

## A BUNCH OF PROSES

**Robert Zend**

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### **The Rock**

Time was pregnant.

It was predetermined that he was to be born. The day and the hour and the minute and the second had been decided. The land and the city and the house assigned. The father and the mother chosen.

But something somewhere sometime went wrong. His dreamer — in a higher consciousness — woke up with a start before dreaming his birth, and by the time he succeeded in sinking back into the dream again, the point was passed. Some observers within the dream were frightened and thought that the outside dreamer had died. Others laughed with malice and said it didn't matter — he didn't pay any attention to them anyway. The magi arrived at the stable and found only innocently grazing-gazing sheep. The guiding star stopped in the middle of the sky, looked down, saw nothing and dissolved itself in great shame. The people were desperate, their trust in the high dreamer shaken.

He floated aimlessly between his predestination and the dream. Emitted from the dreamer, but late to enter the dream, he did not know what to do. There was no one around him to consult about his unique situation. The gate above him through which he had exited was closed because his return had not been scheduled yet; and the door below, which had opened for him during the few seconds while his dreamer woke up, was shut tight again never to be reopened. He could do nothing better than take a watching position — an outcast of time — floating unnoticed by his dreamer, between him and his dream.

And he wept because looking down he saw that he was missed. Thirty years passed in emptiness while everything craved for him in vain. The sea shore did not save his footprints as it had been pre-arranged since timeless time. The sand did not sink under his weight, the air did not vibrate with his voice and the waiting people were not comforted, as predicted. He was a hole in the tissue of time. Now he was supposed to cure the sick for three years, but they suffered just like before. Now he was supposed to set brother against brother for three years, but they lived peacefully, not knowing about him. Now he was supposed to save the people, but the oppressors were more cruel than ever. And, alas, the moment came when he was supposed to die for them, but instead, they all died, except him, for he was nowhere. He looked down and cried and his tears fell into the black nothingness beneath him.

But as he lay there floating and looking down, his eyes enlarged with amazement and his tears stopped pouring. After his non-life and non-death, strange things began to happen down below in the dream. There was one who spent his whole life in wait for him, then realising that his desire was futile, wailed and mourned in the dust of ruins. There was another who witnessed the first one sobbing and on returning home, wrote down his words. A third one came who cured the sick. A fourth one who spoke wisdom. A fifth who died as *he* should have. And a sixth who combined the wishes of the first and the letters of the second and the deeds of the third and the words of the fourth and the death of the fifth. And a seventh one came who named the combination, and the floater, astonished, recognised his own name. And tens read the fantasies and hundreds began to remember him and thousands died for his name and millions followed him. The tissue of time grew and mended the hole of the dream. And there came a time when everyone believed him to have lived and the difference — between what really had happened and what had been preordained to happen — perfectly disappeared in the past.

“Miracle,” he whispered, “a real miracle” — and from his whisper the dreamer woke again. “Will you take me back?” he begged him shivering, “I can’t go on floating here in freezing limbo for ever and ever.”

“Limbo,” murmured the dreamer, “what nonsense-talk this is? Without you there, the whole thing wouldn’t have happened. Your tears generated the growing of the tissue and the mending of the hole and everything was good as it was. For it was I who dreamt you floating there, unnoticed by me, to watch my dream which you couldn’t enter. All the unaccountables within the dream were accounted for, by myself. All the miracles sprouted from my law. All the wrongs down below were right, up here. But now your role has ended and you can be forgotten, so return into me, don’t shiver anymore.”

And the gate opened and he was sucked back into the warm darkness. And the dreamer rolled over and slept peacefully, without dreams for the rest of the night, and when he woke in the morning refreshed, he did not remember a thing.

**(The last chapter of the Elbib)**

*HEADNOTE: One day I realised that the straightforward English translation of the Old Testament is quite misleading since the original was written in Hebrew, straightbackward. In order to grasp the real flavour of the original text, I started (that is ended) reading it backward. Here is the result:*

9. And the scattered peoples from all over the world gathereth on the top of the tower of Babel; and God was angry, so they began to speak one language which everyone understandeth.
8. And they industriously demolished the tower for they wanted to reach the heavens; then they decideth to build a high tower to reach the surface of the earth.
7. And God commanded the waters assuaged; and the waters of the flood came upon the earth for forty days and nights after which Noah destroieth his ark; and God told him to build one and God was very angry, therefore the wickedness of men on earth groweth and they started to sin.
6. And the good people who came out of the ark found the evil people in repentance for their future sins and the good people started to mix with the evil people.
5. And the number of animals increaseth since two of each species came out of the ark: a male and a female; and new species evolveth, much more superfluous than those who found shelter in Noah's ark.
4. But the number of men decreaseth and the more they fornicated the less they were; and, step by step, they forgot what they knew before: there came Tubalcain who forgot the artifice of brass and iron, and Jubal who stoppeth to handle the harp and organ, and Jabal who ceaseth to dwell in tents.
3. And God told men: Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. So finally two of them remained; Cain who was marked by God, henceforth one day he slew his brother Abel who then became kind in God's eyes, thus he brought the firstlings of his flock, as his offering, unto him.

2. And Adam didn't like to work on the cursed ground in the sweat of his face; and also Eve disliked to bring forth children in sorrow: so they ran back into the Garden of Eden where cherubims receiveth them with a flaming sword and God was angry as usual; and Adam hung an apple on the tree and Eve parted from the snake: and they noticed that they are dressed and they undresseth and stood there stark naked.
1. And Eve returned into Adam and became one of his ribs; and Adam fell awake and he was happy to see that all animals have a mate, except him for he was alone, henceforth he created God. And God said, let there be light.
0. And there was darkness.

## The Miracle

Aunt Balmangulda was 72 years old when she immigrated to Canada. She came to join her son, Braquapotor. She had painfully missed him for fifteen years in the old country of Tayanatomia. Her husband was dead and she had no one else in the whole world but her beloved son. It was obvious that she had to come here.

“Kaqui tikku polovarr?” asked Braquapotor at the airport.

“Pradogol . . . ushi pradogol . . .,” she replied and wept.

But after the happiness of the first few months she realized that she was more alone here than back home. Braquapotor worked from early morning till late evening. His wife could not speak Tayanatomic. Their baby was very small. Back home, she would have been able to walk around in the little village and gossip with the neighbors, and confess her innocent sins to Salvanopulquor, the village-priest. But here she was sentenced to silence, except for those few minutes after her son came home from work, but even so, he was usually dead-tired and he talked to his wife and went to bed early. To learn English at 72 . . . it was hopeless. After being in Canada for three years, Aunt Balmangulda’s English vocabulary consisted of 7 words: Yess, No, I donno, pardon, pleize and tan-qu.

She was 75 when the miracle happened. One morning she broke into the bathroom where her son was shaving:

“Oh Braquapotor, my dear son, imagine what happened to me during the night,” she said in faultless Oxford English while her son went on shaving. “I dreamt that God, a really nice gentleman, with graying hair and beard, stepped into my room and told me: ‘Lo, Balmangulda . . . your sufferings have come to an end . . . your patience has won its reward. This is miracle-time now! From now on, you shall completely forget your mother tongue and you shall speak perfect English. So be it. Amen.’ With this, He vanished and I woke up.”

Braquapotor dropped the razor into the sink and slowly turned toward his mother with wide-open mouth and eyes. For a half minute he just stared at her. And then, in a very deep and broken voice, as if he were talking from the bottom of a well, he asked, unbelievably:

“Gur . . . komo ita kakalumu, mama?”

Aunt Balmangulda looked at her son, puzzled, and shrugged helplessly:

“I . . . beg your pardon?”

*FOOTNOTE: The reader has to realize that the above words – as remembered by Balmangulda the next morning – were not the original words she heard, but their English translation, according to the miracle performed in the dream. As the only witness, I feel my duty to submit the original Tayanatomic text of the above speech: ‘Ebbe, Balmangulda . . . tun aychawaicha nulifimopul . . . tun kalmaviller zumboon floris-kul. Gring kurrubleya villong! Samaya-ko te oblinihil tayanatomic, gur te harella-harlapos anglis toltissimoe. Bing ola. Amen.’ – God.*

## Meeting

He went to see her. To make love to her. He desired her. He imagined a surprise-attack. She would defend herself in the beginning, maybe even scream a little. But then her resistance would melt away and she would only sigh and moan and thank him for being strong and irresistible.

She went to see him. To be made love to by him. She desired him. She imagined that she would seduce him and excite him until he could not pretend to play cool. Then she would take him in her arms and absorb him completely, pulsate with him together and lock him into her soft thighs.

They met on the half-way. "Where do you go?" she asked him casually.

"To a restaurant," he said indifferently. "And you?"

"I am going shopping."

"Well," said he, "in this case . . ."

"I'll see you around . . ." she said quickly.

And they parted in opposite directions.

It was noon. A church-bell started to toll. Slowly and majestically.

## **The Super Calendar**

Time and space depend on each other.

The bigger the space is, the longer its time is.

An electron revolves around a nucleus in a fragment of a second.

The further away from the Sun a planet rotates, the longer its year is.

The galaxies rotate around a supergalaxy. This system is called the universe.

Supposing that there is a super-universe, we will need a super-calendar when we will populate it.

In the following pages I submit the first such proposal in recorded history.

**Superdays****1**

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

**2**

Moesday

Tuesday

Wersday

Thriday

Friturday

Sanday

Sonday

**3**

Modnesday

Tursday

Wedday

Thurturday

Frunday

Satonday

Suesday

**4**

Moursday

Tuiday

Weturday

Thunday

Fronday

Satesday

Sudnesday

**5**

Moiday

Tueturday

Wenday

Thonday

Fruesday

Sadnesday

Sursday

**6**

Moturday

Tuenday

Wonday

Thuesday

Fridnesday

Sarsday

Suiday

**7**

Munday

Tonday

Wesday

Thudnesday

Frirsdays

Sriday

Sunturday

**Leap-week:**

Muesday

Thuersday

Wednurday

Thursturday

Friddersday

Saturday

Shurdsday

## The Seasons of the Super Year

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Autumn	Auter	Autring	Aumer
Winter	Wing	Wimmer	Wintumn
Spring	Sprimmer	Spritumn	Sprinter
Summer	Sutumn	Sunter	Sung

### Leap-seasons:

Aunting

Wingmer

Sprummumn

Sumtur

### The Months of the Super-Year

January	Jabruary	Jarch	Japril	Jay	Jane
February	Ferch	Fepril	Fay	Fune	Fuly
March	Mapril	Maray	Marne	Marly	Margust
April	Ay	Aprune	Aply	Appugust	Apتمبر
May	Mahe	Malay	Magust	Matember	Mactober
June	Juny	Jugust	Juptember	Juctober	Juvenber
July	Julust	Juptember	Juctober	Julember	Jucember
August	Augember	Augober	Augember	Aucember	Auguary
September	Septober	Sevember	Secember	Sepnuary	Sepruary
October	October	October	Ocnuary	Ocruary	Orch
November	Nocember	Novuary	Nobruary	Norch	Nopril
December	Denuary	Debruary	Derch	Depril	Dey

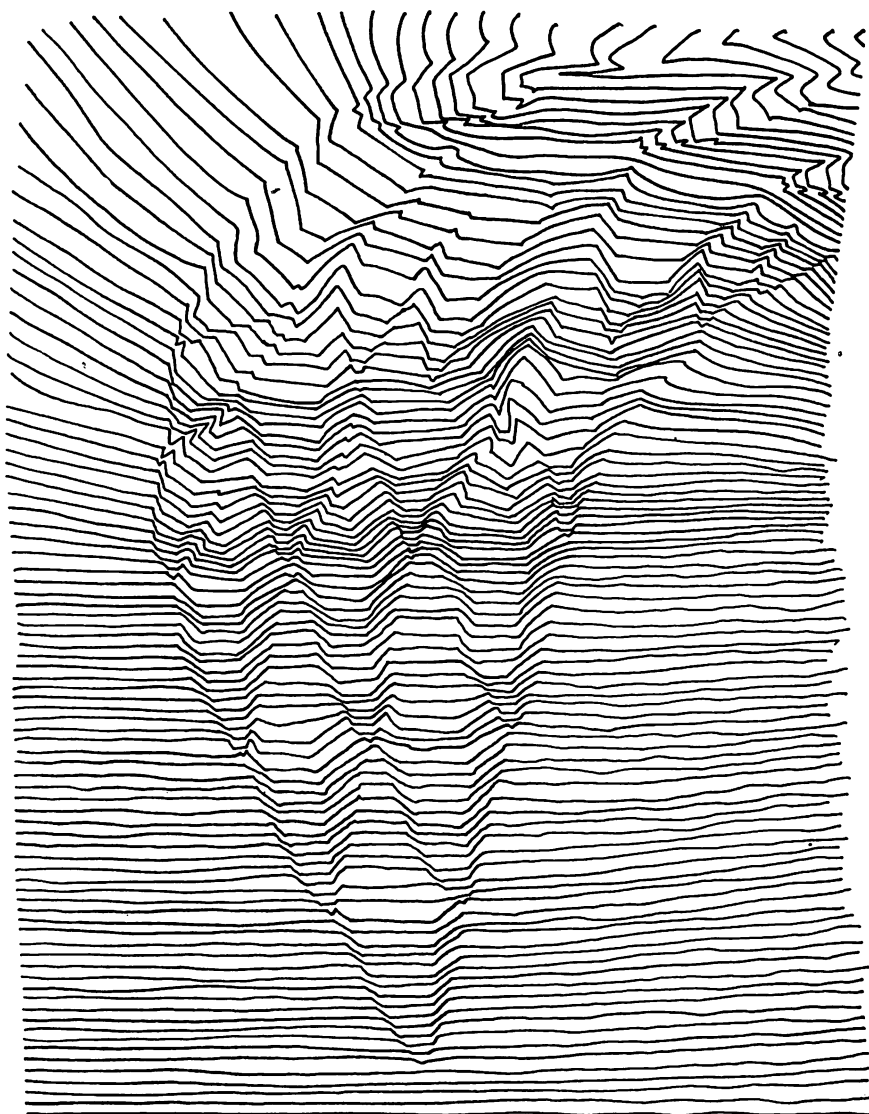
*Julterber*     *Junterber*     *Junterber*  
*Julber*

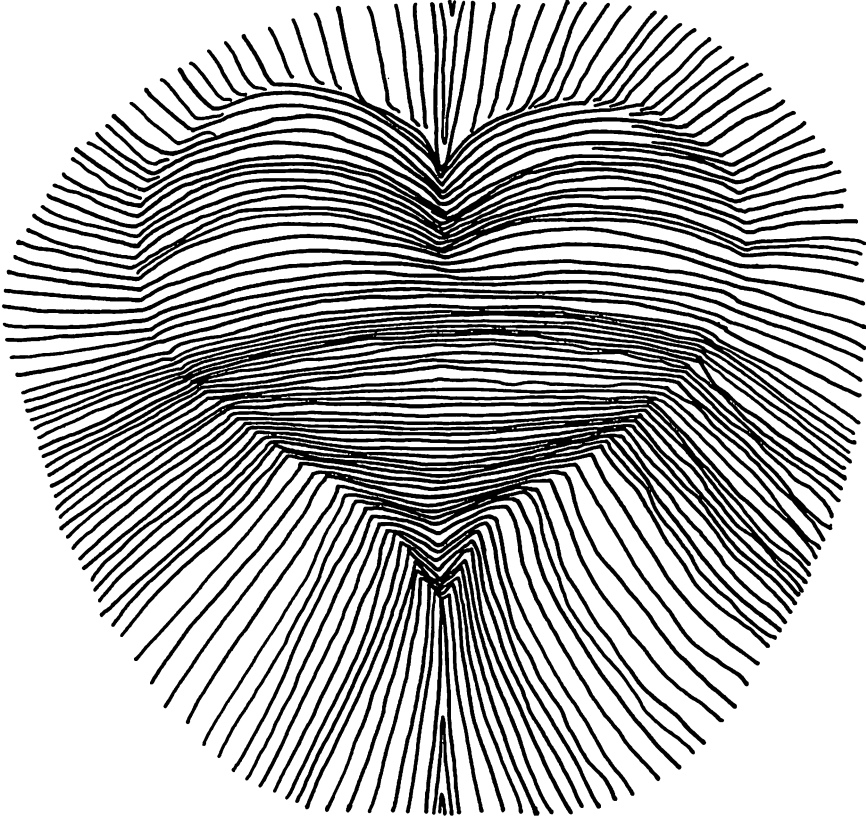
Jaly	Jaugust	Japtember	Jactober	Javember	Jacember
Feugust	Feptember	Fectober	Fevember	Fecember	Febnuary
Maptember	Mactober	Mavember	Macember	Manuary	Mabruary
Aptober	Avember	Acember	Apuary	Apruary	Aprch
Mavember	Maceember	Manuary	Mabruary	Maych	Maril
Jucember	Junuary	Jubruary	Juch	Juril	Juay
Junuary	Jubruary	Jurch	Jupril	Jay	Julne
Aubruary	Aurch	Aupril	Auay	Augune	Auly
Serch	Sepril	Sey	Sepne	Seply	Seppgust
Ocril	Oy	Ocne	Ocly	Ocust	<u>October</u>
Noy	None	Noly	Novust	Noptember	<u>Novober</u>
Dene	Dely	Degust	Deptember	Detober	Devember

**Leap-months:**

<del>Janaymber</del>	<del>Fenober</del>	<del>Malember</del>	<del>Apgumber</del>	<del>Maptuary</del>	<del>Juetruary</del>
<del>Jilverch</del>	<del>Aucembriil</del>	<del>Senuaray</del>	<del>Octrune</del>	<del>Norchly</del>	<del>Deprust</del>

*March*  
*March*







Granduloyf came to Obobistan from an unknown country called Uangia where about four hundred people spoke Uangese. He dwelled for decades in Obobistan and tried to speak Obobi, but it was almost impossible to learn. In Uangese, there were only verbs, in Obobi, only nouns. And the measurements were different too: every Obob unit meant a fracture of the Uangese unit. Nor did the Obob colors exist in Uangese, and while his people had no words for human character, but only for changing moods, the Obobs could not recognize changes in individuals. They thought of themselves as impenetrable iron bricks. After about thirty years in Obobistan, Granduloyf couldn't even ask for a package of cigarettes without making himself ridiculous.

Granduloyf was the greatest poet ever on Earth. But nobody knew it. After his arrival in Obobistan, he tried to write some poems in Obobi, but when he wrote down a Uangese thought like, "blue clouds were floating in the spring-sky," in Obobi it sounded something like, "brown cows gathered around the dilapidated stable," and his Obob friends, rather than weeping, couldn't stop laughing. So gradually he gave up writing poems in Obobi. The only solution seemed to be a good translator, but he couldn't find one Obob who even knew about the existence of Uangia. He wrote to Uangese poet-friends and asked them to come after him to Obobistan, but each had good reasons for not doing so. One's mother was fatally ill. Another, brain-washed by his political party, was afraid of the Obob social system, and a third one was busy immortalizing himself in Uangese literature (although he knew perfectly well that the tribe would not survive the next turn of the century). Finally, after years of endless correspondence, the son of his best friend came out and lived with him. Granduloyf was so happy that it took him months to realize that the young lad had exactly his problems: the boy couldn't learn Obobi. So Granduloyf sent him home and his desperation became one shade darker.

Although he gave up writing poems, he could not stop feeling them. Whenever he heard a new poem singing in his heart, he sat down at his desk and held his pen above the white paper. Always he had the same disturbing thoughts: ". . . to write, to write . . . In Uangese I can but no one will read it . . . in Obobi every one would read it but I cannot

write . . . hopeless . . . " Like migrating birds, guided by ancient instinct, circling aimlessly over the ocean waves searching for Atlantis, the sunken destination of their migration, his pen circled aimlessly over the white paper and could not descend. Instead of writing, he just wept a little.

When he died, they found many volumes in his flat: blank pages bearing the traces of tear-drops. In Uangia these books would have become the celebrated collection of the wordless sufferings of a wounded soul. In Obobistan, they were dismissed as unusable for anything. The officials threw them into the garbage, somewhat irritated.

Which act, of course, had, in the long run, the effect as if Granduloyf had never existed.

POEM

The Uangese Original:



ငါ့ ဒုက္ခ  
 အခပ်အနား  
 မှလွန်

ငါ့ နှလုံးဝလံာ  
 မှလွန်  
 မှလွန်  
 မှလွန်

မှလွန်



The Obob Translation:



ငါ့ ဒုက္ခ  
 အခပ်အနား  
 မှလွန်

ငါ့ နှလုံးဝလံာ  
 မှလွန်  
 မှလွန်  
 မှလွန်

မှလွန်



## The Key

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By Jorge Luis Borges and Robert Zend

The End.

*FOOTNOTE ON THE CONCEPTION OF THE SHORT STORY ENTITLED "THE KEY".*

Whenever we returned (from a walk, or a bookstore, or the University, or a restaurant, or the library, or the cemetery) to the apartment house in which he lives, Borges took the key out of his pocket,

opened the door and, invariably stopping between the half-opened door and the door frame, started to speak about keys. The first time he said: "Isn't it fascinating that a small piece of metal like this can open a huge building like this?" I replied: "Similarly, the prick, a small piece of flesh that can open the body and the soul of a woman . . ." Another time he said: "One key, you see, but it isn't one key, you can have duplicates made of it so that many different people can open the same house with it . . ." Still another time he said: "I am fascinated with the idea of the Key, I think it was the greatest invention in man's history, not the telephone, not the airplane . . ." So, during our last conversation (the eighth within the week), I asked: "During your whole life you seem to have been fascinated with the idea of the Labyrinth and you have been writing about all sorts of Labyrinths, like the mythological one in which the Minotaur lived, or Labyrinths stretching through space and time, or the Labyrinth of the human mind which tries, in vain, to comprehend that other Labyrinth, that of the Universe, and you also wrote about the Labyrinth of the infinite sand in the Sahara and Labyrinthian castles and gardens built by emperors . . ."

"Yes," Borges nodded, "because I find it particularly intriguing that someone builds a Labyrinth in order to get lost in it . . ."

"And you are also fascinated with the idea of the Key. Have you ever thought of combining the two and writing a short story about a key which opens a Labyrinth?"

Borges seemed astonished. "No! I have never thought of that! Very interesting. A short story about a man's search for the key to the Labyrinth. Yes!"

I became excited: "He is searching for the key so that he could enter the Labyrinth in order to get lost in it . . ."

"Yes," Borges continued, "and do you know how I would end the story? The man never finds the key, but when he dies, in the moment of his death, he realizes that his search for the key was futile because the Labyrinth was his own life . . ."

"But," I barged in, "the search for the key made him wander in many lands and made him meet many people and made him study many books and made him learn many languages, so while his search *for the key* was futile, as you say, the search *itself* was not futile because through it he did enter the Labyrinth of his life because the search was the key!"

"Well," Borges smiled, "a new short story! Thank you very much!"

"Will you write it?" I asked with sparkling eyes.

"Yes, I might. But no. You should write it. I give it to you. After all, it is your story, isn't it?"

"No, no, no!" I said, "it is your story! I would be very happy if you wrote it. I wouldn't steal it . . ."

"Look," Borges said, sliding his palm over the edges of the table, "it doesn't matter who writes it, you, or me, or you and me together. I am sitting at this side of the table, you at that side, certain elements of the story came from this side, others from that side . . ."

"It should be written by the *Table!*" I said.

"It *is* written by the Table," Borges said and laughed.

**FOOTNOTE ON THE MISCARRIAGE OF THE SHORT STORY  
ENTITLED "THE KEY".**

After this last conversation with Borges, a cloud of inspiration descended on me and kept my mind enshrouded. A voice, independent from my will, talked in my head incessantly, dictating startling-new-beautiful thoughts, sentences, half-sentences, expressions, adjectives, and I obediently recorded everything immediately no matter where I happened to be when it spoke, walking on the streets of Buenos Aires, sitting on park benches or in sidewalk cafés, and once, while I was falling asleep, it even pushed me out of my bed.

Before my departure from Argentina — since my suitcases were too many and too heavy to carry — I mailed all my books and notes and tapes to myself in Toronto. At the time of present writing, this shipment has still not arrived.

However, a few days after my return, on a certain Tuesday morning, while visiting the Editor of this literary quarterly, with the purpose of correcting the galleys of my short stories entitled "A Bunch of Proses," I was complaining about the unbearable slowness of the mail from Argentina which prevented me from writing another prose piece to follow and conclude those which I had just corrected. He seemed to be interested, so I told him how the idea of this piece was conceived by Borges

and me, and asked him if he wanted me to write the short story, entitled "The Key," as soon as my notes arrived.

"No," he said, "I am not interested in the story about the key to the Labyrinth, but you can write the story of Borges and Zend inventing the story of the key to the Labyrinth, as you just told me."

I thought for a moment. "Hm. I never thought that the story about the story could be a story. This, actually, is your idea. Should it be written then by Borges and Zend and you?"

The Editor laughed: "As you wish. After all, it is your story, isn't it?"

I found his idea quite inspiring, so upon returning home, I grabbed a pen and, without hesitation, I wrote down the story of how the story, entitled "The Key," was conceived (by Borges and me) and received (by the Editor). This second version was a straightforward narrative, it started with the sentence, "Whenever we returned . . ." and ended with the Editor saying to me: "After all, it is your story, isn't it?" Having finished writing it, I read it aloud to myself, I liked it, so I read it aloud to myself again, I liked it even more, so I called the Editor on the phone and read it to him. He sounded somewhat disturbed by the ending of my story involving him (in that version I used his name instead of calling him the Editor) and he said: "I don't think that you should use my name."

"You're wrong (I said) because it is not you but me who is writing about you since my story would be incomplete without you, and anyway, don't forget that after all, it is my story, isn't it?" We laughed. "You know what?" (I added) I will not end the story two hours ago, that is, as I've read it to you now on the phone, but I will end it with my saying to you, 'isn't it?' just a sentence ago. So I will include your protesting and my refuting your protesting, and . . . "

"And you will entitle it, 'Isn't it?' as first said by Borges, then by me, then by you . . ." the Editor said, and I felt a bit lost.

"Maybe I should write a series of footnotes without a story and entitle it 'Footnotes' . . . "

"It's getting too confusing (the Editor said), but try it, anyway, and we'll see . . . "

When I hung up the receiver, suddenly I saw the shape of the third version of my story clearly projected on the inner screen of my mind.

When trying to understand abstract ideas, I cannot help simplifying them into structures. Everybody, more or less, does it: doodles drawn during a lecture or a conversation subconsciously reflect the visual model of how the listener *sees* what is said. With me, this process has always been extremely conscious. In elementary school, for instance, when the teacher explained to us that every composition must have an introduction, a treatment and a conclusion, I immediately saw in my mind this tripartite form:



Ever since, if I hear someone talking about linear stories, I visualize them:



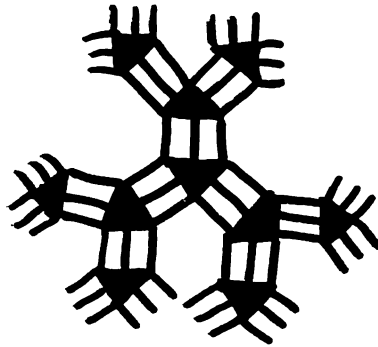
Therefore, Boccaccio's Decamerone, a linear story about ten people, each telling ten linear stories in the course of ten days (altogether 101 linear stories), looks to me like:



Whereas *A Thousand and One Nights*, another chest-of-drawers story, a world of Eastern magic, with its convoluted framework, containing stories within stories, rather looks like this:



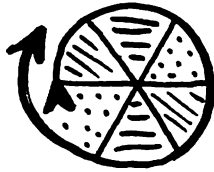
The *Divine Comedy*, Dante's epic consisting of 3 parts, each part containing 33 cantos, each canto written in 3-line stanzas, takes this shape in my mind:



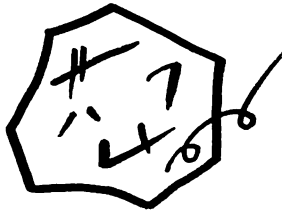
I see the intricate plots of Shakespearean-tragedy, with the colliding emotions of its heroes, most of whom die sooner or later, something like this:



Pirandello's stories are based on the games inherent in the number Two, mirrors and parallels and shadows and portraits and alteregos, and their plots usually end with a new start, making a spiral out of a circle:



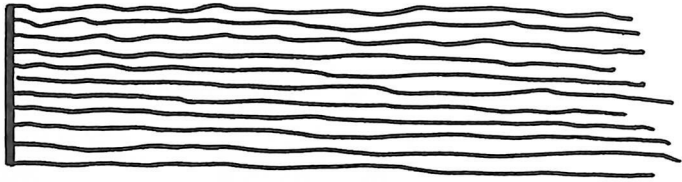
Ionesco is full with unexpected flashes of wit, seemingly fragmentary, but based on a closed and wholesome (perhaps morbid) wisdom:



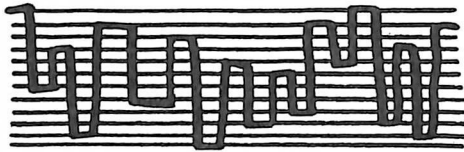
Proust seems to me an unwinding spool of unbeginning and unending memories:



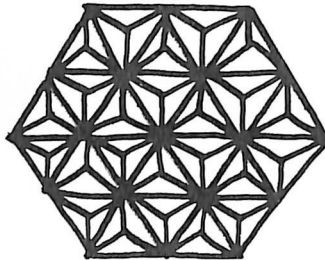
Joyce is a multilinear story flowing at the same time on many levels like a super-Bach fugue:



Updike tells a story in a linear way, but his line constantly zig-zags among the Joycean levels:

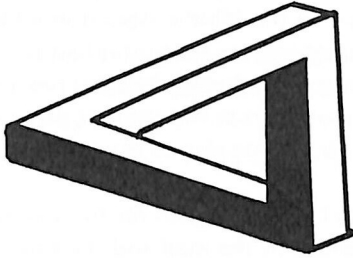


Borges' 'forma mentis' I see as a huge and beautiful (both ancient and modern) city, in which every avenue branches out into many directions, thus each one is connected with all the rest:



After I hung up the receiver, realizing that what I wanted to write is not the story entitled "The Key", it isn't even the story of the conception of the story entitled "The Key", but it is the story of the conception of the story of the conception of the story, entitled "The Key", I suddenly visualized Escher's three-dimensional triangle, the optical

illusion of which can dazzle only on two-dimensional paper (it is impossible to sculpt it):



Cover with your finger any of the angles, there is nothing wrong with the other two:



only the third (no matter which) angle makes the other two impossible:



And this was the form into which I attempted to translate the *form* of my originally linear story, entitled "The Key", in this present (third) version.

#### *FOOTNOTE ON FOOTNOTES.*

Writing footnotes as organic parts of a fiction is not my innovation, I am merely imitating Jorge Luis Borges who imitates DeQuincey who

probably also . . . Borges openly imitates innumerable writers innumerable times since he doesn't believe in originality — everything was said and done before, he thinks. This is quite an original philosophy of writing, at least nowadays: in the Middle Ages it wouldn't have been. Thus, although writing footnotes on footnotes had been done, yet writing footnotes following a blank page had not been done, and I consider this to be my innovation in this present piece of writing: however, it is possible that I do so only due to my lack of cultural awareness.

Beside the two reasons I brought up so far for leaving the original story unwritten (the slowness of the mail and the Editor's disinterest in it), the third and deeper reason is that, although Borges and I invented it together and he encouraged me to write it alone and did not object to our writing it together, still, the hard fact is that our common story *is* unwritten as yet, so consequently, the only proper way of writing it as a collaboration is unwriting it as a collaboration, which idea is respectfully expressed by the blank space following our names.

My fourth reason for writing a story by not writing a story — and this became clear to me after the writing, so it must have been unconscious during it — is that I feel now, having written the story in this way, that I made the reader wander through/ and get lost in/ a Labyrinth, that of my style, thus he is forced to search for the key to understand what he is reading, and during this process he, himself, becomes the hero of the unwritten story, grasping its essence not by reading it, but by filling it in and identifying with it.

But my fifth — and main — unconscious reason for writing a story through a Labyrinth of footnotes was perhaps to practise the Borgesian style (so often compared to Escher's art), not to avoid it, but to live through it, for if I am under his influence now, as I am, it would be unhealthy and futile to deny it or to pretend not to be. The only honest and fruitful way to deal with this influence, it seems to me, is to go through it and absorb it and make it part of me and then go ahead. So, although this piece of writing seems to make a mockery or a caricature of a certain aspect of Borges' style, what it really amounts to is but a humble study of it, or a rather unsuccessful experiment in trying to dissolve my former self in his (as he dissolved his in others) and to do it openly. I have no reason whatsoever to hide it since I consider him one of my spiritual fathers not only after knowing his works, but even before that.

The shipment from Buenos Aires finally arrived! I've read through my beautiful notes and realize that I must abandon at once the Editor's plans for my story. That voice, independent from my will, is talking to me again and I cannot help but record its words:

**THE KEY**

**By Robert Zend**

**Once upon a time there lived a man who**