

“Emma Zunz” in the Mirror and the Labyrinth

Jay Corwin¹

“Emma Zunz” exemplifies Borges’s particular use of literary devices, including extra-literary references and motifs that refer to the author’s earlier stories. Among those motifs the most central to “Emma Zunz” is the mirror. The use of the verb “multiplicar” reiterates the phrasing from two earlier stories: “Tlön, Uqbar y Orbis Tertius” and “El tintorero enmascarado, Hakim de Merv.” At the same moment the author only proposes that the character sees her reflections on her way to the port of Buenos Aires but promptly offers another scenario, meaning that the reader’s perception of omniscience is authorial sleight of hand. As in “Tlon,” fiction invades reality, and some of the sources of fiction are identifiable in “Emma Zunz” as the Book of Exodus, a lost silent film called “The Yellow Ticket” and the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. The convergence of Hebrew and Minoan legends are also implied in the title of the collection, *El Aleph* through the hieroglyphic origins of the initial letter of the Hebrew abjad. [Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2020 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]

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Borges’s fiction is perplexing in no small part because of his trademark use of particular aesthetic devices. In certain stories the author recycles old, sometimes ancient motifs, instilling them with new meaning, placing

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