

## Las Ruinas Circulares

*And if he left off dreaming about you ...*  
Through the Looking Glass, VI

**Nadie lo vio desembarcar en la unánime noche, nadie vio la canoa**  
No one saw him disembark in the unanimous night, no one saw the canoe  
**de bambú sumiéndose en el fango sagrado, pero a los pocos días**  
of bamboo sinking in the sacred mire, but in a few days  
**nadie ignoraba que el taciturno hombre venía al Sur, y que su**  
no one did not know that the silent man came from the south, and that his  
**patria era unas de las infinitas aldeas que están aguas arriba, en el**  
country was one of the endless villages that are above the waters, on the  
**flanco violento de la montaña, donde el idioma zend no está**  
violent flank of the mountain, where the tongue Zend is not  
**contaminado de griego y donde es infrecuente la lepra. Lo cierto es**  
contaminated with Greek and where leprosy is infrequent. The certainty is  
**que el hombre gris besó el fango, repechó la ribera sin apartar**  
that the grey man kissed the mud, regained? the riverbank without parting  
**(probablemente sin sentir) las cortaderas que le dilaceraban las carnes,**  
(probably without feeling) the reeds which tore apart his flesh  
**y se arrastró, mareado y ensangrentado, hasta el recinto circular**  
and dragged himself dizzy and bloodied to the circular enclosure  
**que corona un tigre o caballo de piedra, que tuvo alguna vez el color**  
which a tiger or a horse of stone crowns, which had at one time the colour  
**del fuego y ahora el de la ceniza. Ese redondel es un templo que**  
of fire and now that of ash. That arena is a temple which  
**devoraron los incendios antiguos, que la selva palúdica ha profanado**  
ancient fires [had] devoured, which the malarial jungle has defiled  
**y cuyo dios no recibe honor de los hombres. El forastero se tendió**  
and whose god does not receive honour from men. The stranger lay down  
**bajo el pedestal. Lo despertó el sol alto. Comprobó sin asombro**  
beneath the pedestal. The high sun woke him. He ascertained without surprise  
**que las heridas habían cicatrizada; cerró los ojos palidos y durmió,**  
that his wounds had closed; he closed his pale eyes and slept,

## The Circular Ruins

No one saw nor heard his coming, in the clamorous night, and no one saw the canoe of bamboo he climbed from sink into the sacred mire, but in no more than a day there was no one who did not know that the silent man came from the South, and that his country lay above the river, in the mountains, in the violent valleys where the tongue of the Zend is not sullied with Greek, and where there are no lepers. What is certain is that the grey man brought to his reverent lips the venerated slime of the river, that he climbed the bank heedless of the lacerating reeds, not feeling them tear his flesh, and that he dragged himself, bloodied and dizzy, to the circle of stone that a tiger crowns, or a stallion maybe, which had worn the color of flame once, and now shows ash. Fire had long since devoured the temple that stood within, whose ground the fevered jungle defiled now, and whose god was no more honoured by men.

The stranger lay down beneath the pedestal that kept the sacred animal. The high sun woke him. He saw without surprise that his wounds had closed. He closed his pale eyes and slept, having determined his will thus, and not out of weariness or weakness of the flesh. He knew that this was the temple his imperious purpose required, and even though some little way

no por **flaqueza de la carne** sino **por determinación de la voluntad.**  
 not through weakness of the flesh but by determination of the will.

**Sabía que ese templo era el lugar que requería su invencible propósito;**  
 He knew that that temple was the place that his invincible purpose required;

**sabía que los árboles incesantes no habían logrado estrangular, río abajo,**  
 he knew that the incessant trees had not succeeded in strangling, downriver,

**las ruinas de otro templo propicio, también de dioses incendiados y**  
 the ruins of another propitious temple, also with gods burnt and

**muertos; sabía que su inmediata obligación era el sueño. Hacia**  
 dead; he knew that his immediate obligation was sleep. Toward

**la medianoche lo despertó el grito inconsolable de un pájaro. Rastros**  
 midnight the inconsolable cry of a bird woke him. Marks

**de pies descalzos, unos higos y un cántaro le advirtieron que los hombres**  
 of unshod feet some figs and a pitcher warned him that the men

**de la region ha espionado con respeto su sueño y solicitaban su amparo**  
 of the region had watched with respect his sleeping and solicited his protection

**o temían su magia. Sintió el frío del miedo y buscó en la muralla**  
 or feared his magic. He felt the cold of dread and searched the dilapidated

**dilapidada un nicho sepulcral y se tapó con hojas desconocidas.**  
 rampart for a sepulchral hollow and covered himself with unknown leaves.

**El propósito que lo guiaba no era imposible, aunque sí sobrenatural.**  
 The purpose that led him was not impossible, even if itself supernatural.

**Quería soñar un hombre: quería soñarlo con integridad minuciosa e**  
 He wished to dream a man: he wished to dream him with minute completeness and

**imponerlo a la realidad. Ese proyecto mágico había agotado el espacio**  
 impose him on reality. That magical project had exhausted the entire

**entero de su alma. Si alguien le hubiera preguntado su propio nombre o**  
 space of his soul. If someone had asked him his own name or

**cualquier rasgo de su vida anterior, no habría acertado a responder.**  
 any feature of his life before, he would not have been accurate in responding.

**Le convenía el templo inhabitado y despedazado, porque era un mínimo**  
 The uninhabited and riven temple suited him, because it was a minimum

**de mundo visible; la cercanía de los leñadores también, porque éstos se**  
 of the visible world; the proximity of the woodsmen also, because they were

down the river there lay another propitious temple whose discountenanced god and fallen ramparts the incessant jungle had not smothered and strangled, not yet, he knew that it was his duty now to sleep. In the dead of night he was woken by the disconsolate cry of a bird. The fresh marks of unshod feet, and some figs and a pitcher, told him that the men of the place had been careful of his sleep, and solicited his protection or feared his magic. He felt the cold of dread and searched the mouldering wall for some immuring hollow, and lay within, covering himself with the leaves of the strange trees.

Supernatural purpose guided the silent stranger. He wished to dream a man, with minute completeness to dream a man, and impose him upon reality. The supernal intent had usurped his soul, had embarked him on his magical but not impossible undertaking. Had he been asked his own name now, or the circumstances of his life before, he could not have answered at all surely. The ravaged and deserted temple would serve him, being the merest semblance of the world of men, and the nearness of the forest dwellers as well, for they had taken upon themselves the relieving of his frugal necessities. The rice and

**encargaban de subvenir sus necesidades frugales. El arroz y las frutas de**  
taking charge of relieving his frugal necessities. The rice and the fruit of  
**su tributo eran pabulo suficiente para su cuerpo, consagrado de la única**  
their tribute was sufficient food for his body, consecrated to the single  
**tarea de dormir y sonar.**  
task of sleeping and dreaming.

**Al principio los sueños eran caóticos; poco después, fueron**  
In the beginning his dreams were chaotic; a little after, they were  
**de naturaleza dialéctica. El forastero se soñaba de un anfiteatro circular,**  
of [a] dialectical nature. The stranger was dreaming of a circular amphitheatre,  
**que era de algún modo el templo incendiado: nubes de alumnos taciturnos**  
which was in a certain way the burnt temple: crowds of silent students  
**fatigaban las gradas. Las caras de los últimos pendían a muchos siglos de**  
fatigued the terraces. The faces of the last hung at many centuries of  
**distancia y una altura estelar, pero eran del todo precisas. El hombre**  
distance and an astral height, but were of all [the most] precise. The man  
**les dictaba lecciones de anatomía, de cosmografía, de magia; los rostros**  
gave them lessons in anatomy, in cosmography, in magic; the faces  
**escuchaban con ansiedad y procuraban responder con entendimiento, como**  
heard with anxiety and tried to answer with understanding, as  
**si adivinaran la importancia de aquel examen, que redimiría uno de ellos**  
if they divined the importance of that examination, which would redeem one of them  
**de su condición de vana apariencia y lo interpolaría en el mundo real.**  
from his condition of vain appearance and interpolate him into the real world.  
**El hombre, en el sueño y en la vigilia, consideraba las respuestas**  
The man, in dream and in vigil, considered the answers  
**de las fantasmas, no se dejaba embaucar por los impostores, adivinaba**  
of the phantoms, did not let himself be deceived by impostors, divined  
**en ciertas perplejidades una inteligencia creciente. Buscaba un alma**  
en certain perplexities a growing intelligence. He was looking for a soul  
**que merecería participar en el universo.**  
that would deserve to participate in the universe.

**A las nueve o diez noches comprendió con alguna amargura que**  
After nine or ten nights he understood with a certain bitterness that

fruit they brought for tribute would be refreshment enough for his body, which he had consecrated to the sole task of sleeping and dreaming.

In the beginning his dreams were disordered, and chaotic even. But very soon they assumed a character at once strange and familiar. The stranger dreamed himself into a circular amphitheatre, which was in some way the burnt temple he lay within. Silent students thronged the terraces. The furthest faces seemed to hang centuries away, at the distance of stars, but these showed most clearly among all of them. The man pronounced upon anatomy and cosmography and magic. The anxious faces attended, and attempted to respond with understanding, as though they had divined the import of their lessoning: which would redeem into reality one among them from his condition of vain appearance. In dream and in wakeful vigil the grey man pondered the answers his phantoms ventured. He was not deceived by impostors: and divined in certain perplexities an emergent intelligence. He was seeking a soul that would merit participation in the universe.

But by the ninth or the tenth night he came to understand, not without bitterness, that he could

nada podía esperar de aquellos alumnos que aceptaban con passividad  
 he could hope for nothing from those students who accepted with passivity

su doctrina y sí de aquellos que arriesgaban, a veces, una  
 his doctrine and of those [among] themselves who risked, sometimes, a

contradicción razonable. Los primeros, aunque dignos de amor y de bueno  
 reasonable contradiction. The first, although worthy of love and of good

afecto, no podían ascender de individuos; los últimos preexistían un  
 disposition, were not able to ascend to individuals; the last pre-existed a

poco más. Una tarde (ahora también las tardes eran tributarios del sueño,  
 little more. One evening (now the evenings also were contributors to the dreaming,

ahora no velaba sino un par de horas el amanecer) licenció para siempre  
 now he did not but for a couple of hours watch the breaking day) he discharged for ever

el vasto colegio ilusorio, y se quedó con un solo alumno. Era un  
 the vast illusory seminary, and was left with a single student. He was a

muchacho taciturno, cetrino, discolo a veces, de rasgos afilados que  
 silent boy, sallow, rebellious at times, with sharp features that

repetían los de su soñador. No lo disconcertó por mucho tiempo  
 repeated those of his dreamer. [It] did not disconcert him for very long

la brusca eliminación de los condiscipulos; su progreso, al cabo de unas  
 the brusque elimination of his classmates. His progress, by the end of a

pocas lecciones particulares, pudo maravillar al maestro. Sin embargo,  
 few particular lessons, managed to astound the master. However,

la catástrofe sobrevino. El hombre, un día, emergió del sueño como de un  
 catastrophe supervened. The man, one day, emerged from sleep as from a

desierto viscoso, miró la vana luz de la tarde que al pronto confundió  
 glutinous wilderness, saw the vain light of the evening which very quickly mixed

con la aurora, y comprendió que no había soñado. Todo esa noche y todo  
 with the dawn, and realized that he had not dreamed. All that night and all

el día, la intolerable lucidez del insomnio se abatió contra él. Quiso  
 all day, the intolerable lucidity of insomnia was pressed down against him. He wanted

explorar la selva, extenuarse; apenas alcanzó entre la cicuta  
 to explore the jungle, to exhaust himself; scarcely he reached/caught between the hemlocks

unas rachas de sueño debil, veteadas fugazmente de visiones de  
 some flurries of feeble sleep, veined/streaked fugitively by visions of [a]

not hope upon his pupils at all: for they received with equal passivity his doctrines and, as well, the contendings of such among themselves as would now and again risk some not unreasonable disagreement. The docile many, although not unworthy of love or affection, could never achieve the condition of individuals. The more spirited few would subsist so for some little time only. One evening — the evenings as well were given to dreaming now, now he kept vigil for no more than an hour over the mornings — one evening he dismissed the entire spectral assembly, except for one pupil. He was a silent boy, but rebellious at times, and on his sallow face the stranger saw reprised his own narrow countenance. The brusque expulsion of his school-fellows did not very long disconcert the apprentice: and his progress through some particular lessons astounded the master.

But catastrophe supervened. Emerging from sleep one day as though from some viscid and glutinous waste, he saw the vain light of the evening flare in the dawn, and knew that he had not dreamed. All day and all night his intolerably lucid wakefulness oppressed him. To exhaust himself he thought to wander the jungle: but scarcely had he gained the lowering hemlocks when flurries of impotent sleep came streaking their fugitive and rudimentary visions, useless to him. He sought to convoke his dismissed seminary: toward whose glimmering return he had uttered some brief exhortation only, however,

**tipo rudimental: inservibles. Quiso congregar el colegio y apenas hubo**  
rudimentary type: unserviceable. He wanted to assemble the school and scarcely had  
**articulado unas breves palabras de exhortación, éste se deformó,**  
articulated some brief words of exhortation, [when] that was distorted,  
**se borró. En la casi perpetua vigilia, lágrimas de ira le quemaban**  
was obliterated. In the almost perpetual vigil, tears of rage scalded  
**las ojos viejos.**  
his ancient eyes.

**Comprendió que el empeño de modelar la materia incoherente y**  
He understood that the pledge of modelling the incoherent and vertiginous  
**vertiginosa de que se componen los sueños es el más arduo que**  
substance of which dreams are composed is the most difficult thing that  
**puede acometer un varón, aunque penetre todos los enigmas del**  
one male could attempt, even if he penetrates all the enigmas of the  
**orden superior y del inferior: mucho más arduo que tejer una cuerda**  
upper order and of the lower: much more difficult than plaiting a rope  
**de arena, o que amonedar el viento sin cara. Comprendió que un**  
of sand, or than coining the faceless wind. He understood that an  
**fracaso inicial era inevitable. Juró olvidar la enorme alucinación que**  
initial failure was inevitable. He swore to forget the vast hallucination which  
**lo había desviado al principio, y buscó otro método de trabajo. Antes de**  
had led him astray in the beginning, and looked for another method of working. Before  
**ejercitarlo, dedicó un mes a la reposición de las fuerzas que**  
practising that, he dedicated a month to the recovery of the energies that  
**había malgastado el delirio. Abandonó toda premeditación de soñar y**  
the delirium had squandered. He abandoned all premeditation of dreaming and  
**casi acto continuo logró dormir un trecho razonable del día. Las**  
almost immediately he managed to sleep [for] a reasonable space of the day. The  
**raras veces que soñó durante ese periodo, no reparó en los sueños. Para**  
rare times that he dreamt during this period, he took no note of the dreams. In order  
**reanudar la tarea, esperó que el disco de la luna fuera perfecto. Luego,**  
to resume the task, he waited for the disk of the moon to be perfect. Then,  
**en la tarde, se purificó en las aguas del río, adoró los dioses planetarios,**  
in the evening, he purified himself in the waters of the river, worshipped the planetary gods,

before the assembling phantoms wavered away,  
obscured and mis-shapen, and were lost utterly. In  
their now almost perpetual vigil tears of rage scalded  
the ancient eyes.

To mould the substance of dreams — to pledge  
oneself to such a task, to try one's powers so, even,  
against the inchoate and vertiginous plasm dreams  
shape themselves out from — that was the most  
difficult thing a man could attempt, he understood  
now, more difficult than to plait a rope of sand, or to  
coin the faceless wind, even had he penetrated all the  
mysteries and enigmas of the supernal and infernal  
orders. That one should fail at first had been  
inevitable then. So he swore to himself that he would  
put out of mind the vast college of pupils he had  
conjured — and lingered with, deluded, for so very  
long — and sought another way than his wearying  
and unwieldy hallucinations could show him.

But he would dedicate a whole month first, the  
man decided, to the recuperation of the energies his  
delirium had squandered: and he lay down to sleep  
with no forethought of dreaming. No sooner had he  
done so than he was able, thereafter, to sleep whole  
days and nights through. He took no notice of his  
dreams on the rare occasions he dreamt. To resume  
his appointed task he waited on the moon. The night

**pronunció las sílabas lícitas de un nombre poderoso y durmió.** Casi  
uttered the permitted syllables of a powerful name and slept. Almost

**inmediatamente, soñó con un corazón que latía.**  
immediately, he dreamt a heart that throbbed.

**Lo soñó activo, caluroso, secreto, del grandor de un puño cerrado,**  
He dreamed it active, fervent, secret, of the bigness of a closed fist,

**color granate en la penumbra de un cuerpo humano aun sin**  
garnet-coloured [with]in the penumbra of a human body without even

**cara ni sexo; con minucioso amor lo soñó, durante catorce lúcidas noches.**  
face or sex; with minute love he dreamt it, for fourteen lucid nights.

**Cada noche, lo percibía con mayor evidencia. No lo tocaba:**  
Each night he perceived it with greater evidence. He did not touch it: he

**se limitaba a atestiguarlo, a observarlo, tal vez a corregirlo con la mirada.**  
limited himself to testifying to it, to observing it, perhaps to straightening it with his look.

**Lo percibía, lo vivía, desde muchas distancias y muchos ángulos. La noche**  
He perceived it, he lived it, from many distances and many angles. The

**catorcena rozó la arteria pulmonario con el índice y luego todo el**  
fourteenth night he grazed the pulmonary artery with his forefinger and then the whole

**corazón, desde afuera y adentro. El examen lo satisfizo. Deliberadamente**  
heart, from outside and inside. The examination satisfied him. Deliberately

**no soñó durante una noche: luego retomó el corazón, invocó el nombre**  
he did not dream for one night: then he retook the heart, invoked the name

**de una planeta y emprendió la visión de otro de los órganos principales.**  
of a planet, and undertook the vision of another of the principal organs.

**Antes de un año llegó al esqueleto, a los párpados. El pelo innumerable**  
Before a year he managed the skeleton, and the eyelids. The innumerable hair

**fue tal vez la tarea más difícil. Soñó un hombre integro, un mancebo, pero**  
was perhaps the most difficult task. He dreamt an entire man, a youth, but

**éste no se incorporaba, ni hablaba, ni podía abrir los ojos. Noche tras noche,**  
this one could not sit up, nor speak, nor was he able to open his eyes. Night after night,

**el hombre lo soñaba dormido.**  
the man dreamt him asleep.

**En las cosmogonías gnósticas, los demiurgos amasan un rojo Adán**  
In the Gnostic cosmogonies the demiurges knead a red Adam

it rose full he purified himself with the water of the river, raised its sacred slime to the planetary gods, and pronounced the permitted syllables of a potent name. His eyes had only closed in sleep again when he dreamt a throbbing heart.

Quick, fervent, secret, with the heft of a closed fist, the heart he was dreaming lay glowing garnet within the penumbral dark of a body lacking face or sex even. With minute and particular care he dreamt the heart through the course of fourteen lucid nights. Each night he saw the organ more surely. He did not touch it. He bound to himself to observe, and to attest, and to steady with his gaze, if need be, the palpitant valves and ventricles. He held it to his dreaming eyes at many paces, from many angles. On the fourteenth night he grazed with his forefinger the pulmonary artery, and palped the whole heart afterwards, within and without. The examination satisfied him: and he kept himself from dreaming it the following night. He reclaimed to his sleep the heart then, and, invoking the name of a planet, set himself to envision another one of the principal organs. Within a year he had assembled the innards, closed the ribs around the lungs, joined the muscles to the jointed bones, shaped the eyes and their lids, and had begun the labour of sifting the innumerable hair. Very soon after he was able to dream out the entire body of a young male. But the body was still, and the mouth did not move,

**que no logra ponerse de pie; tan inhábil y rudo y elemental como ese**  
 who did not manage to get to his feet; as little apt and rough and elementary as that  
**Adán de polvo era el Adán de sueño que las noches del mago**  
 Adam of dust was the Adam of dream that the nights of the magician  
**habían fabricado. Una tarde, el hombre casi destruyó toda su obra, pero**  
 had prepared. One evening, the man almost destroyed his work, but  
**se arrepentió. (Más le hubiera valido destruirla.) Agotados los votos**  
 repented. (It would have cost him more to destroy it.) [Having] exhausted the vows  
**de la tierra y el río, se arrojó a las pies de la efigie que tal vez era un tigre**  
 of the earth and the river, he threw himself at the feet of the image that perhaps was a tiger  
**o tal vez un potro, e imploró su desconocido socorro. Ese crepúsculo,**  
 or perhaps a colt, and implored its unknown assistance. That evening  
**soñó con la estatua. Lo soñó viva, tremula: no era un atroz bastardo de**  
 he dreamt the statue. He dreamt it alive, tremulous: it was not some atrocious bastard of  
**tigre y potro, sino a la vez esas dos criaturas vehementes y también un toro,**  
 tiger and colt, but at once those two vehement creatures and also a bull,  
**una rosa, una tempestad. Ese múltiple dios le reveló que su**  
 a rose, a tempest. This multiple god revealed to him that his  
**nombre terrenal era Fuego, que en ese templo circular (y en otros iguales)**  
 earthly name was Fire, that in that circular temple (and in similar others)  
**le habían rendido sacrificios y culto, y que mágicamente animaría**  
 sacrifices and worship had been rendered it, and that it magically enlivened  
**al fantasma soñado, de suerte que todas las criaturas, excepto el Fuego**  
 dreamed phantasms, so [that] all creatures, except Fire  
**mismo y el soñador, lo pensaron un hombre de carne y hueso.**  
 itself and the dreamer, thought it a man of flesh and bone.  
**Le ordenó que una vez instruido en los ritos, lo enviara al otro**  
 It ordered that once instructed in the rites, it would send him to another  
**templo despedazado cuyas piramides persisten aguas abajo, para que**  
 riven temple whose pyramids persisted below the waters, in order that  
**alguna voz lo glorificara en aquel edificio desierto. En el sueño del hombre**  
 some voice could glorify it in that deserted edifice. In the dream of the man  
**que soñaba el soñado despertó.**  
 who was dreaming the dreamed one awoke.

and the eyes lay lidded within the smooth face. Night after night the man dreamt the sleeping youth.

In the cosmogonies of the Gnostics the demiurges knead from their muddy earth an Adam who cannot gain his feet: as rude as that Adam of marl, as little apt, was the Adam of dream the nights of the magus had fashioned. One evening he let the vision dissolve almost: but forebore, for that would have cost him dearly. His vows and his supplications to the deities of the earth and the river availing naught, at last the grey man abased himself before the sacred image, tiger or stallion he could not say, at whose feet he had lain dreaming, and implored its alien succour.

In the dusk he dreamt the image tremulous and living, an integral being — not some chimera tigerish and equine — but vehement tiger and stallion at once, and a bull as much, a rose, a tempest: he dreamt a being multitudinous and divine. The god told him that its name among men was Fire: and that this circle of stone had been its own temple, that men had worshipped it and sacrificed to it here, and in many other such temples, that it could with its magic enliven the phantasms men dreamed, so that all living things, but for Fire and the dreamer himself, took those for creatures of flesh and blood and bone. The youth the man was dreaming would wake: and when he had been instructed in the proper rites, so the god decreed, he should be sent to another ruined temple

**El mago ejecutó esas órdenes. Consagró un plazo** (que finalmente  
 The magician carried out those orders. He consecrated a span of time (which finally  
**abarcó dos años)** a descubrirle los arcanos del universo y del culto  
 comprehended two years) to discovering the mysteries of the universe and [of] the cult  
**del fuego. Intimamente, le dolía apartarse de él. Con el pretexto de**  
 of fire. Intimately, it pained him to part from him. With the pretext of  
**la necesidad pedagógica, dilataba cada día las horas dedicadas al sueño.**  
 pedagogic necessity, he prolonged every day the hours dedicated to dreaming.  
**También rehizo el hombro derecho, acaso deficiente. A veces, lo inquietaba**  
 He remade also the right shoulder, perhaps deficient. At times [it] disquieted him  
**una impresión de que ya todo eso había acontecido ... En general, sus días**  
 an impression that already all that had happened ... In general his days  
**eran felices; al cerrar los ojos pensaba: Ahora estaré con mi hijo. O, más**  
 were happy; on closing his eyes he thought: *Now I shall be with my child.* Or, more  
**raramente:** *El hijo que he engendrado me espera y no existirá si no voy.*  
 rarely: *The child I have engendered waits for me and will not exist if I do not go.*  
**Gradualmente, lo fue acostumbrando a la realidad. Una vez le ordenó**  
 Gradually, he was accustoming him to reality. Once he ordered  
**que embanderara una cumbre lejana. Al otro día, flameaba la bandera**  
 that he should flag a distant peak. By the next day, the flag waved  
**en la cumbre. Ensayó otros experimentos análogos, cada vez más audaces.**  
 on the peak. He attempted other analogous experiments, each time more audacious.  
**Comprendió con cierta amargura que su hijo estaba listo para nacer – y**  
 He understood with a certain bitterness that his son was ready to be born – and  
**tal vez impaciente. Esa noche lo besó por primera vez y lo envió al otro**  
 perhaps impatient. That night he kissed him for the first time and sent him to the other  
**templo cuyos despojos blanqueaban río abajo, a muchas leguas de**  
 temple whose remains were whitening downriver, at many leagues of  
**inextricable selva y ciénaga. Antes (para que no supiera nunca que era**  
 inextricable jungle and swamp. Before (in order that he should never know that he was  
**un fantasma, para que se creyera un hombre como los otros) le infundió**  
 a phantom, in order that he should think himself a man like others) he infused in him  
**el olvido total de sus años de aprendizaje.**  
 the total forgetfulness of his years of apprenticeship.

that lay down the river, a temple whose pyramids still stood, so that some voice should glorify Fire in that deserted place. In the dream of the man who was dreaming the dreamed one awoke.

The magus complied with the commands of the god. He consecrated a term of time to discerning the mysteries and learning the cults of fire: and that would keep him two years in the end. It pained him inwardly, intimately, to part from the boy he had dreamed: and on the pretext of having much to teach him he prolonged each day the time given to dreaming. In the never enough hours he remade the body where it seemed lacking: most by the shoulders, it looked to him, where the torso met the nape. Now and again he was disquieted by the feeling that all this had already happened. But his days were mostly glad. On closing his eyes he would say: *now I shall be with my child.* More than once he told himself: *the child I have engendered awaits me, and shall be no more if I do not go to him.*

He accustomed the boy to reality gradually, through a series of experiments each more arduous than the last: and at length ordered him to plant a flag on a distant mountain. The next day the flag flourished in the high distance: and the magus knew that his son was ready to be born, was eager even, so he understood, with grief, and with a certain bitterness. That night he



**Su victoria y su paz quedaron empañadas de hastío. En los crepsúculos,**  
 His victory and his peace were dimmed by weariness. In the gloamings,  
**de la tarde y del alba, se prosternaba antes del la figura de piedra,**  
 of the evening and the dawn, he prostrated himself before the figure of stone,  
**tal vez imaginando que su hijo irreal ejecutaba idénticos ritos, en otras**  
 perhaps imagining that his unreal son executed identical rites, in other  
**ruinas circulares, aguas abajo; noche no soñaba, o soñaba como**  
 circular ruins, below the waters; at night he did not dream, or dreamed as  
**lo hacen todos los hombres. Percibía con cierta palidez los formas y sonidos**  
 all men dream. He perceived with a certain pallor the shapes and sounds  
**del universo: su hijo ausente se nutría con esas disminuciones de**  
 of the universe: his absent son nourished himself with those diminutions of  
**su alma. El propósito de su vida estaba colmado; el hombre persistió en**  
 his soul. The purpose of his life was fulfilled; the man persisted in  
**un suerte de extasis. Al cabo de un tiempo que ciertos narradores**  
 a sort of ecstasy. At the end of a time which certain narrators  
**de su historia prefieren computar en años y otros in lustras,**  
 of his history prefer to compute in years and others in pentads,  
**lo despertaron dos remeros en la medianoche: no pudo ver sus caras,**  
 two oarsmen woke him at midnight: he could not see their faces,  
**pero le hablaron de un hombre mágico en un templo del Norte, capaz de**  
 but they told him of a magical man in a temple to the North, capable of  
**hollar de fuego y no quemarse. El mago recordó bruscamente las palabras**  
 treading on fire and not being burnt. The magician suddenly remembered the words  
**del dios. Recordó que de todos los criaturas que componen el orbe, el fuego**  
 of the god. He remembered that of all the creatures that make up the worlds, Fire  
**era la única que sabía que su hijo era un fantasma. Ese recuerdo,**  
 was the only one who knew that his son was a phantasm. That remembrance,  
**apaciguador al principio, acabó por atormentar lo. Temió que su hijo**  
 reassuring in the beginning, ended by tormenting him. He feared that his son  
**meditara en ese privilegio anormal y descubriera de algún modo**  
 would think on that abnormal privilege and would discover in some way  
**su condición de mero simulacro. No ser un hombre, ser la proyección**  
 his condition of (a) mere simulacrum. To not be a man, to be the projection

kissed the boy, for the first time, and sent him to the temple Fire had bade, whose remains lay whitening downriver many leagues of tangled jungle and swamp away. But before he went the magus induced in him a forgetting, entirely, of the years of his apprenticeship: so that his son should think himself a man, always, and never know himself for a phantom.

But his victory and his peace were sullied by tedium. In the gloamings of his dusks and his dawns the magus prostrated himself before the image of stone: even as his dreamt son lay to worship Fire, so he imagined, within other circular ruins far down the river. He did not dream, or dreamed in the night as other men do only. The shapes and sounds of world came wan and hushed to his eyes and ears: but his absent son was nourished by these diminutions of his soul: and the purpose of his life fulfilled so, the magus subsisted in a kind of ecstasy. At the end of a term which some narrators of his history compute in years, and others in the pentads or lustra of the Romans, two men woke him in the middle of the night. They were oarsmen they said; and they told him of a man who trod fire and never was burnt, a magical man, in a temple to the North, just like his. He could not make out their faces; and all at once remembered that only Fire, and among all the creatures that were he only, could ever know that his son was a phantasm. So the god had said: but that promise, so reassuring at

**del sueño de otro hombre! que humillación incomparable, que vertigo!**  
of the dreaming of another man! what incomparable humiliation, what dizziness!

**A todo padre le interesan los hijos que ha procreado (que ha permitido)**  
They interest all fathers, the sons that they have produced (that they have permitted)

**en una mera confusión o felicidad; es natural que el mago temiera por**  
in [a] mere confusion or happiness; it is natural that the magician feared for

**el porvenir de aquel hijo, pensado entran por entran y rasgo por rasgo,**  
the future of that son, thought innard by innard and feature by feature,

**en mil y una noches secretas.**

in (a) thousand and one secret nights.

**El término de sus cavilaciones fue brusco: pero lo prometieron algunos**

The end of his ponderings was sudden: but they promised him certain

**signos. Primero (al cabo de una larga sequía) una remota nube en un cerro,**  
signs. First (at the end of a long drought) a remote cloud on a hill,

**liviana como un pajarito; luego, hacia el Sur, el cielo que tenía el color**  
light as a bird; then, toward the South, sky that had the rosy colour

**rosado de la encía de los leopardos; luego las humaredas que herrumbraron**  
off the gum(s) of leopards; then the clouds of smoke that rust

**el metal de las noches; después la fuga pánica de las bestias. Porque se**  
the metal of the nights; afterwards the panic flight of animals. Because it was

**repitió lo acontecido hace muchos siglos. Las ruinas del santuarios del dios**  
repeated the happening took many centuries. The ruins of the sanctuaries of the god

**del fuego fueron destruidas por el fuego. En un alba sin pájaros el mago vio**  
of fire were destroyed by fire. In a dawn without birds the magician saw

**cernirse contra los muros el incendio concéntrico. Por un instante, pensó**  
hovering against the walls concentric flame. For an instant, he thought

**refugiarse en las aguas, pero luego comprendió que la muerte venía a**  
to take refuge in the waters, but then he understood that death was coming to

**coronar su vejez y a absolverlo de sus trabajos. Caminó contra los jirones**  
to crown his age and to absolve him of his travails. He walked against the whirls

**de fuego. Estos no mordieron su carne, estos lo acariciaron y lo inundaron**  
of fire. These did not consume his flesh, they caressed it and flooded it

**sin calor y sin combustión. Con alivio, con humillación, con terror,**  
without heat and without combustion. With relief, with humiliation, with terror,

first became in the end a torment. He began to fear that his son would dwell on the singular privilege of treading fire unharmed, and in some way discern that he was not a creature of flesh but a simulacrum ... and to be not a man but the projected dream of another man! what unparalleled humiliation! dizzying, unforeseeable ... Their sons interest all men surely, whether they have fathered them with purpose, or in confusion only, or in mere happiness allowed themselves the deed; and it is natural that the magus feared for what would befall the son he had thought into the world, organ by organ and feature by feature, through a thousand and one secret nights.

His anxious pondering ended as suddenly as it had begun; and before they left the men promised the grey stranger certain signs. After a long drought a cloud, first, on a far hill, as light as bird; then, toward the south, a sky as pink as the mouths of leopards; vapourous smoke rusting the metal night then; and the panic flight of animals after. But the signs were repeated, many times over, and what they portended took centuries to happen. The mouldering sanctuaries of the god had been burnt away. In a dawn without birds the magus saw hovering along a lone wall the wheel of fire. For an instant he wanted to run into the river; but he thought then that death had come to crown his age and absolve him of his travail; and he walked into the fiery whorl. The licking flames did

**comprendió que él también era un apariencia, que otro estaba soñandolo.**

he understood that he also was an appearance, that another was dreaming him.

not burn him, and he could feel neither heat nor pain  
as they caressed his flesh and coursed his body; with  
relief and shame and terror he understood that he too  
was a phantom another was dreaming.