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### SYMBOLIC METAMETAPHORS IN BORGES' "THE HOUSE OF ASTERION"

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**Abstract:** The paper examines metametaphors in Borges' "The House of Asterion", focusing on reconstructing symbolic metametaphors and derivative metaphorical constructs within a postmodernist and existentialist framework. It highlights the role of metaphorical core and periphery in encoding the narrative-semiotic structure. The study reveals that metametaphors serve as codes for interpreting and integrating images and meanings, aligning with symbolic metaphorical constants in postmodern and existential-philosophical texts.

**Keywords:** symbolic metametaphors, narrative-semiotic codes, Inner Self, Labyrinth, Minotaur.

### 1. Introduction

Myths, as a universal language of human imagination, embodying constants of human thought and behaviour in archetypal mythological images (Dardel 1984; Keen & Valle-Fox 1989) and characterized by paraconsistent logic (Béziau et al. 2007) in explaining fundamental worldview problems, have remained the focus of constant attention in postmodernism. Postmodernists use the universal recognizability of myths to disrupt constants, challenge the very concept of truth, and contribute to radical pluralism of values and worldviews through variation, reinterpretation, and demythologization of mythological images, plots, and motifs. The use of labyrinth and Minotaur imagery in postmodernism undergoes reinterpretation, creating new symbolic metaphors. Their source spaces are based on mythological images and symbols, triggering "some abstract arcane ideas"



(Volkova & Stetsenko 2022: 225). The metaphorization of the Minotaur figure in postmodernism departs from the archetypal demonization of the anthropomorphic creature with a bull's head as the embodiment of evil. Instead, it relies on peripheral characteristics of the source space of metaphorization, such as confinement, the inevitability of killing, animalistic innocence, vulnerability, and loneliness. It also involves a reinterpretation of the Minotaur with a bull's head as a dichotomy between human essence and animalistic instincts. The target spaces of postmodernism metaphors often draw on the concepts of existentialism, symbolizing human wandering in the labyrinth of the subconscious and their struggle with their own fears and prejudices. In particular, the symbolization of the Minotaur as a metaphor for solitude, a quest for one's own identity, the inverted mirror of Man, is iconic in Dürrenmatt's "Minotaurus. Eine Ballade" (1987), Danielewski's novel "House of Leaves" (2000), James' story "The Jolly Corner" (2005), and Fowles' "The Magus" (2004). Reconsidering the image of the Minotaur in an existential-phenomenological context, Umberto Eco notes: "A maze does not need a Minotaur: it is its own Minotaur: in other words, the Minotaur is the visitor's trial-and-error process" (Eco 1986: 81).

The focus of our research on studying symbolic metametaphors in Borges' 'The House of Asterion' is justified by the insufficient exploration of the story and the novelty of the metametaphor concept in linguistic studies. In contrast to the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, Borges (1964) humanizes the image of a bull man, portraying it as a being suffering from boredom and loneliness, aware of its punishment, and eagerly awaiting its saviour. According to Bell-Villada, "prior to Borges's little fable, there is no instance of a major author so inverting the hero–monster relationship" (1999: 279). In 'The House of Asterion', Borges introduces metaphors that extend beyond the text and are used as symbolic referents for subsequent postmodernist literature. Researchers note that the Borgesian labyrinth is a metaphor for human existence and the universe itself, and Asterion's redemption is not only the freedom that death affords, but also a transformation that transcends his fictional universe (Tilney 2012: 51). There are limited literary studies on the work (Bernal 2012; Yalciner 2014), and the only linguistic article on its stylistics (Tilney 2012) does not cover metaphors. These gaps highlight the significance and novelty of this article.

## **2. Literature review**

Relevant research associated with the study question encompasses the investigations on metametaphor, interactive metaphor, and symbolic metaphors. There are two approaches to interpreting metametaphor: (a) as an extension of the primary metaphor's nomination beyond the literary text (Воробйова 2010: 76-83) and (b) as a hierarchical structure with implied meanings,

transforming the semantics of textual elements and promoting self-organization of meaning within the text, which determines the synergistic nature of metametaphors (Піхтовнікова 2012: 15-18). The second approach aligns with the definition of a metametaphor as an integrative metaphor that contains imagery and meaning common to all other metaphors in discourse and reorganizes "perspectives by means of the juxtaposition of meanings" and the creation of "new and different connotations along with surplus meaning" (Waistell 2007: 86). The synergistic nature of metametaphors, facilitating the interaction of explicit and implicit meanings, aligns with the interaction theory of metaphor (Black 1962), wherein metaphors involve a principal subject (metaphorical focus) and subsidiary subject – the nominations and images forming an implicative complex. Metaphorical processes include projecting associations and implications from the subsidiary subject (metaphor frame) onto the principal subject. This interaction combines ideas associated with the secondary subject and those linked to the primary subject, creating a new meaning for the metaphorical focus, where the principal subject is "seen through" the metaphorical expression and "projected upon" the field of the subsidiary subject (Black 1962: 41). It involves the foregrounding, adoption, or alteration of certain features in the primary subject based on the features of the secondary subject. The influence of the metaphorical focus and the implicational complex is mutual, leading to parallel changes in both the primary and secondary subjects.

To address the research objectives, the article draws upon works on symbolic metaphor as "persistently repeated" phenomena (Wellek & Warren 1973: 189): "an image may be invoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol" (ibid.: 189). Based on this, the mechanism of metaphorical symbolization is similar to the mechanism of metametaphor functioning: if metaphors extend beyond individual texts, becoming symbolic constants for creating and interpreting metaphors of other texts, they perform a metametaphorical function. Symbolic metametaphorical meanings can become conventional, turning the text into a metasign – a metaphor generating meanings within a specific paradigm (Кравченко 2017: 107; Binbin et al. 2022: 185). A special contribution to the theory of symbolic metaphor, demonstrating its specificity, is the distinction between textual and global symbols. Textual symbols pertain to text phenomena, while global symbols are components of text interpretation (Shurma 2010: 115). Borges' (1964) symbolic metaphors are shaped by mythology and existentialist texts, defining symbolic fields. These symbols become referents, aligning with global symbols, refracted in textual fields and forming a correlating but not identical symbol group (ibid. 2010: 110). For a metaphor to become a symbol, it should unfold from a combination of metaphoric and metonymic components, with the dominant role of the metonymic component (ibid. 2010: 112).

### 3. Methods

The article employs the method of contextual-interpretative analysis aimed at interpreting "nominative units verbalizing the corresponding metaphorical conceptual models" (Holyk 2021), in combination with the narrative-semiotic coding (Barthes 1974), and the tools of conceptual integration (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 92-115) – to analyze the mechanism of formation of metametaphors. Considering the polysemy of metaphors based on mythological images, the research also applies a methodology for reconstructing polysemantic allusions (Kravchenko et al. 2021a), taking into account, firstly, the allusive basis of Borges' metaphors, and secondly, the structural similarity of such phenomena. Both polysemantic allusions and metaphors can have a "multicomponent structure – each structural component being capable of creating additional allusive connotations in its unfolding in further context" (ibid. 2021a: 1917). A polysemantic metaphor implies multiple levels of semantic interpretation with varying degrees of implicitness in meanings. It bases on the transfer of various attributes from the original space to several target spaces, stemming, on the one hand, from the context of the entire text, and on the other hand, from reference to global symbols formed by the existentialist tradition in the interpretation of mythological images. For instance, the source space 'Labyrinth' in the metaphor "Labyrinth is a world" can generate a polysemantic metaphor by projecting characteristics of the labyrinth both from Borges' text and as a global symbol onto interconnected target spaces in metaphors: 'Labyrinth – World / Rhizomatic Universe,' 'Labyrinth – Inner Self,' and 'Minotaur – Inner Self'. Each of these metaphors, in turn, is polysemantic in terms of "one source domain – several coreferential target domains." As a result, polysemantic metaphor intersects with one of the features of metametaphor – its structural-forming function in creating the metaphorical and figurative architecture of the text.

The components of input spaces of the metaphors are scattered throughout the text, influencing its narrative-semiotic codes (Barthes 1974). Narrative coding is used to identify how metametaphors contribute to (a) the hermeneutic code, relying on metaphor blends; (b) the semiotic code related to the connotative periphery of the metaphorical associative complex; (c) the actional code, predicting actions and the unfolding of the plot; (d) the cultural code based on mythological and existential-philosophical allusions referring to the target and source spaces of metaphors; (e) the symbolic code of semantic oppositions (ibid., 17-20, 78, 117). The interaction of opposites in the symbolic code can be explained based on Lotman's idea that there is a "constant exchange" between semiospheres (Lotman 1990: 142), with the projection of semiospheric values in the form of meaningful oppositions for constructing cultural models (Lotman 1977: 218). Such a model of interpreting oppositions has been tested on the material of institutional discourse (Kravchenko et al. 2022). The oppositions in Borges' text – reality-illusion, cruelty-compassion, despair-hope, confinement-freedom, and others –

are revealed through the combination of semiotic values of archetypal mythology (left members of the oppositions) and existential values (right members of the oppositions). This forms the basis for the process of metaphorization as a conceptual reinterpretation of mythological images.

The research comprises four consecutive stages of analysis:

- (a) Identification of allusions to Labyrinth and Minotaur images, which serves as a preliminary stage for reconstructing the source spaces of metametaphors.
- (b) Interpretation and reconstruction of basic metaphors while justifying their metametaphoric nature, cross-referentiality of their conceptual spaces, their symbolic nature, and relationship to the symbolism of mythological figures in existentialism and postmodernism.
- (c) Identification of metaphor functions in narrative-semiotic encoding of the text.
- (d) Justification of chain relations between metametaphors and their derivative metaphors.

#### **4. Results and discussions**

In Borges' "The House of Asterion", the Cretan myth is retold from the perspective of the Minotaur, who is simultaneously the protagonist and the narrator. The particular features of metaphorization of the Minotaur and Labyrinth images imply complex coding that engages both allusive and metaphorical levels of interpretation of these figures.

##### *4.1 The allusive basis of Borges' metaphors*

Since Borges' story is an enigmatic tale, the reconstruction of the source spaces of metaphors is carried out through allusions to Greek mythology, as there is not a single explicit mention of the Labyrinth and the Minotaur in the text (except for the final line of the epilogue), as well as through implicit references to the characteristics of the labyrinth and the Minotaur. Therefore, the identification of allusive references to the figures of the Minotaur and the labyrinth precedes the reconstruction of metaphors. References to the theme of the labyrinth are contained in the description of the house: *the halls of stone; each part of the house occurs many times; any particular place is another place; return to our previous intersection; you will see how the cellar forks; single dusty gallery of gray stone*, and are provided through intertextual allusions of varying degrees of implicitness. Specifically, the allusions that allow for the interpretation of the house as a labyrinth and Asterion as the Minotaur include:

- Mythological projections to the ritual of human sacrifice, with the unexpected arrival of youths as sacrifices "from the outside" from the space outside the house:

(1) *"hear their steps or their voices in the depths of the stone galleries and I run joyfully to find them. The ceremony lasts a few minutes. They fall one after another without my having to bloody my hands"* ("The House of Asterion", p. 130).

- Drawing parallels between Asterion's house and a similar house in Egypt, implying the temple on the southern side of the pyramid at Hawara:

(2) *"a house like no other on the face of the earth. (There are those who declare there is a similar one in Egypt, but they lie.)"* (ibid., p. 129). In Herodotus's book on Egypt in the 5th century BCE this temple is referred to as the "Labyrinth" (Herodotus 2014).

- Two recurring references to the Temple of the Axes, signifying the Knossos Palace in Crete, where, according to mythology, the Minotaur's labyrinth was located.

(3) *"some climbed onto the stylobate of the temple of the Axes"* ("The House of Asterion", p. 129).

(4) *"I have reached the street and seen the temple of the Axes"* (ibid., p. 130).

- Allusions related to temporal deixis, through mentions of the time intervals between sacrifices – every nine years akin to the intervals between sacrifices in the Knossos labyrinth:

(5) *"Every nine years nine men enter the house so that I may deliver them from all evil"* (ibid.).

- The number *fourteen*, which in metatextual references signifies infinity, but, on the other hand, is related to the number of sacrifices sent into the Knossos labyrinth:

(6) *"the mangers, drinking troughs, courtyards, pools are fourteen (infinite) in number"* (ibid.).

Allusions to the figure of the Minotaur are found in: (a) The naming of the owner of the house as Asterion, a lesser-known name of the Minotaur that Apollodorus mentions in his "Library of Greek Mythology". Borges employs complex coding in this case, catering to both the average reader who associates Asterion with the Minotaur only in the final line of the story and to connoisseurs of ancient Greek mythology and literature; (b) A paratextual allusion in the epigraph – a quote from Apollodorus describing the circumstances of the birth of the Minotaur-Asterion as in (7). The full version of the Apollodorus quote reads: "and she gave birth to Asterius, who was called the Minotaur. He had the face of a bull, but the rest of him was human" (Apollodorus 1921: 3.1.4); (c) Asterion's words about his origins: *not in vain was my mother a queen*, referring to Pasiphaë, who gave birth to the Minotaur and was a queen of Crete, and implicit references to his divine nature as in (8) and (9); (d) In Asterion's contemplations about his redeemer as in (10):

(7) *"And the queen gave birth to a child who was called Asterion. Apollodorus: Bibliotheca, III, I"* ("The House of Asterion", p. 129).

(8) *"The people prayed, fled, prostrated themselves"* (ibid.).

(9) *"Perhaps I have created the stars and the sun and this enormous house"* (ibid., p. 130).

(10) "*Will he be a bull or a man? Will he perhaps be a bull with the face of a man? Or will he be like me?*" (ibid., p. 131).

The implicature triggered by the violation of the maxim of quantity and clarity in (8) is reconstructed with reference to the description of the redeemer in the preceding questions, following the principle of relevance, which dictates that subsequent information is in some way connected to the previous one, and the disjunctive conjunction "or" implying opposition: If he is not "*a bull with the face of a man*" (ibid.), then perhaps he will be someone "*like me*", that is a human with the face of a bull.

#### 4.2 *The metaphor 'Labyrinth – World / Rhizomatic Universe': metametaphorical and symbolic attributes and functions in narrative semiotic coding*

The image of the labyrinth, actualized through allusions in (1)-(6), becomes the source space for a symbolic metaphor: The labyrinth is a model of the world.

(11) "*The house is the same size as the world; or rather, it is the world*" (ibid., p. 130).

The process of metaphorization is carried out through the identification of the house with the world based on the common physical structure of the labyrinth house, which symbolically represents the intricate nature of the world. This metaphor satisfies the characteristics of a symbolic metaphor in terms of its source space, and its referential function in the subsequent postmodern tradition, correlating with the metametaphor function. Borges's metaphor expands beyond the text as "constant, invariable substitutions for certain ideas" (Dobrovsky 1960: 229-238) (ideas of unfathomability and intricacy of the world), thus aligning with the characteristics of a symbol. It becomes a referent for symbols in postmodern texts – the symbol of the world-labyrinth in Dürrenmatt's "The Minotaur" (1987), the labyrinth-universe in Borges's stories "The Library of Babel" (2000), "The Garden of Forking Paths" (2018), and Umberto Eco's labyrinth of the world in "The Name of the Rose" (1983), into which "you enter and you do not know whether you will come out" (Eco 1983: 158). In turn, the symbolism of Borges's textual metaphor is associated with the symbolism of its source mythological space, based on the understanding of the myth as the most fundamental symbolic form (Cassirer 1983: 175; 1954: ix), and awareness of the image of the Labyrinth as an archetypal mythological symbol, the centre of which is symbolically associated "with the center of the world macrocosmically or in the microcosm of our individual hearts" (Jewitt 2004: 16). In addition, the metaphor qualifies as a metametaphor as it contains images and meanings that integrate other metaphors in the text: 'the House-Labyrinth – Model of a rhizomatic Universe', 'the Labyrinth – Consciousness of the Minotaur,' and metametaphors like 'Labyrinth – Inner Self' and 'Minotaur – Inner Self.' The metaphors are cross-referential in source spaces, involving metonymic identification of the images of the Labyrinth and

the Minotaur, and also in target spaces – based on the shared characteristics of the inexhaustibility and intricacy of the world/Universe and consciousness.

The target space 'Model of the World' expands to 'Model of the Universe' in the metaphor 'The Labyrinth is the Rhizomatic Universe', due to designations that denote (a) a chronotype with infinitely blurred spatial-temporal coordinates and (b) the impossibility of decoding the meaning of the labyrinthine universe that is textually underpinned by semantic oppositions. This metaphor resonates once again with the interpretation of the labyrinth-universe in Borges's stories "The Library of Babel" (2000), "The Garden of Forking Paths" (2018), and Umberto Eco's novel "The Name of the Rose" (1983).

The non-spatiality of the labyrinthine house is indicated by the recurrent repetitions of *many times* to denote an indefinitely large number, an implicit antithesis *any particular place is another place*; enumeration with repetition of negative indefinite pronoun, and number 14, symbolizing infinity in the text:

(12) "*All the parts of the house are repeated many times, any place is another place. There is no one pool, courtyard, drinking trough, manger; the mangers, drinking troughs, courtyards, pools are fourteen (infinite) in number*" ("The House of Asterion", p. 130).

(13) "*Everything is repeated many times, fourteen times*" (ibid.).

The cyclicity of the labyrinthine Universe is marked by the temporal nomination *every nine years*, and the image of a simplified labyrinth after death-redemption. For Asterion, the existence of anything outside the house is incomprehensible unless it also unfolds infinitely. In other words, the infinite house, in turn, is contained within an infinite universe:

(14) "*the seas and temples are also fourteen (infinite) in number*" (ibid.).

In "The House of Asterion" the impossibility of deciphering the meaning and secrets of both the labyrinth and the universe are marked by semantic oppositions contributing to the metaphorical periphery and underlying the symbolic code of the text (see Table 1).

Table 1. Metaphorical periphery via semantic oppositions. Source: Own processing

<b>Confinement</b>	<b>Freedom</b>
"It is true that I never leave my house. Another ridiculous falsehood has it that I, Asterion, am a prisoner" (ibid., p. 129).	"it is also true that its doors (whose number is infinite) are open day and night. Shall I repeat that there are no locked doors, shall I add that there are no locks?" (ibid., p. 129).



<b><u>Murder</u></b>	<b><u>Humanity</u></b>
killing victims	"Every nine years nine men enter the house so that I may deliver them from all evil" (ibid., p. 130).
<b><u>Self-contentment</u></b>	<b><u>Awaiting redemption-liberation</u></b>
"I am unique" (ibid., p. 129). "Bothersome and trivial details have no place in my spirit, which is prepared for all that is vast and grand" (ibid., p. 130).	"Some day my redeemer would come. Since then my loneliness does not pain me, because I know my redeemer lives and he will finally rise above the dust" (ibid., p. 131).

These characteristics specify the target space of the metaphor as the 'Rhizomatic Universe', forming a component of the hermeneutic code of the text: the house-labyrinth of Asterion symbolizes an infinite Universe, incomprehensible in its inexhaustibility and contradictions. At the final stage of conceptual integration, the blend becomes enriched with meanings associated with the scenario of liberation from the infinite rhizomatic space of the labyrinth-Universe. The Minotaur's transition from the 'Labyrinth-Universe' to a more understandable, i.e., finite space, signifies an escape from time and redemption as death at the hands of Theseus the liberator. This creates narrative tension, linking the blend scenario with the actional code of the text:

(15) "I hope he takes me to a place with fewer galleries and fewer doors" ("The House of Asterion", p. 130).

In this context, the symbol of the labyrinth is related to the concept of absurdity (Kumar 2022) and the associated motif of death in existentialism (Schopenhauer 1909 / 2011), which asserts that the world-Universe lacks internal meaning and the meaning of human existence. As Albert Camus noted in "The Rebel", "the absurd is an experience that must be lived through, a point of departure" (Camus 1960: 4), and its denial is linked to the archetypal motif of death. At the same time, Asterion perceives death not as the end of time but as a transition to another place, connecting the metaphor of the Labyrinth-Universe with sacred cyclical mythological time, which is "reversible", can be "indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable" (Eliade 1959: 69) Manifestations of cyclicity in the text include rituals, formality, and repetitions (often occurring a symbolic number of times) (Kravchenko et al. 2021: 79): recurring ritual sacrifices every nine years, a recurrent emphasis on the number 14, symbolizing infinity.

#### 4.3 The metametaphor 'Labyrinth – Inner Self': reconstruction and functions in narrative-semiotic encoding of the text

Since the locus of the formation and existence of oppositions is Asterion's consciousness, the attributes of the generic space of the metaphor 'The Labyrinth – Rhizomatic Universe', namely, the intricacy and the impossibility of deciphering the meaning of the 'Labyrinth-Universe', are projected

onto the characteristics of the target space of another metaphor: 'The Labyrinth – Consciousness of the Minotaur' and expands to the metametaphor of 'Labyrinth – Inner Self'. *The metaphor 'Labyrinth – Inner Self' becomes symbolic due to actualization of metonymic components 'Labyrinth for Complexity and Intricacy' of one's inner self, and 'Labyrinth for Self-Discovery' of oneself, one's hidden aspects.*

The metaphor 'Labyrinth – Inner Self' is reinforced by another set of oppositions in the symbolic code of the text, actualizing the sense of Asterion's spiritual hopelessness, akin to the despair of the rhizomatic labyrinth. On one side of the first opposition are tranquility and spiritual peace, indicated by words such as *quiet and solitude, vast and grand* (spirit), as in (16) and (17). On the other side, these meanings are contrasted with restlessness and agitation, marked by terms like *impatience* and *terrible dread*, as well as nominations of reckless actions, as in (18).

(16) *"He will find here no female pomp nor gallant court formality, but he will find quiet and solitude"* ("The House of Asterion", p. 129).

(17) *"Bothersome and trivial details have no place in my spirit, which is prepared for all that is vast and grand"* (ibid., p. 130).

(18) *"Like the ram about to charge, I run through the stone galleries until I fall dizzy to the floor. There are roofs from which I let myself fall until I am bloody"* (ibid.).

The second opposition is formed by the meanings of finitude-infinity, as in (19) and (20), and the third between amusement and loneliness, involving the invention of an imaginary friend, another Asterion (21):

(19) *"Everything is repeated many times, fourteen times, but two things in the world seem to be only once: above, the intricate sun; below, Asterion"* (ibid., p. 130).

(20) *"a night vision revealed to me that the seas and temples are also fourteen (infinite) in number"* (ibid.).

(21) *"Of course, I am not without distractions [...]. But of all the games, I prefer the one about the other Asterion. I pretend that he comes to visit me and that I show him my house"* (ibid.).

These oppositions highlight the internal turmoil within Asterion's consciousness, mirroring the unsolvable nature of his labyrinthine existence and reinforcing the theme of existential despair. So, the space of generic features selected from the source space of the 'Labyrinth' and the target space of 'Inner Self' includes: (a) complexity and intricacy; (b) the possibility of getting lost in the labyrinth and within "oneself"; (c) the loss of orientation. In the symbolic code of the text the "right" members of oppositions marking the labyrinthine-rhizomatic nature of the inner self, namely, anxiety, agitation, hopelessness, and loneliness, are linked to the state of spiritual hopelessness of Asterion and unfold

in the hermeneutic code of the text as the motif of liberation, the unwillingness to be oneself, or the "desire for a new Self" (ibid., 53), to break free from the labyrinth of consciousness filled with irresolvable contradictions, creating tension in the narrative code of the novel. In the hermeneutic code of the text, the motif of death as the only way of redemption is supported by allusions that the house of Asterion is a labyrinth, and Asterion, accordingly, is the Minotaur. In the labyrinth, the only reality is death of the sacrificial victims and of Asterion himself, and everything else is an illusion and self-deception.

Unlike the metaphor 'Labyrinth – the world/Universe', which becomes a symbolic metametaphor due to its referential function for symbols in postmodernist texts, the symbolism of the metaphor 'Labyrinth – Inner Self' is determined by the grounding of this textual symbol in the symbolic field of existential texts. In particular, the metaphor aligns with the Jungian interpretation of the labyrinth as a symbol of the unconscious (Von Franz 1964: 176), with Sartre's idea of the transitional space "from existence to essence" (Sartre 1973: 28), where "to know oneself, one loses and finds oneself anew" (ibid.: 58), akin to navigating a labyrinth. It also resonates with Kierkegaard's metaphor about the enigmatic (labyrinthine) nature of the Self (Kierkegaard 1843/1992: 479-480): "One should be an enigma not just to others but to oneself too. I study myself" (ibid.: 47). Thus, the metaphor is symbolic not only in its original space, rooted in myth, but also in the target space, reflecting the existentialist tradition of symbolically representing the Self as a labyrinth – drawing a parallel between the labyrinth as a structure characterized by the duality of confusion and intricate order, and the labyrinth as a subjective process – a movement that can signify liberation or complex progression towards enlightenment (Doob 1990). The transformative aspect of the labyrinth lies in the fact that people seek to understand themselves rather than reach a destination point (Attali 1998: 76) in the "fateful detours and wrong turnings" on the way to wholeness (Jung 1968: 6). This functional characteristic of metaphor—its transcending of text boundaries—is indicative of a metametaphor, which is borrowed by Borges from preceding traditions but with a reverse vector compared to the metaphor "Labyrinth – Universe." The latter extends beyond the confines of the text, becoming a global symbol in postmodern literature. On the other hand, 'Labyrinth – Inner Self' functions as a metametaphor because it, in turn, extends beyond the text, operating as an intertextual metaphor in postmodernism, and signifying "a reevaluation of the unconscious in its inner confusion, a constant process of becoming, a psychological experience of disorientation, a way to find a new self" (Cipolla 1987: 120). The third argument in favour of the metaphorical designation of consciousness as a labyrinth serving as a metametaphor is based on its integrative properties, as it incorporates another metametaphor 'Minotaur – Inner Self' relying on the metonymic connection between the images of the Labyrinth and the Minotaur, as well as metaphors derived from it.

#### 4.4 The metametaphor 'Minotaur – Inner Self'

The completion and development of the blend of the metametaphor 'Labyrinth – Inner Self' are achieved by its re-metaphorization with the reverse adjustment of the source space: 'Minotaur – Inner Self'. This type of semantic transformation bases on implicational relationships: (a) partitive-metonymic: the Minotaur is a part of the labyrinth but its essential meaning, metonymically replacing characteristics of the labyrinth such as danger, hopelessness, and death; (b) associative: all "right" components of oppositions in the symbolic code convey connotations of danger, suffering, death, associated with the semantic associative periphery of the metaphor 'Minotaur – Inner Self'. It demonstrates characteristics of a metametaphor, as Borges employs a metaphorical interpretation of the Minotaur archetype within existentialism. Nietzsche, using the metaphor of the "cave-Minotaur of conscience" (Nietzsche 2002: 30), considers the image of the Minotaur as an expression of a chaotic, uncontrollable element that one must confront. In this context, Herman Kern asserts that once at the centre of the labyrinth, "the subject is all alone, encountering him or herself, a divine principle, a Minotaur" (Kern 2000: 30). On the other hand, Borges's metaphorical interpretation of the Inner Self as the Minotaur becomes a prototype for metametaphors in subsequent postmodernist texts, reimagining the Minotaur as a symbol of a person's wanderings in the labyrinths of the subconscious and the struggle with their own fears and prejudices. Borges uses this metaphor as a recurrent one in his texts and subsequently it becomes an intertextual metaphor in postmodernism, including Dürrenmatt's "The Minotaur" and "The Magus" by Fowls. Finally, within Borges's text, the metaphor 'Minotaur – Inner Self' functions as a metametaphor because, due to the characteristics of its generic space, it serves as a hierarchical structure generating target conceptual spaces for other metaphors: 'The Minotaur – Person's Self-Deception', and 'The Minotaur – Person's Unconscious Despair'.

The attributes of the identified metametaphors in the text are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of metametaphors in "House of Asterion". Source: Own processing

<b>Symbolism of source spaces</b>	<b>Intertextuality of metaphors based on sources of borrowing - the referential field of existential metaphors</b>	<b>Intertextuality of metaphors based on their referential function in subsequent postmodernist texts</b>	<b>Structural-forming function in relation to images and meanings integrated into the text</b>
archetypal symbolism of the images of the labyrinth and the minotaur	enigmatic nature of Self (Labyrinthine Self); Consciousness – Cave of the Minotaur; Labyrinth – path to the integrity of Self; Labyrinth - symbol of Unconscious	symbol-metaphor of the world-labyrinth; symbol-metaphor of the Labyrinth- Universe; symbol-metaphor of the Labyrinth- Inner Self; symbol-metaphor of the Minotaur as one's own fears and prejudices	cross-referentiality of metametaphors in terms of source and target spaces; re-metaphorization based on metonymic connections of source spaces

#### 4.5 Derivative metaphors

The relationships between the metametaphor and derivative metaphors aligning with the source space "Minotaur," follow a monohierarchical structure, with a chain of metaphorical extensions stemming from the metametaphor. The components of the target space of the first metaphor are dispersed throughout the text, filling slots in the self-deception frame, such as:

(a) Causes of self-deception: lack of understanding of the reasons for one's imprisonment; traumatic experience of meeting people on the other side of the labyrinth, fear and anxiety about accepting:

(22) *"I did so because of the fear that the faces of the common people inspired in me, faces as discolored and flat as the palm of one's hand. [...] but the helpless crying of a child and the rude supplications of the faithful told me I had been recognized. The people prayed, fled, prostrated themselves; some climbed onto the stylobate of the temple of the Axes, others gathered stones"* ("The House of Asterion", p. 129).

(b) The purpose and strategies of self-deception as a form of self-defense against the truth. To give meaning to his captivity, he lives in the illusion that his royal lineage prevents him from *"mixing with commoners"*; to understand the ritual of sacrifice, he endows it with a special humanistic meaning (23), and the killings are justified by the practical goal of structuring the labyrinth (24):

(23) *"so that I may deliver them from all evil"* (ibid., p. 130).

(24) *"their bodies help distinguish one gallery from another"* (ibid.).

(c) Signs of self-deception: Creating a better version of oneself:

(25) *"Perhaps I have created the stars and the sun and this enormous house"* (ibid.).

(26) *"The fact is that I am unique"* (ibid., p. 129).

(d) Results of self-deception: Compulsive anticipation of a saviour who will transport them to a more comprehensible world.

The generic space of the metaphor 'The Minotaur – Human's Self-Deception' selects features from the target and source spaces, such as: the physical isolation of the Minotaur – the alienation of a person in a state of self-deception due to his own interpretation of reality; the denial of its own monstrosity – the denial of facts and contradictions during self-deception; the acceptance of sacrifices as the norm – the self-deceptive justification of one's actions as the norm; the physical nearsightedness of the Minotaur – the unwillingness to see the obvious for a person in self-deception. The concept of blindness is connoted in the text through multiple repetitions of the verb *hear* instead of the verb *see*.

The transition from one of the characteristics of the Minotaur, even if humanized by Borges, to the metaphor of the existential state of a person in the labyrinthine world is carried out at the level of completing and elaborating the blend through the inclusion of the existential concept of 'Unconscious

Despair', when the person is in "the despairing ignorance of having a self" (Kierkegaard 1980: 33-34). Self-deception is a consequence of 'Unconscious Despair'. Similar to the ancient myth, the Minotaur bears the burden of fate and lacks the ability to choose. In Borges' text, he does not want to choose, replacing choice with illusion, as choice entails a confrontation with one's essence. In an existential context, to rid oneself of illusion and transit from existence to essence a person must, as Sartre puts it, "first encounter oneself" (Sartre 1973: 17). Such an encounter evokes the despair, which is characterized by the state "not to will to be a self" (Kierkegaard 1843 / 1992: 52), which is why the Minotaur prefers to remain in 'Unconscious Despair'. In the blend of the metaphor 'The Minotaur is the Human's Unconscious Despair', common features of the input spaces include complexity, fear, and the unwillingness/impossibility to grasp reality. In the hermeneutic code of the text, with the elaboration of the blend from an existentialist perspective, the metaphor allows for, depending on the interpreter, its extension to the idea that the struggle with 'Unconscious Despair', necessary for the encounter with oneself, can be a complex and perilous task, much like defeating the Minotaur.

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis of the text has identified three metametaphorical models: 'Labyrinth – World / Rhizomatic Universe,' 'Labyrinth – Inner Self,' and 'Minotaur – Inner Self,' with metonymic connections of source spaces and cross-referentiality based on shared attributes of target spaces. Metametaphors define the complex conceptual and metaphorical architecture of the text. The metametaphor 'Labyrinth – World / Rhizomatic Universe' establishes a code for interpreting the metaphor 'Labyrinth – Inner Self', shifting the locus of a person's loss in the external world to the inner world. 'Labyrinth – Inner Self' provides the code for metametaphor 'Minotaur – Inner Self', denoting Inner Self fears and prejudices, which, in turn, forms chain-like relationships with the metaphors 'The Minotaur – the Human's Self-Deception' and 'The Minotaur – the Human's Unconscious Despair' that are mono-hierarchical, as they represent branches from one metametaphor linked to its source and generic spaces. Identified metaphors are justified as symbolic metametaphors based on such features as: their extension beyond the text in the postmodern literary tradition; their referential projection in Borges' text onto preceding existentialist metaphors; archetypal symbolism of source spaces; structuring function concerning the images and meanings integrated into the text. According to these characteristics, metametaphors correlate with global symbols. From the perspective of narrative-semiotic encoding, blends of metametaphors that form the metaphorical core of the text contributes to the motifs of its hermeneutic code. The metaphorical periphery of the text is connected to semantic oppositions of its symbolic code associated with the rhizomatic nature of both external world ('Labyrinth – Rhizomatic Universe') and internal existence/self-awareness ('Labyrinth – Inner Self'), as well as the consequences of such rhizomatic hopelessness (the metaphor 'Minotaur

– Inner Self). The semantic code is marked by connotations of contradiction, allusiveness, and hopelessness in the associative periphery of metaphors that creates tension in its actional code, foreshadowing redemption and liberation as a way out of the rhizomatic labyrinth of consciousness.


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