self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, ...reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man") is thus not confined to "high-tech culture" (35) but finds its untechnological precursor in Borges.

Another example from *How We Became Posthuman*, as central to the first, concerns Hayles's reading of "Funes the Memorious" (197). In connection with her main argument for an embodied notion of information she criticises Foucault for focusing on a rather

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<sup>14</sup> Lois Parkinson Zamora, "Borges's Monsters: Unnatural Wholes and the Transformation of Genre," in: Gracia et al. *Literary Philosophers*, 47-84.

<sup>15</sup> Donna Haraway, "A Manifest for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," in: *The Haraway Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Haraway, "Manifest for Cyborgs," 23.

abstract theoretical notion of “the body” rather than using a processual idea like “embodiment.” The same criticism is then levelled at “theory” in general which, according to Hayles, “by its nature seeks to articulate general patterns and overall trends rather than individual instantiations” (197). And here, strategically, she uses Borges again:

Theories, like numbers require a certain level of abstraction and generality to work. A theory that did not generalize would be like the number scheme that Jorge Luis Borges imagines in ‘Funes the Memorious’. Funes, blessed or cursed by a head injury that enables him to remember each sensation and thought in all its particularity and uniqueness, proposes that each number be assigned a unique, nonsystematic name bearing no relation to the numbers that come before and after it. If embodiment could be articulated separate from the body – an impossibility for several reasons, not least because articulation systematizes and normalizes experiences in the act of naming them – it would be like Funes’s numbers, a froth of discrete utterances registering the continuous and infinite play of difference.<sup>17</sup>

The narrator of Borges’s story ironically reports that one “Pedro Leandro Ipuche has written that Funes was a precursor of the supermen, ‘a vernacular and rustic Zarathustra.’”<sup>18</sup> Funes, in many respect, could be seen as an “embodiment” of the Nietzschean “overman” but also maybe as posthuman in the sense that the narrator describes the infallibility of his memory – a perfect recording device that one might provocatively name “cyborg memory,” but without technology of course. The narrator squarely puts Funes’s case within the “science of mnemonics” and explains: “He told me that before that rainy afternoon when the blue-grey horse threw him, he had been what all humans are: blind, deaf, addle-brained, absent-minded” (91). While Nietzsche’s encounter with a horse led to madness, Funes’s fall from one was a fortunate one, an awakening into perfect awareness and almost intolerable hypersensitivity: “When he fell, he became unconscious; when he came to, the present was almost intolerable in its richness and sharpness, as were his most distant and trivial memories... Now his perception and his memory were infallible” (91). It is surprising that Hayles does not exploit Borges’s story any further, beyond a rather tangential number analogy, because Funes actually stresses the embodied nature of his posthuman memory: “each visual image was linked to muscular sensations, thermal sensations, etc.” (92). But it is precisely the embodiment of what seems to be the entirety of mankind’s memories that makes Funes experience his memory as a “garbage heap.” The key passage of the story, the turning point where the narrator bursts into “commentary” mode, again relates not only to Borges’s “precursivity to posthuman ideas” but also their critique. In fact, the narrator seems almost as surprised by the belatedness of technology for the posthuman: “In those days there were no cinemas or phonographs; nevertheless, it is odd and even incredible that no one ever performed an experiment with Funes” (92). What follows is an explanation of the radical “inhumanity” of Funes’s “computational” memory: “The truth is that we live out our lives putting off all that can be put off; perhaps we all know deep down that we are immortal and that sooner or later all men will do and know all things” (92). Now, the real challenge for a “posthuman memory” it seems lies not so much in the embodied recording or inscription process nor with the informational computation, but with the aspect of psychical repression necessary to separate actual experience from imagination, remembrance and invention: “Funes rememberd not only every leaf of every tree of every wood, but also every one of the times he had percieved or imagined it” (93). Funes’s “vertiginous world” of perfect memory, the narrator “reminds” us, is incapable of accounting for “ideas, of a

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<sup>17</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 197.

<sup>18</sup> Borges, *Labyrinths*, 87.

general, Platonic sort” (93): “Not only was it difficult for him to comprehend that the generic symbol *dog* embraces so many unlike individuals of diverse size and form; it bothered him that the dog at three fourteen (seen from the side) should have the same name as the dog at three fifteen (seen from the front). His own face in the mirror, his own hands, surprised him every time he saw them” (93-94). It makes you wonder what a cyborg would “feel” as “the solitary and lucid spectator of a multiform, instantaneous and almost intolerably precise world” (94). Or whether thought would be possible under the conditions of a “fully embodied memory” under Funes-like “posthuman” and “post-theoretical” conditions: “To think is to forget differences, generalise, make abstractions. In the teeming world of Funes, there were only details, almost immediate in their presence” (94). Again, this seems to be a case where a seminal work on posthumanism, actually mentioning Borges in a seemingly self-contained way, will have to admit that the thinkability of the “posthuman” relies on “pretechnological” conditions entirely outside its control.

Two of the contributions to this volume focus on the question of Borges’s “posthuman” idea of memory. Ruben Borg, addresses this issue of human “surviving” as articulated in Borges according to “the uncanny logic of a scene in which the human stands facing its aftermath, in which human history, already an outdated concept, faces itself and carries itself beyond its term.” Again, this is a posthuman vision without the need of technology, because “the posthuman, as the majority of its defining myths confirms, has more to do with the memory of the dead, with death’s future, than with any redemptive remembrance of life.” As Borg claims, Borges “does not indulge in techno-futuristic fantasies about the encounter of man and machine... but the fantastic worlds he conjures up are organized around a hitherto unimagined possibility: that a displaced memory, a memory that is both strangely intimate and utterly irreconcilable to the protocols of human history, will testify to the truth of humanity’s end.”

Jonathan Boulter, in his contribution, looks at “the relation between trauma and memory” in Borges’s texts, which require their reader to “prosthethically complete the narratives his subjects... are incapable of fully comprehending.” Borges’s stories are thus an illustration of posthuman or “posthumous” subjectivity in that “the reader, as prosthesis, enters into a curious hermeneutical dialogue with Borges’s text becoming, in a sense, the fully realized cyborg his subjects can only approximate.” In Borges’s stories, memory itself becomes the traumatic event that constitutes the human subject, who, in turn is “being annihilated by his history even as he *gains* a totalized knowledge.” In this way, Borges “anticipates the aporias that arise in more conventional figurations of the cyborg in cyberculture or in various representations in sci-fi.”

The same pattern, of Borges being an acknowledged but ultimately downplayed precursor to posthumanism, continues in Hayles’s *My Mother Was a Computer*.<sup>19</sup> One of the main arguments in Hayles’s follow-up book to the posthuman is that digital code is radically different from linguistic code, or that machines speak an entirely different language to humans, which therefore poses the problem of “translation.” Hayles explains the choice of her subtitle, “Digital Subjects and Literary Texts,” by stating that:

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<sup>19</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

This entanglement of the bodies of texts and digital subjects is one manifestation of what I call “intermediation,” that is, complex transactions between bodies and texts as well as between different forms of media. Because making, storing, and transmitting imply technological functions, this mode of categorization insures that the different versions of the posthuman will be understood, in Kittlerian fashion, as effects of media. At the same time, in my analysis of literary texts and especially in my focus on subjectivity, I also insist that media effects, to have meaning and significance, must be located within an embodied human world... The final and most important significance of *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*, as a title and as a book, is to insist on the irreducible complexity of contemporary posthuman configurations as they continue to evolve in digital subjects and literary texts, computer programs and human mindbodies. (7)

Chapter 4, “Translating Media,” begins by referring to Borges’s “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*” to discuss the “transformation of a print document into an electronic text as a form of translation” (89). What Hayles calls Borges’s “mock-serious fantasy,” the idea to rewrite Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, word for word, but in a contemporary cultural context, is taken as a precursive analogy of “more mundane operations carried out every day around the globe.” Borges’s premonition of “hypertextuality,” in this and other stories, raises the same question as to whether an electronic version of a work would still be the same work, or indeed, whether “hypertextuality” is merely another form of textuality or something qualitatively, or even “ontologically” entirely different.<sup>20</sup> A few pages later, Hayles picks up her brief introductory reference to “Pierre Menard” and again highlights the centrality of Borges’s conceit for her argument:

If literature and materiality are indeed closely intertwined, what happens when a text is translated into a different medium than that in which it was originally created? I began this chapter with a reference to Borges’s “The Don Quixote of Pierre Menard,” which suggests slyly that the same words in the same order can nevertheless mean something utterly different when transported into a new context. In this sense Pierre Menard’s project is analogous to the translation of a literary text into a new medium, for the same words appear in the same order, yet like Menard’s “Don Quixote,” they mean something very different than in the original. Indeed, I use the term “media translation” to suggest that recreating a text in another medium is so significant a change that it is analogous to translating from one language to another...<sup>21</sup>

Hayles duly admits that Borges’s “idea of translation” (as explained by Efrain Kristal in *Invisible Work*) is a proto-deconstructive approach that sees translation as at once the general condition of textuality (i.e. the impossibility of an “original;” including what was said about Borges’s “logic of precursivity” before) and the text as a (Deleuzian) “assemblage” and “rhizomatic network” (114-115). In line with her previous strategy, Hayles praises Borges for his foresight but then quickly “moves on:” “That Borges

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<sup>20</sup> Hayles in fact also discusses “The Library of Babel” in this passage, and speculates about the feasibility of something like a “digital book:” “To undertake the complete bibliographic coding of a book into digital media would be to imagine the digital equivalent of Borges’s Library of Babel, for it would have to include an unimaginable number of codes accounting for the staggering multiplicity of ways in which we process books as sensory phenomena” (96). It comes as no surprise then that the term “cyberliterature” often leads to the kind of anachronistic misunderstanding either in the form of disappointed reader expectation or the overestimation of “hypertextuality” as an enhancement of literature. Compare for example James Brook’s disenchantment with Stuart Moulthrop’s attempt to digitalise and hypertextualise Borges’s “The Garden of the Forking Paths,” in: Brook and Iain A. Boal, eds., *Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995), 263-274.

<sup>21</sup> Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer*, 109.

arrived at this view while working exclusively in print should caution us not to overstate the fluidity of electronic texts compared to print... It remains the case, however, that the resources of print are *different* than the resources of electronic textuality, and that each medium interacts with and influences the others... How might Borges's perspective apply to media translations? Let us return to..." (115).

However, sticking with Borges's "Pierre Menard" would have led to another confrontation with the posthuman without technology. As the narrator clearly states, Menard was doing something radically different from rewriting the same story in another medium: "He did not want to compose another *Quixote* – which is easy – but *the Quixote itself*. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes."<sup>22</sup> It is not a question of recreating the same, a perfect "simulacrum," or of "becoming Cervantes" (66); the challenge is to reproduce a "singularity" one might say, or perfect "contingency" (67), or identity without repetition.

Menard's venture seems to involve to create an identical singularity under radically different conditions, to create a perfect repetition while accepting radical contextuality. It is true that this idea could be used as an illustration of the Derridean understanding of the im/possibility of translation, namely as translation as that which is impossible but at the same time most necessary or desirable. In this sense, it is no paradox to say that "Cervantes's text and Menard's are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer. (More ambiguous, his detractors will say, but ambiguity is richness)" (69). This seems precisely to capture the impossibility/desirability of "perfect" machine translation (i.e. translation "between media"): the resistance of and to ambiguity. Instead, Borges's view seems much more radically posthuman than mere technological intermediality. The question whether textuality can be translated from print into electronic, from the letteral to the digital involves the idea of a "palimpsest" of singularities which nevertheless cohere and form a unified experience within a "subject:" "Every man should be capable of all ideas and I understand that in the future this will be the case," according to "Menard" (70). Independently of technoculture, in a "deconstructive" vein, Borges found a posthuman "technique" that bypasses the modern logic of originality and the technology of translation: "Menard (perhaps without wanting to) has enriched, by means of a new technique, the halting and rudimentary art of reading: this new technique is that of the deliberate anachronism and the erroneous attribution" (71).

David Ciccoricco, in his contribution to this volume points out that "using" Borges as either a prophet or precursor of "the emergent field of digital art and culture" seems obvious, because "much of his work can read like a creative response to hypertext technology and the World Wide Web, offering isomorphic conceptions of these digital artifacts without the benefit of digital technology itself." It would however be wrong to approach Borges's texts merely as hypertext *avant la lettre* (or *avant le nombre*) which seems a reductively teleological view (e.g. the idea that it is somehow "unfortunate" that Borges should not have "benefitted" from the existence of the internet because he would surely have preferred to write "cyberliterature"). What precisely makes Borges a "critical posthumanist" is that he anticipates not only the potential but also the limitations of the

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<sup>22</sup> Borges, *Labyrinths*, 65-66.

“digital.” “His writings occupy an artistic period that saw the metaphorical connotations of organic and machinic textuality blend as they came into contact with digital texts that were literary machines in a literal sense,” Ciccoricco claims. “No longer aspiring to the classical criterion of organic unity, but not yet assuming the mobility of the textual machine, Borges does conceive of a cyborg textuality.” But this cyborg textuality is very different from what usually ranks as “cyberliterature.” Ciccoricco shows this by referring to the frequent “conflation of discursive and formal complexity” in a lot of new media art: “The works of Borges... ultimately exhibit a complexity that is discursive rather than material while their textual apparatus remains simple and abbreviated. When discursive complexity is seen as nothing more than an expression of desire for a more advanced medium, the distinction is of course lost.” What is thus seen as technological possibilities to “realise” some of Borges’s anticipatory imaginary visions in some form of “convergence” might actually rather lead to something like a “collision” of ideas. When we speak of Borges as an ally for a posthumanism without technology it is also in order to do justice to an imaginary that resists technological determinism. Ciccoricco describes the “implicit agenda of using technology to realize heretofore unrealizable aesthetic ideals” as “the instrumentalization or ‘technologizing’ of imagination itself.”

Let us return to Hayles one more time. Her most sustained engagement with Borges, however, already occurred in *The Cosmic Web* (1984) where she relates the mathematical “field concept” to literature on the basis of the two ideas of “interconnectivity” and “self-referentiality.”<sup>23</sup> In chapter five – “Subversion – Infinite Series and Transfinite Numbers in Borges’s Fiction” – she compares Borges’s with Nabokov’s responses to the field concept. According to her, Borges is attracted to the field concept, “because its discontinuities reveal that everything, including itself, is no more than a game” (138). In line with her strategy of showing an inspirational link between science and literature Hayles dwells on Borges’s discussion of Cantor’s set theory (in “The History of Eternity”)<sup>24</sup> and how this “led directly to the discovery of paradoxes of self-referentiality,” “indefinite expansion” and the possibility for creating “new kinds of Strange Loops” in his writings (142-143). For Hayles, Borges uses these paradoxes to exploit rather than to suppress any inconsistencies, “because he hopes to use them to reveal the essential fictionality of the model. His intent is thus subversive” (143). She refers to Borges’s strategy in a combination of Baudrillardian (“seduction”) and Deleuzian (“fold”) terms:

His strategy is seduction, for he progresses to this revelation by several seemingly innocuous steps. The first step in his strategy is to transform a continuity into a succession of points, and to suggest that these points form a sequence; there follows the insinuation that the sequence progresses beyond the expected terminus to stretch into infinity; then the sequence is folded back on itself, so that closure becomes impossible because of the endless, paradoxical circling of a self-referential system. This complex strategy (which may not appear in its entirety in any given story) has the effect of dissolving the relation of the story to reality, so that the story becomes an autonomous object existing independently of any reality. The final step is to suggest that our world, like the fiction, is a self-contained entity whose connection with reality is problematic or nonexistent. (*Cosmic Web*, 143)

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<sup>23</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Field Models and Literary Strategies in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> In Jorge Luis Borges, *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (London: Penguin, 2001), 123-139.

It is fascinating to see that in this early text on Borges, Hayles does in fact credit him and his “stories” with the (“subversive”) power to create a kind of dialogic imagination between literature and science, fiction and reality, etc. Her readings of “The Aleph” and “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” are at once powerful, detailed and persuasive. However, it can already be seen that by focusing on Borges’s “literary strategy” in his “metaphorical appropriation” of scientific models the flow of the argument will inevitably return to science: “Where Borges’s fiction differs from scientific models of the field concept, however, is in using the concept to suggest that everything, including reality, is a fiction” (151). Hayles ends by challenging Borges’s “A New Refutation of Time”<sup>25</sup> on the grounds that Borges remains unable to free himself from the very “Newtonian” notion of time he tried to escape. By imposing a circular structure on the infinite series he, according to Hayles, has to admit the limitations of his own artistic project: “But worse for Borges than being subject to this limitation [that the series he uses to subvert the field concept involves him in paradoxes that he creates and exploits, and to which he also yields] is to be trapped within a clear-cut world where continuities of logical progression render paradox impossible. In such a world, all the artist can say is, ‘The world, alas, is real; I, alas, am Borges’” (166). However, Borges’s stories, and “The Aleph” in particular, might be more powerful in their self-referentiality as they seem. Although there is a circular structure that seems to try and recapture the runaway infinite series it nevertheless never manages to do so without a “twist” (a Heideggerian “*Verwindung*” – or, indeed, what “Strange Loop” could be understood to mean, namely a loop, rather in the manner of a Möbius strip, that precisely does not turn into a simple “cybernetic” feedback structure). In this sense the “ineffability” of the Aleph as explained by the narrator, the simultaneity that, in a sense like Hayles’s “intermediality” does not translate into a “successive” medium like language, might just be another realist lure:

Perhaps the gods might grant me a similar metaphor, but then this account would be come contaminated by literature, by fiction. Really, what I want to do is impossible, for any listing of an endless series is doomed to be infinitesimal. In the single gigantic instant I saw millions of acts both delightful and awful; not one of them amazed me more than the fact that all of them occupied the same point in space, without overlapping or transparency. What my eyes beheld was simultaneous, but what I shall now write down will be successive. Nonetheless, I’ll try to recollect what I can.<sup>26</sup>

The “unimaginable universe,” the total vision of the whole and all its parts at once, this piece of ultimate nanotechnology without technology is undialectisable for the human mind,<sup>27</sup> just like “Cantor’s *Mengenlehre*” that is mentioned in the “Postscript” (which insists on distinguishing between the “nature” and the “name” of the Aleph): “for Cantor’s *Mengenlehre*, [the Aleph] is the symbol of transfinite numbers, of which any part is as great as the whole.”<sup>28</sup> Instead of resolving the final paradox between the fictionality or reality of the Aleph, Borges’s story instead adds to the confusion: the

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<sup>25</sup> In Borges, *Total Library*, 317-332.

<sup>26</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *The Aleph and Other Stories 1933-1969*, ed. and trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), 26.

<sup>27</sup> It could thus be argued that here again Borges somewhat prefigures a kind of “nanowriting” without nanotechnology. Colin Milburn defines “nanowriting” as a “genre of popular and professional writing about nanotech” in which, in the form of a “complex interface,” “science and science fiction bleed into one another.” Cf. Milburn, “Nanotechnology in the Age of Posthuman Engineering: Science Fiction as Science,” in N. Katherine Hayles, ed., *Nanoculture: Implications of the New Technoscience* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2004), 112-113.

<sup>28</sup> Borges, *The Aleph and Other Stories*, 29.

narrator questions the truthfulness of the Aleph whose reality has given rise to the rival's fiction: "I would like to know whether Carlos Argentino chose that name or whether he read it – applied to another point where all points converge – in one of the numberless texts that the Aleph in his cellar revealed to him. Incredible as it may seem, I believe that the Aleph of Garay Street was a false Aleph" (29-30).

Let me repeat that my argument is not that Hayles's use of literature to elucidate scientific metaphors is wrong (which would be a kind of "reverse Sokal claim") or that a link between scientific ideas and literary strategies does not exist (or should not be "made"), rather, in line with a truly critical posthumanism, one must ask whether the very link is not "contaminated" by unacknowledged "humanist" assumptions. It might be argued that at the heart of the desire to resolve the differend between literature and science is an irreducibly humanist model in which both literature and science are ultimately seen as serving an end to human understanding or human self-legitimation – an "anthropomorphism" difficult, maybe impossible, to avoid as long as literature and science (co)exist. It should be remembered that, in this context, a writer like Borges may be legitimately called "posthumanist" in the sense that his choice of genre to a certain extent seems to unhinge both, the fictionality of "literature," and the factuality of "science" – as hinted at by Deborah Knight, in her critique of "humanist ethical criticism:" "What sense will [humanistic ethical criticism] be able to make out of the mock-essay, that fabulous Borgesian genre, that completely subverts both the expectations of realist literary fiction and any straightforward application of the idea that as readers we are in communication with an author (however implied) who is merely communicating things to us known as fact?"<sup>29</sup> To see Borges as a kind of "science fiction writer" could therefore be justified as long as one takes the phrase literally (i.e. science "as" fiction and vice versa). SF is one of the most important fictional genres that underpins the cultural dynamic and the cultural imaginary of posthumanism, which is not surprising since it is one of the main genres that engages with the representation of cultural and social change. Even though Borges is certainly not a straightforward political writer, at a deeper, metaphysical level, his texts do of course engage with the notion of utopian and dystopian vision of changes in cultural values namely through the articulation of "spirituality," "eternity" and the "fantastic."

What might make Borges an ally for critical posthumanism – as that kind of engagement with scenarios of the "inhuman," past, present or future – is that the profound existential anxiety that exists side-by-side with Borges's irony and nihilism is precisely not resolved in some kind of humanist morality. It might be gesturing towards a "posthumanist" ethics instead, which seems to be what Coetzee insinuates in relation to Borges's "gnosticism:"

Borges's gnosticism – his sense that the ultimate God is beyond good and evil, and infinitely remote from creation – is deeply felt. But the sense of dread that informs his work is metaphysical rather than religious in nature: at its base are vertiginous glimpses of the collapse of all structures of meaning, including language itself, flashing intimations that the very self that speaks has no real existence. In the fiction that responds to this dread, the ethical and the aesthetic are tightly wound together...<sup>30</sup>

It is striking how absent technology is from such a vast logistical challenge as posed by the "Library of Babel" (which others call the universe, as the narrator remarks). Nothing

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<sup>29</sup> Knight, "Intersections: Philosophy and Literature, or Why Ethical Criticism Prefers Realism," in: Gracia et al. *Literary Philosophers*, 23-24.

<sup>30</sup> J.M.Coetzee, *Stranger Shores: Essays 1986-1999* (London: Vintage, 2002), 173.

is said about the workings of the latrines, in each of the infinite number of hexagonal galleries; no details are given about the functioning of the ventilation of the infinite number of “vast air shafts;” the reference to the “powering” of the Library, especially its electrical wiring and lighting remains mysterious: “Light is provided by some spherical fruit which bear the name of lamps.”<sup>31</sup> Is what I have discussed so far under the name of “posthumanism without technology” just some kind of “technognosis,” or a simple repression of technological materiality by some kind of radical spirituality? Is it a simple negation of the techno-logical that can be found in so many writers of the first half of the Twentieth Century? Is it merely a Heideggerian-like attempt to invalidate technology’s specificity by “re-ontologising” it and binding it to the metaphysical “*longue durée*” of humanity? Some passages in “The Library of Babel” would suggest this: “Man, the imperfect librarian, may be the product of chance or of a malevolent demiurgi; the universe, with its elegant endowment of shelves, of enigmatical volumes, of inexhaustible stairways for the traveller and latrines for the seated librarian, can only be the work of a god” (79).<sup>32</sup> Or is Borges’s “posthuman” condition merely another techno-apocalyptic scenario in the vein of the *Terminator* films (where a machine-world “survives” humanity)? “I suspect that the human species – the unique species – is about to be extinguished, but the Library will endure: illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret” (85). Is “posthuman” for Borges merely synonymous with “posthumous”? “The methodical task of writing distracts me from the present state of men. The certitude that everything has been written negates us or turns us into phantoms” (85). Maybe. But I would like to believe there is another, more “serious” and “critical” message in Borges’s irony and nihilism.

Philosophically, then, what both Borges and posthumanism have in common is their toying with a “post-metaphysical” scenario. According to Hermann Rapaport, “No literary writer, perhaps, has self-consciously explored [the humanist preconditions for reading] in more detail than Jorge Luis Borges.” In comparing Paul de Man’s “deconstructing” of the metaphysics that underlies these humanist preconditions, Rapaport states that “Borges does much the same by intensifying and exhausting metaphysical strategies.”<sup>33</sup> In Borges (just like in Blanchot) this is expressed as “the end of writing” or the end of “literature” which is also the beginning and the generalisation of fiction – which constitutes another connection point with contemporary “theory,” and especially Baudrillard. Borges’s “magical realism” in which the “dreamexistence” attempts to replace a phantom-like dreamed existence, thus echoes, or rather pre-echoes the Baudrillardian obsession with the

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<sup>31</sup> Borges, *Labyrinths*, 78.

<sup>32</sup> This apparent drive towards remythologisation in Borges is what would probably associate him with certain Gnostic elements, which of course have their contemporary counterparts in what could be called “techno-gnosticism.” Many of the ideas related to the “transhumanists,” for example, could be described as gnosticism’s reinvention through technology, and also to Heidegger’s notion of technology is a kind of “techno-gnosis,” from which “only a god can save us:” “Technology is in its essence something which man cannot master by himself... philosophy will not be able to effect an immediate transformation of the present condition of the world. This is not only true of philosophy, but of all merely human thoughts and endeavor. Only a god can save us. The sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god in the time of founding [Untergang]; for in the face of the god who is absent, we founder” (cf. Heidegger, ““Only a god can save us’...,” 105-107).

<sup>33</sup> Hermann Rapaport, “Borges, De Man, and the Deconstruction of Reading,” in: Edna Aizenberg, ed., *Borges and His Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 141.

precession of simulacra. How not to think of scenarios like *Truman Show* or *Matrix* (and Baudrillard's accompanying comments about these as part of a major "trend" in postmodern society) when reading Borges's "The Circular Ruins," in which the demiurge who wants to "dream" a human must conceal from his "son" that he is merely a "phantom:"

The magician suddenly remembered the words of the god. He recalled that, of all the creatures of the world, fire was the only one that knew his son was a phantom. This recollection, at first soothing, finally tormented him. He feared his son might mediate on his abnormal privilege and discover in some way that his condition was that of a mere image. Not to be a man, to be the projection of another man's dream, what a feeling of humiliation, of vertigo!<sup>34</sup>

Arguably, while Truman, who is in a sense the dreamt son of Kristof, the demiurge of *Truman Show*'s artificial world, is ultimately a tale about media deception and hence gestures towards a recuperation of some form of "true" reality (as does *Matrix*), Borges's story is more truly Baudrillardian in gesturing towards a "regressus ad infinitum." The dreamer is dreamt in turn: "With relief, with humiliation, with terror, he understood that he too was a mere appearance, dreamt by another" (77).

Borges's idea of a 1:1 map that "replaces" reality (geo-graphy in a literal sense) has of course not failed to inspire Baudrillard's idea of "hyperreality" and (Baudrillard's and Deleuze's notion of) "simulacrum." At the same time, as Darren Tofts points out, Borges's map has also become "an indexical figure in discussions of postmodernism:" "It has come to stand for a problematic diminution of the real at the expense of a proliferating image culture, obsessed with refining the technologies of reproduction, of making the copy even better than the real thing."<sup>35</sup> Apart from Borges's pre-posthumanism it is also his pre-post-modernism which informs (cultural) theory.<sup>36</sup> Tofts even makes the (deliberate?) mistake to refer to "Jean Luis Baudrillard."<sup>37</sup>

This blurring of the boundary between fiction and reality through an eternal recess or a mise-en-abyme also has a clear overlap with contemporary notions of virtuality or virtuality. This is the focus of Gordon Calleja's contribution to this volume, and, more precisely how in Borges's "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" "the relationship between the real, the imaginary and those liminal zones of convergence where the former blends into the latter... [constitute] the problematizing of the reality boundary underpinning [Borges's] narratives" and how they "prefigure contemporary western society's ever increasing expansion of these liminal zones through technologies of the virtual." Borges's stories, Calleja claims, "act as metaphors for the disappearing interface between worlds that virtual technologies are enabling and popularizing," such as MMOGs (Massive

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<sup>34</sup> Borges, *Labyrinths*, 77.

<sup>35</sup> Darren Tofts, "'The World Will Be Tlön': Mapping the Fantastic on to the Virtual," [www3.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.103/13.2tofts.txt](http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.103/13.2tofts.txt).

<sup>36</sup> Borges's problematic appropriation for either modernism or postmodernism is something we cannot discuss in detail here. Let us merely point out that he is often claimed to be a prime example of John Barth's notion of "the literature of exhaustion" (cf. e.g. John O. Stark, *The Literature of Exhaustion: Borges, Nabokov, and Barth*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1974). For a good discussion of the problematic see Geoffrey Green, "Postmodern Precursor: The Borgesian Image in Innovative American Fiction," in Aizenberg, *Borges and His Successors*, 200-213.

<sup>37</sup> The close intellectual link between Borges and Baudrillard is also the main focus of a previous essay on Borges by Jonathan Boulter (cf. "Partial Glimpses of the Infinite: Borges and the Simulacrum," *Hispanic Review* 69:3 (2001): 355-377).

Multiplayer Online Games). Tlön, in line with our notion of posthumanism without technology, “embodies this analogue, continuous experience that digital media make manifest” by affirming that “this immersion in the virtual is just as dependent upon the psychological and the perceptual as it is upon the technological.”

“Tlön symbolizes an ontological analogue-view which reases the epistemological borders between the real and unreal. From the standpoint, the virtual in its mental and computational manifestations ceases to be viewed as the binary opposite of the real and instead becomes an intrinsic part of contemporary human reality operating on personal, social and cultural levels; a body without organs spanning physiological, mental and digital realms.”

It is also what creates the special affinity between (poststructuralist) “theory,” textuality and Borges’s writing. This is something that Cornelia Klettke powerfully demonstrates in her study on the affinity between notions of simulacrum and writing in literature and theory. She points out that it is very rarely acknowledged that Borges is not only often present in the texts of “poststructuralist” thinkers like Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida but that there is also a close relation between their philosophical concepts. She claims that these thinkers are “undoubtedly inspired by the enigmatic *écriture* of this Argentinian writer... One can assume that Borges to a certain extent has been providing the model for the notion of writing for [the philosophers of] difference.”<sup>38</sup>

Also, Borges’s mixing of genres, between poetry, fiction, criticism and philosophy, clearly prefigures the kind of writing practice which has been institutionalised in many English, comparative literature and cultural studies departments as “theory.” What also combines these two *écritures* is of course a certain anti-humanist stance which, in turn, is the tradition with which any “critical posthumanism” has to engage, and which expresses itself in a critique of humanist ideas like the “liberal self” based on a self-same essentialist notion of identity, an essentialist almost mystical notion of absolute truth and the policing of the boundary between fiction and reality. The resulting antirealism and the undermining of the humanist “knowing subject” is what Neil Badmington’s contribution sees prefigured in Borges’s “The Library of Babel” as part of a “posthumanist textuality” (which he describes as “Babelation.” Badmington’s notion of posthumanism is informed by Lyotard’s understanding of the “post-” as a process or “working through” and deferral: “Humanism never manages to constitute itself; it forever rewrites itself as posthumanism.”<sup>39</sup>

Martin Watson, in this volume, holds a similar “anachronistic” view of posthumanism. Borges’s writings, for Watson, “speak to us of the future from the past.” This chronological dislocation is “a mark of posthuman experience” as a certain “presence of the future” (as something that has already arrived). Watson explores this paradox through the notion of the archive (of posthumanism) and concludes that while “the conditions of posthumanism might be new... the posthuman condition has been imagined and experienced long before the transformations [of contemporary life] took place.” Borges’s

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<sup>38</sup> Cornelia Klettke, *Simulakrum Schrift: Untersuchungen zu einer Ästhetik der Simulation bei Valéry, Pessoa, Borges, Klossowski, Tabucchi, Del Guidice, De Carlo* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001), 64. This affinity between notions of textuality and writing is something Edna Aizenberg refers to as a shared “hebraism” in both Borges and “contemporary literary theory” (cf. Aizenberg, “Borges and the Hebraism of Contemporary Literary Theory,” in: Aizenberg, *Borges and His Successors*, 249ff.).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. his “Introduction: Approaching Posthumanism,” in: Badmington, ed., *Posthumanism* (Palgrave, 2000), 9.

special value for critical posthumanism thus lies in the fact that “his writings archived the future before it arrived.” In true Borgesian fashion, according to the anachronistic “logic of precursivity” outlined above, the “memories of posthumanism” lie in the past, in writers, like Borges, who “*will have been* posthuman.” One particular “posthuman” interest in Borges’s writings lies in the “arbitrary, the automatic and the recombinant.” Watson’s reading of “Ramón Llull’s Thinking Machine” finally allows us to fully sanction our puncept of “Cy-Borges.”<sup>40</sup> As an early illustration of the dream about artificial intelligence, machines like Llull’s are a disaster. However, in typical turnaround move, Borges assigns the machine with a future for poetry, or the aesthetic imaginary. In fact, the idea of the machine as poetic (as the automatic other within the self), makes the poet machinic, Watson claims. Would this dissolution of the boundaries between the organic and the machinic not therefore be an endorsement by Borges, the poet, of our puncept?<sup>41</sup>

In summary, this volume argues that studying the links between Borges and emerging cyberculture and its theorisation through the puncept of “Cy-Borges” can provide important and broader statements on the relations between literature and the “post-human(ist).” We believe it is fair to say that this (non-)phrase “Cy-Borges” is more than just a conceit (or another form of technesis) but establishes and makes visible some links that exist between Borges and posthumanism on a formal, metaphysical and in a sense “poetical” or aesthetic level. The glimpses of our “posthuman condition” that Borges’s writings provide are experiments in how to make thinkable the impossible and the unconfigurable. The posthuman, as that which reconfigures the actual and the possible once technology re-engineers human potential and institutes a new order, is therefore everywhere in Borges. For is it not the posthuman order which would make it possible to realize Borges’s conceits, and inhabit infinite libraries and archives, perceive plenitude in a pinprick, remember all experience, and return to roads not taken? On this reading, the discourse and the imagination Borges brings to bear prefigure what the posthuman order could achieve. Even without technology, they arrive there before it, as the very memory of the uncreated and perhaps uncreatable order which technology might just set about fashioning in the posthuman future.

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<sup>40</sup> In Borges, *Total Library*, 155-159.

<sup>41</sup> Beatriz Sarlo discusses Borges’s text on Llull’s thinking machine in more detail in chapter 4 (“Tropes of Fantastic Literature”) in her *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*, ed. John King (London: Verso, 1993), 59-61.

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