

BORGES AND 'PATAPHYSICS

The goal of this project is to comprehensively analyse and describe the philosophical interconnectedness of the works and ideas of Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) and the fictional science of imaginary solutions called 'pataphysics, invented in the 19th century by Alfred Jarry, author of *Ubu roi* (1888), to study the rules that govern exceptions and describe a world that is supplementary to this one. The hypothesis at the centre of the project is that Borges is an original, 'pataphysical thinker, which can be seen in his approach to poetic influence, science, cognition and interpretation of reality and culture, as well as the idea of the self. I intend to examine all of those problems and propose a description of "Borgesian 'pataphysics", which combines literary and critical theory.

Borges was one of the most important writers of the 20th century, acclaimed not only in his native Argentina, but also throughout the world. His works influenced some of the greatest minds of the era, such as Gilles Deleuze or Michel Foucault, and many literary critics, such as John Barth and Gérard Genette, who put him in the centre of their theories of postmodernism and intertextuality, respectively. However, the subject proposed in this project has never been studied. The 'pataphysical character of Borges's ideas was only observed by Juan Esteban Fassio, the translator of *Ubu roi* into Spanish and a member of the original Collège de Pataphysique (institution of "learned and inutilious research" founded in Paris in 1948 to promote and explore Jarry's concepts), and used by Christian Bök in his study *Pataphysics. The Poetics of an Imaginary Science* (2002), but only as an anecdote. The juxtaposition of Borges and 'pataphysics is an innovative, original approach to the works of the Argentinian author, which will allow us to present to the fullest the subversive potential of his texts and fill the gap in the active and rich field of Borges studies. The project will also constitute a substantial contribution to literary and critical theory, adding new contexts to the study of philosophy in Borges. The goal is to demonstrate the 'pataphysical character of those of Borges's texts and ideas that pertain to some of the most important theoretical problems: literary influence, the relationship between philosophy, literature (and, thus, fiction) and science, as well as the idea of the self who faces the senselessness of existence. An exploration of these problems seems especially relevant today, when both 'pataphysics and Borges's texts, as strange as it may seem, are considered as phenomena that contribute to the field of creative computing and might help us interpret the world changing through technology.

The general plan of the project is to investigate and examine the connections of Borges and 'pataphysics that have been almost made or alluded to, but never explored. There are two main areas in which these problems meet: Harold Bloom's theory of literary influence and the studies dedicated to Borges and science. I propose a re-reading of Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), where he admits that the science of imaginary solutions is the source of his ideas, but eventually excludes both 'pataphysics and Borges from his theory of poetry, due to the fact that they seem to contradict it. As I have observed in several articles, a conclusion might be drawn that based on the ideas of Borges and 'pataphysics an alternative theory should be constructed, which is the first task of this project. It will contain, on the one hand, a Borges and 'pataphysics inspired theoretical approach to influence and intertextuality, and, on the other, a comparative analysis of three cases of Argentinian 'pataphysicians: Borges, Julio Cortázar and Macedonio Fernández.

The field of Borges studies offers many approaches to the problem of a perceived connection between the works of Borges and different scientific concepts, for example: *Borges y la matemática* by Guillermo Martínez (2003), *Unthinking Thinking: Jorge Luis Borges, Mathematics and the New Physics* by Floyd Merrell (1991); in those monographs, Borges is presented as a serious writer who interprets the world through the lens of modern science and metaphorically describes the mathematical and physical rules that govern the universe. However, such approaches do not appreciate Borges's critical interpretation of scientific discourse and methods. As Alan Pauls observes in his essay *El factor Borges* (2004), we should propose a different reading of Borges that would explore his humorous, ironic, and very sceptical interpretation of the world. Pauls, unconsciously, advocates for a 'pataphysical reading of Borges, which will allow us to create a new metaphysical and epistemological, Borgesian-'pataphysical theory. The goal is not only to reinterpret the "scientific" side of Borges's literature, but also to revisit the problem of "seriousness". Its opposite is not madness or absurd, but a ludic approach to reality with a critical distance, a subversion of scientific legitimization and of common sense, which aims to reveal their relativity and arbitrariness. Borges and 'pataphysics provoke yet another questioning of the legitimacy of serious, scientific discourse and stimulate a return to the problematic tension between knowledge and folly, foregrounded not only by 'pataphysicians, but also other philosophers who contemplate and critically analyse the problem of "rationality" of our society.

The project requires research at several international institutions (Borges Center at Pittsburgh University, Argentinian National Library in Buenos Aires, Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut in Berlin etc.). The sources collected there will serve as materials for exhaustive examination of different approaches to 'pataphysics, interpretations of Borges, and for a meticulous comparative analysis of Borges and other 'pataphysical philosophers; they will ultimately lead to a description of the specific 'pataphysics of Borges, with consequences in literature (Argentinian and global), theory and philosophy.