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Transpersonality and the Collapse of the Self in Jorge Luis Borges's *Funes the Memorious*: A Cognitive-Poetic Approach

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ABSTRACT

In Jorge Luis Borges's *Funes the Memorious* (1962), perfect memory becomes not a sign of cognitive mastery but the condition for the disintegration of thought and selfhood. This article employs a transpersonal and cognitive-poetic reading of the story to argue that Borges presents absolute recall as a limit-case that exposes the impossibility of identity without abstraction, forgetting, and narrative mediation. Incapable of categorization or conceptual generalization, Funes remains trapped within an endless accumulation of discrete perceptions that resists linguistic and narrative organization. Drawing on Paul Ricœur's theory of narrative identity and Maurice Halbwachs's concept of collective memory, the article contrasts Funes's mnemonic isolation with the narrator's retrospective emplotment, through which overwhelming perception is transformed into coherent meaning. From a cognitive-poetic perspective, the story demonstrates that comprehension depends not on exhaustive memory but on processes of selection, reduction, and shared interpretive schemata. Borges thus anticipates a transpersonal model of subjectivity in which identity is narratively constituted through collective memory rather than exhaustive individual recollection.

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1. Introduction

Jorge Luis Borges's short story *Funes the Memorious* has long occupied a central position in discussions of memory, abstraction, language, and epistemology. It is the story of Ireneo Funes, a young man who acquires perfect memory after a riding accident. He can recall every detail of every experience with absolute precision, yet he is unable to forget, generalize, or think abstractly. His world, therefore, consists of an overwhelming accumulation of particulars without synthesis. Contemporary cognitive neuroscience has increasingly confirmed the importance of such selective processes. As neuroscientist Scott Small (2022) observes, "memory needs to be balanced by normal forgetting in order for a person to cognitively generalize" (para. 15), suggesting that Borges anticipated a central insight of modern memory research: forgetting is a prerequisite for abstraction and meaning-making. Critics such as Novillo-Corvalán (2008), Dapía (1999), Todorov (2004), Reid (1986), and Shapiro (1985) – to mention a few – have approached the story through various perspectives of philosophical nominalism, phenomenology, structuralism, and theories of language and cognition, often emphasizing the disturbing implications of perfect recall. Yet while the story has frequently been interpreted as a meditation on memory and cognition, less attention has been devoted to the relationship between memory and the formation of subjectivity itself. As Novillo-Corvalán (2008) observes, "Funes's impossible memory is ... not an achievement but an incapacity" since "perfect memory destroys the very conditions of meaning" (p. 71). While this insight helps explain the collapse of abstraction in Borges's story, it also raises a further question: what becomes of the self when experience can no longer be organized into meaningful and shared structures of understanding? Most readings stop at the epistemological level; they do not sufficiently explore the implications of Borges's story for theories of identity and subjectivity.

This article addresses that gap by synthesizing cognitive poetics with Ricœur's (2004) theory of narrative identity and Halbwachs's (1992) theory of collective memory. While Ricœur (2004) explains how identity is narratively configured and Halbwachs (1992) demonstrates that remembering always occurs within collective frameworks, these perspectives together point toward a broader conception of subjectivity that exceeds the boundaries of isolated consciousness. Building on this convergence, the article proposes transpersonality as a conceptual framework for understanding identity as narratively and collectively constituted. The term is used here not in the sense of transpersonal psychology or mystical transcendence but to designate the intersubjective field in which identity is constituted through narrative, collective memory, and acts of interpretation. From this perspective, selfhood emerges not from private cognition alone but through the symbolic and social processes by which memories are narrated, shared, and continually reconfigured.

2. Critical Context

The paradox at the center of Borges's story illustrates why abstraction and interpretive mediation are indispensable not only for cognition but also for the formation of selfhood. The story dramatizes the paradox of perfect memory: a young man, Ireneo Funes, who acquires the ability to remember every detail of his experience, finds his mind overwhelmed rather than ennobled. As Borges's narrator observes, while Funes "remembered everything"—every cloud, leaf, and building—with such intensity that "I repeat, the least important of his recollections was more minutely precise and more lively than our perception of a physical pleasure or a physical torment" (Borges, 1962, p. 115), he is "almost incapable of ideas of a general, Platonic sort," unable to form the most basic abstractions (p. 114).

Funes's excessive mnemonic precision destroys the possibility of abstraction and conceptual continuity. Far from constituting intellectual perfection, total memory becomes the destruction of thought itself. Silvia G. Dapía (1999) argues that "the story casts doubts on the efficacy of infinite perception, for it does not prove to be very useful if it is not accompanied by the ability to think, that is to say, to deal with abstract concepts" (p. 154). Such readings reveal that Borges's story is fundamentally concerned with the impossibility of cognition without reduction and interpretive mediation. Recalling the past always occurs within symbolic systems shaped by language, institutions, and communal experience. As Huyssen (2003) notes, "memory is contextual, anchored in the present and oriented toward the future" and "memory is a construction of the past, not the past itself; as such, it is necessarily mediated and incomplete" (p. 3). Similarly, Novillo-Corvalán (2008) argues that "a subject who cannot detach from the immediate presence of the thing cannot enter the field of language properly" because language requires symbolic substitution and abstraction (p. 72). He further states that "meaning is not produced by the simple accumulation of perceptual data, but by the ability to abstract from the data and to place them into a system of relations that makes them intelligible" (p. 72). This argument intersects with Borges's critique of nominalism, which privileges particulars over universals and treats abstract categories as secondary constructions.

Critics have also situated *Funes the Memorious* within broader literary and philosophical traditions. Identifying parallels between Borges's story and Yeats's poem "The Tower," particularly in their shared concern with memory, Sheehan (2009) argues that the influences of Nietzsche and Yeats illuminate "a dialectic between the individual and history ... but also provide another way of understanding the historical stakes that underlie the impetus for Funes's character" (p. 23). Likewise, Novillo-Corvalán (2008) proposes that *Funes the Memorious* can be read as "a parody of the baroque modernist novel in its ultimate forms," linking Funes's absolute memory to works such as *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, and Proust's *Recherche* (p. 67).

Other scholars have emphasized the paradoxical nature of perfect memory. Alexander (2024) argues that although total recall initially appears desirable, its inclusion of "all the faux pas we have ever made, all the rejections we have experienced, and all the suffering of loved ones in their last moments" (p. 22) transforms the apparent gift into a burden. His discussion foregrounds forgetting as essential for human flourishing, social forgiveness, and moral complexity. Together, these readings suggest that memory becomes meaningful not through completeness but through limitation and selection.

Several critics focus on the linguistic and existential implications of Funes's condition. Franks (2014) argues that language becomes for Funes "a unique and private system of classification" (p. 1054), underscoring the tension between private perception and shared meaning. Reid (1986) characterizes Borges as a writer whose stories are "verbal constructs" that expose the gap between language and reality. His narratives function as linguistic thought experiments exploring infinity, time, duality, and the limits of representation and suggests that Borges's own insomnia is transposed into the figure of Funes (p. 146). Spector (2007) similarly describes Funes as one of Borges's most powerful conceptual inventions, while Todorov (2004) emphasizes that Funes's condition constitutes "a terrifying experience" (p. 32). Shapiro (1985) further argues that radical empiricism prevents the formation of stable concepts because "experience does not contain the moment of unity required to make reference to the same through time" (p. 261).

More recent approaches have begun to move beyond purely epistemological concerns toward questions of collective meaning and interpretation. Harris contrasts "the 'I' of *Funes the Memorious* with the 'We' of collective political identity and warns against the "paralyzing particularity" represented by Funes (as cited in Franks, 2014, p. 1058).

From a cognitive-poetic perspective, Stockwell (2002) argues that readers rely on conceptual frames and schemata to organize experience, while Small (2022) emphasizes that forgetting is necessary to filter sensory “noise” and identify meaningful patterns. These approaches suggest that comprehension depends not on exhaustive recall but on reduction, interpretation, and participation in shared symbolic frameworks. Indeed, without narrative mediation, a raw stream of impressions cannot constitute an intelligible self.

This research extends beyond cognition toward the problem of selfhood. In doing so, the study contributes to Borges scholarship by shifting the critical focus from the epistemological limits of perfect memory to the narrative and collective conditions through which subjectivity is constituted. Funes cannot become a coherent subject because subjectivity itself depends on abstraction, forgetting, and socially mediated narrative organization. Drawing on Paul Ricœur’s theory of narrative identity, Maurice Halbwachs’s concept of collective memory, and cognitive-poetic approaches to interpretation, it is argued that *Funes the Memorious* demonstrates how identity is shaped by stories, social contexts, and cultural memory rather than through isolated acts of remembering. Indeed, within a transpersonal framework, identity is not understood as an isolated interior possession of consciousness but as a relational and interpretive structure emerging through linguistic, social, and narrative mediation.

3. Theoretical Framework

Paul Ricœur (1992) argues that identity is not a fixed substance but a narrative construction emerging through temporal emplotment. The self exists only insofar as experience is configured into intelligible narrative continuity. Ricœur distinguishes between *idem*-identity (sameness) and *ipse*-identity (selfhood), arguing that the latter emerges through narratively organized continuity rather than through static essence. We understand ourselves by casting life-events into a coherent story. This requires selecting, ordering, and interpreting experiences. As Ricœur puts it, narrative allows us to “reconfigure” experience so that memory and action gain meaning.

Cognitive scientists similarly find that our memories gain significance only when integrated into schemas shared by culture (Bartlett, 1932; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978), for instance, posits that “the very essence of human memory consists in the fact that human beings actively remember with the help of signs” that is, with language and symbols learned socially. Memory is thus inherently social and symbolic, not a brute psychological storage (p. 51).

Sociologists of memory make this point explicit. Halbwachs (1992) insists that all memory is collective:

it is in society that people normally acquire their memories; it is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” In his famous example, “most of the time, when I remember, it is others who spur me on; their memory comes to the aid of mine and mine relies on theirs” (p. 39).

In other words, individual recollection occurs through social interaction and shared frameworks. Each member of a community remembers the past according to group norms and institutionalized symbols. Ricœur echoes this dialectic: while cautioning against the extreme that “we are not original owners of our memories,” he ultimately “accepts Halbwachs’s thesis that no one ever remembers alone, we always remember with others and with the help of others” (as cited in Clorinda, 2019, p. 99). Put simply, memory wells up from groups and is filtered through collective symbols.

The cognitive-poetic dimension of Borges's story reinforces this interpretation. Cognitive poetics emphasizes the role of schemas, conceptual blending, and interpretive reduction in literary comprehension. Modern cognitive studies of literature emphasize how readers make sense of texts through mental schemas and narrative structures (Dancygier, 2012). In cognitive poetics, reading involves active selection and interpretation rather than mere data accumulation.

Together, Ricœur's account of narrative identity, Halbwachs's theory of collective memory, and cognitive-poetic accounts of interpretation converge on a common insight: subjectivity is constituted not by the accumulation of experience but by interpretive processes that are narrative, selective, and socially situated. This article introduces the concept of transpersonality to describe this relational model of subjectivity. As used here, transpersonality refers to the intersubjective field in which identity is constituted through narrative interpretation, collective memory, language, and other shared symbolic structures. Rather than dissolving individuality, it reconceptualizes the self as relationally and narratively constituted through ongoing acts of remembering, storytelling, and interpretation. This conceptual framework provides the basis for the present reading of *Funes the Memorious*. Borges's story anticipates a transpersonal understanding of subjectivity by demonstrating that memory acquires meaning only through shared frameworks of narration and interpretation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Memory and the Collapse of Thought

Before examining questions of identity and subjectivity, it is necessary to understand how Funes's extraordinary memory disrupts the basic cognitive processes that make interpretation and meaning possible. In the story, Funes's astonishing memory initially appears empowering, but quickly becomes a prison for cognition. Funes remembers every detail of his life, a capacity that defines his "dizzying world" (Borges, 1962, p. 114). As Quiroga (2012) summarizes, Borges portrays Funes as having "the incredible skill — or perhaps curse — of remembering absolutely everything" (p. 3). However, Funes is incapable of any kind of abstraction. Borges (1962) explicitly points out that he was "almost incapable of ideas of a general, Platonic sort" (p. 114). Indeed, Funes cannot even recognize that a "dog" at one time is the same dog seen at another time; to him every moment is unique. Thus, Funes's cognitive world is shattered into an endless series of particulars. This fictional outcome resonates with modern neuroscience and psychology. Research reviewed by Small (2022) shows that forgetting and generalization are functions of normal brains, not bugs to be fixed. Small emphasizes that without forgetting, we would "not generalize from one sensory experience to the next" (para. 19). He reports that scientists have confirmed Borges's insight: "We depend on our normal forgetting to cognitively generalize" (para. 19). Funes's disorder (caused by his fall) essentially shuts off the brain's forgetting mechanism. His condition resembles an autistic fixation on parts: psychologists note that autistic individuals often recall details but struggle to perceive wholes or change (Small, 2022). In Borges's terms, Funes pays a "price" for his infallible memory: he is left paralyzed, quite literally, by the overwhelming flow of information (1962).

Funes's case illustrates that pure memory without conceptualization destroys thought. As Small (2022) remarks, Borges recognized that balance is needed: memory must be checked by forgetting so that cognitive flexibility is possible. In Borges's narrative, even when Funes closes his eyes, he cannot escape sensory stimulation; lying in darkness he still sees every architectural detail in the street. In effect, Funes cannot form any schema or symbol to group his data. Halbwachs' assertion that others' "memory comes to the aid of mine and mine relies on theirs" (1992, p. 38) remains true for others, but not for him; he stands alone among people who remember collectively. From this perspective, Funes represents the collapse of precisely this narrative process. His subjective world has collapsed under the weight of unanalyzed

impressions. Because he remembers every detail equally, he cannot hierarchize perception into meaningful structure.

Ricœur's distinction between *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (selfhood) illuminates the paradox of Funes's condition. At first glance, Funes appears to embody the strongest possible form of identity, since every past experience remains perfectly preserved in memory. Yet what his perfect recall secures is only *idem*: the uninterrupted sameness of remembered particulars. It cannot produce *ipse*, the narrative selfhood that emerges through interpretation, reconfiguration, and temporal mediation. Funes remembers but cannot narrate; he preserves experience but cannot transform it into a meaningful account of a life. Consequently, his extraordinary mnemonic continuity becomes the very condition of his failure as a narrative subject.

As Novillo-Corvalán (2008) observes, "without omission, there can be no pattern; without pattern, there can be no narrative order, and without narrative order, there can be no stable subject" (p. 73). Funes therefore exemplifies the impossibility of narrative identity in the absence of abstraction, selection, and temporal emplotment. A comparable conclusion emerges from literary analyses of Borges's narrative technique. Folger (2002) argues that Borges stages Funes as an "anti-realistic counterbalance" whose total recall exposes the limits of representation and the necessity of emplotment for meaning (p. 261). Where the narrator imposes plot and philosophical frame, Funes offers only indexical particulars, dramatizing the cognitive and epistemological costs of memory unmediated by narrative form.

4.2 Abstraction, Language, and Narrative

Funes's narrative collapse stems from his inability to mediate experience through narrative. The narrator makes clear that Funes lacks a personal narrative competence. The narrator, by contrast, recounts Funes's story as an imposition of plot and meaning. For example, the narrator remembers a Mr. Ipuche's comment that "Funes was a precursor of superman, 'an untamed and vernacular Zarathustra,'" (Borges 1962, pp. 107–108) thereby situating the raw events in a philosophical context. This act of retrospection is itself telling: unlike Funes, the narrator must select and interpret episodes. He uses narrative coherence as a tool. Stroud (2013) notes that the narrator "does not have a perfect memory," but can describe Funes's life because he engages in the creative act of storytelling (p. 2). This insight becomes central for understanding Borges's narrator, whose memory is productive precisely because it is partial and retrospective. Funes, however, lacks the distance necessary for interpretive reconstruction; his memory remains trapped within immediate perception. From a Ricœurian perspective, only through emplotment can disparate experiences be configured into a coherent sense of self. Ricœur (1992) further argues that narrative identity involves interpretation, not mere recollection. Memory must be shaped by "the hermeneutic circle" of understanding (pp. 21–22). Funes's memory, however, is non-hermeneutic. He does not interpret; he merely registers. Deprived of this capacity for narrative configuration, Funes cannot transform experience into a meaningful life story. Consequently, he never negotiates the Ricœurian movement from *idem* to *ipse*. His memories preserve sameness but never become selfhood because they cannot be narratively mediated.

It is only through the narrator's retrospective emplotment that Funes's isolated memories acquire coherence and become intelligible as a human life. The narrator performs precisely the transpersonal mediation that is absent from Funes's own consciousness. Read through Ricœur's hermeneutics, this narrative relationship structures a shared narrative space in which identities are configured and reconfigured through acts of reading, remembering, and retelling. Rather than merely presenting two perspectives on the same events, Borges stages the tension between immediate experience (Funes's) and retrospective interpretation (the narrator's). This contrast illustrates Ricœur's claim that narrative identity arises from the interplay between lived

experience and interpretive reconstruction (2004, pp. 158–159). By selecting, interpreting, and narrating Funes’s memories, the narrator relocates them from the domain of private recollection into a shared symbolic space where they become collectively meaningful. Narrative does not simply recount experience; it mediates between continuity and change, allowing the self to reinterpret its past while maintaining coherence over time. Because Funes cannot perform this interpretive work, his memories remain static records rather than elements of an unfolding narrative self.

Funes does not narrate his existence; he merely endures it. Borges hints that Funes speaks only in lists or simple sensory descriptors. Funes’s attempt at a personal archive is entirely indexical—reminiscent of Locke’s thought experiments about naming each thing with a unique term, which Borges alludes to.¹ Scholars of early modern language theory have shown that projects for a “real” or “philosophical” language explicitly aimed to fix signs to narrowly circumscribed kinds or particulars—an ambition most fully articulated in John Wilkins’s *Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1968)—and that this program was later problematized by Locke’s critique of the idea that language could mirror reality rather than ideas (Locke, 1975). Funes’s memory embodies this impossibility. No single abstract word suffices for him; every object must have its own label. More broadly, Borges stages a conflict between projects that seek a one-to-one naming of the world and the narrative practices that make human life intelligible. As Aarsleff (2006) observes, attempts to fix signs to particulars ultimately collide with the social and cognitive functions of ordinary language (pp. 451–452). In effect, Funes lives as if Borges’s remark were literal: “the dog at three-fifteen (seen from the front)” is a different thing from “the dog at three-fourteen (seen in profile)” (Borges, 1962, p. 114). Funes cannot generalize the concept of ‘dog’ at all.

Because Funes’s memory is so exacting, he cannot even speak in a general language. This echoes Ricœur’s point that language and narrative constitute identity. Language itself is a social product. As socio-cognitive theory suggests, words and grammar emerge from communal practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Funes’s world lacks this social-linguistic layer. Unlike the narrator, he does not tell of his experiences, so no narrative subject emerges. The narrator says that Funes learned foreign languages “without effort,” (Borges, 1962, p. 115) yet we never hear Funes use them to form ideas. He remains silent, locked in perception. Thus, the story exemplifies Ricœur’s claim that “reality is a fictive construction” without narrative (2004, p. 19). The narrator frames Funes’s story as a cautionary fable: Funes’s subjectivity disintegrates precisely because his memory is too complete. This is while the narrator is inescapably a literary agent whose very telling imposes form. Through this contrast, the narrative demonstrates that comprehension and selfhood arise not from perfect data but from the imposition of meaning.

Funes’s portrait has been read alongside clinical studies of exceptional autobiographical memory to show that excess memory can disable higher-order thought. Clinical commentators observe that Borges anticipates a central clinical insight: “To think is to ignore (or forget) differences, to generalize, to abstract,” and Funes’s incapacity to forget therefore becomes a cognitive impediment rather than a triumph (Ohri et al., 2021, para. 2). This clinical framing reframes Funes not as a superhuman archive but as a subject whose mnemonic plenitude precludes the operations—abstraction, categorization, hypothesis—that make language and selfhood possible (Ohri et al., 2021, para. 2). Borges further emphasizes the psychological cost of this uninterrupted perception through the narrator’s observation that “It was very difficult for him to sleep. To sleep is to be abstracted from the world” (Borges, 1962, pp. 114–115),

¹ “Locke, in the seventeenth century, postulated (and rejected) an impossible idiom in which each individual object, each stone, each bird, and branch had an individual name; Funes had once projected an analogous idiom, but he had renounced it as being too general, too ambiguous” (Borges, 1962, p. 113–114).

suggesting that even the most basic form of cognitive withdrawal or disengagement becomes impossible in a mind that cannot cease registering detail.

This collapse of cognitive distance directly anticipates Ricœur's account of narrative temporality, where "time enables the development of action in a story" (2004, pp. 128–129) because only temporal organization allows events to become intelligible as a life rather than a sequence of isolated impressions.

Seen this way, Funes's condition is a paradigmatic failure of narrative temporality: he stores moments but cannot reconfigure them into a diachronic self. Ricœur (1992) emphasizes that *ipse* identity requires temporal integration, that is, the ability to link past, present, and future into a coherent whole. Reflecting on the nature of thought, the narrator remarks that Funes was not "very capable of thought" because "to think is to forget a difference, to generalize, to abstract. In the overly replete world of Funes there were nothing but details, almost contiguous details" (Borges, 1962, p. 115). This observation suggests that identity itself depends upon selective forgetting, since narrative coherence requires the suppression of innumerable details in favor of meaningful patterns. Funes's fidelity to experience therefore prevents him from organizing it into a meaningful sequence or transforming perception into understanding. As Ricœur (1992) argues, narrative identity depends on the "synthesis of the heterogeneous" (p. 141), the ability to unify disparate moments into a coherent whole. Borges's tale therefore suggests that identity depends not on the accumulation of memories but on the selective processes of abstraction, interpretation, and narrative ordering that transform experience into a life story.

4.3 Collective Memory and Transpersonal Identity

Borges's narrative underscores the idea that identity is collectively mediated. This mirrors Halbwachs's idea that "forms of memory vary according to social organization" (1992, p. 39). Funes has no framework other than his own mind. This becomes evident when Funes, overwhelmed by stimuli, retreats to a dark, unchanging room. The story even suggests that Funes's memories will die with him. In effect, Borges dramatizes what Ricœur and Halbwachs converge on: that personal identity cannot be 'cognitively contained' in isolation (Ricœur, 1992; Halbwachs, 1992). Instead of "always remember[ing] with others" and with the help of others (Clorinda, 2019, p. 93), Funes remembers only through himself. Ricœur (1992) likewise argues that *ipse* identity is fundamentally relational, emerging through promises, testimony, and social recognition. This becomes particularly evident as the progression of the narrative juxtaposes Funes's condition with the narrator's retrospective reconstruction of experience. While Funes remains trapped within immediacy, the narrator actively converts memory into narrative through selection, omission, and temporal ordering. The narrator survives overwhelming perception because he transforms memory into communicable form. Funes, by contrast, remains imprisoned within pure accumulation of disjointed elements. Consequently, Funes cannot participate in collective memory or become a transpersonal subject because his memories remain radically private and resist the social processes through which recollection becomes meaningful. What remains radically isolated in Funes's consciousness becomes narratively connected through another's act of remembering and storytelling. In this sense, remembering and forgetting are no longer private acts but relational ones that bind narrator and reader into a common storyworld. This highlights Borges's subtle anticipation of a transpersonal subjectivity. Rather than an egotistical self, identity arises through narrative interpretation within shared symbolic relations. The narrator's act of storytelling implicitly recognizes that meaning belongs to the social realm. In the end, Funes's memories are summarized in a single ironic fact: before dying of "a pulmonary congestion," (Borges, 1962,

p. 115) he told the narrator that he thought himself older than all other men – “*I have more memories in myself alone than all men have had since the world was a world*” (Borges, 1962, p. 112, emphasis in the original). The tragic irony is that Funes's “self” is precisely that: a solitary repository of memories. He has no “narrative identity” in Ricœur's sense of a selfhood that emerges through time. Funes exists outside the shared abstractions through which social meaning becomes possible. He cannot participate fully in language because, as Novillo-Corvalán (2008) writes, “language requires selection, equivalence, and the substitution of one element for another” (p. 72). His memory therefore cannot be integrated into the shared symbolic frameworks that make language, social participation, and narrative identity possible.

As Halbwachs (1992) reminds us, memory is “constantly reshaping” itself through present needs (p. 182). Borges's fable performs a similar reshaping: the otherwise crushing particulars of Funes's recollections are rendered meaningful only when they become parable. The self that emerges in *Funes the Memorious* is one partly external to Funes – belonging to the narrator, the reader, and the culture that grips the story. This is the transpersonal self-construction: the self is not cognitively isolated but distributed across narrative, social, and symbolic networks.

The broader implication of Borges's fable is that memory survives only insofar as it becomes narratively shareable. Funes cannot narrate himself; lacking narrative mediation, he is trapped in unmediated first-person perspective – an identity of raw data rather than a story. Consequently, his identity endures only through the narrator's account and the reader's continued interpretation. In this respect, Borges anticipates Ricœur's claim that narrative provides a third-person perspective on one's own life, enabling a dynamic and relational selfhood (Ricœur, 2004). By the story's conclusion, Funes's memories have entered collective culture not as a private archive but as literature. What survives, therefore, is not Funes's isolated consciousness but the transpersonal identity constituted through social memory and narrative transmission. In Halbwachs's terms, only as Funes “participants in [social] frameworks” is memory of him preserved (1992, p. 53). And only through the very forgetting of Funes's details do we learn something profound about ourselves.

Ultimately, *Funes the Memorious* demonstrates that forgetting and narrative are not mere imperfections in human cognition but necessary features of a coherent self. Here, Borges's Funes appears as a counterexample that clarifies the nature of testimony: Funes remembers everything perfectly, but this very perfection makes thought impossible. The witness, by contrast, must forget in order to testify. Borges's story dramatizes the idea that absolute memory is the enemy of identity. In doing so, it reveals a transpersonal model of subjectivity: we are formed by the collective tapestries of memory and narrative that surround us, not by the archiving of our own experiences in isolation. Understanding depends on selection, reduction, and shared schemata. By exposing the dangers of a self ‘without forgetting,’ Borges anticipates the idea that the self is fundamentally a social and literary construct rather than a contained cognitive content. In short, *Funes the Memorious* shows that real mastery lies not in endless recall, but in the wisdom to forget and to weave memory into meaning.

5. Conclusion

Borges's critique of perfect memory is not only epistemological but ontological. Read in light of Ricœur, Halbwachs, and cognitive poetics, *Funes the Memorious* demonstrates that narrative identity depends not on exhaustive retention but upon abstraction, forgetting, and collective mediation. By conceptualizing this convergence as transpersonality, this article has offered a new framework for understanding how the story relocates selfhood from isolated cognition to shared symbolic life. Funes's isolated experience, preserved only at the level of *idem*, acquires coherence once the narrator's retrospective emplotment bestows form (*ide*—the narrative self-constituted through interpretation and temporal reconfiguration) upon it.

Because Funes cannot narratively organize his own experience, the narrator assumes the task of giving it form and transforms Funes's radically private recollections into collectively intelligible memory. By so doing, the story thus challenges the ideal of the autonomous individual mind and points instead toward a transpersonal model of subjectivity in which identity is constituted through narrative interpretation within the shared symbolic frameworks of language, memory, and culture rather than contained within isolated cognition. Ultimately, the self survives not through perfect remembrance but through the shared processes of narration, interpretation, and collective remembrance that transform memory into meaning.

Conflict of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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