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Madilyn Abbe

Brigham Young University, madilyn.abbe@gmail.com

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“Hopelessly Crippled”

The Construction of Disability in Borges’s “Funes, His Memory”

Madilyn Abbe

Ireneo Funes, in Jorge Luis Borges’s “Funes, His Memory,” presents a complex combination of both physical and cognitive atypicality. As Lennard Davis acknowledges in his landmark disability studies argument, oftentimes “disability presents itself to ‘normal’ people through two main modalities—function and appearance” (11). The narrator of this story attaches both these markers of disability to Funes, casting Funes as “hopelessly crippled” and “not very good at thinking” (Borges 132, 137). Despite paying close attention to Funes’s deficiencies, the narrator unashamedly acknowledges his own weaknesses, continuously debasing himself for his poor ability to recall information. Although both the narrator and Funes display deficits, Funes is the one ultimately categorized as disabled by the narrator. Recognizing disability as a socio-political construct necessitates a reconsideration of the formation of disability in “Funes, His Memory,” specifically an evaluation of whether Funes should be regarded as disabled and if the narrator should be typified as the norm.

Considering Borges’s blindness, several scholars have approached his literature through an autobiographical or historical study of disability. Jason Wilson connects Borges’s lack of visual description and emphasis on memory in his writing to his declining vision (21). Kevin Goldstein and Christopher Krentz examine blindness in Borges’s literature. Goldstein recognizes how

blindness functions as “a precondition for gnosis” that juxtaposes the “banality of the blind body” (48). Krentz argues that “Funes could be read as Borges imagining his own future of blindness” (43–44). For Krentz, due to Funes’s abilities and deficits, Funes both contests ableism and reinforces it. Patricia Novillo-Corvalán avoids an autobiographical comparison of Borges to Funes, instead comparing Funes to historical figures and identifying “hypermnesia” and “savant syndrome” as possible diagnoses (6). With the majority of Borges disability scholarship focusing on autobiographical and historical reads, a gap in the critical conversation demands engagement with the construction of disability solely within the text. My focus on the interaction between the narrator and Funes attempts to address this existing gap.

Polarized opinions about “Funes, His Memory” alternate between casting Funes as decrepit or as the ideal human. Henry Shapiro outrightly contests John Sturrock, who argues Funes “cannot think” and that Funes’s name indicates his sad and unfortunate status (248). Reacting against this “fatal ineptitude” model, Shapiro asserts Funes is not a wretch but “the figure of a Berkeleyan deity” (260). Folger acknowledges Funes’s oscillation between human impotence and divine potential, yet interestingly Folger employs the term “stupid” to describe Funes (130). While Folger clarifies he means “stupid” in the etymological sense, employing such language carries associations directly related to disability studies. Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus typify “Funes, His Memory” as a posthuman text, capitalizing on the trope of the cyborg (21). While Ariel Arjona similarly compares Funes to a machine, Arjona argues that even it’s not so easy to establish that a machine is incapable of thought. As Arjona contests, the text provides ample evidence supporting Funes’s thinking abilities despite the narrator’s claim. Overall, the inverted opinions of ableism and disablism within the existing “Funes” scholarship offer a clear tie-in to disability studies considering the disagreements about the level of humanness and thinking capability reflect common conversations around disabled persons.

Because of these discussions, “Funes, His Memory” can be read as a documentation of the process of creating and imposing disability onto Funes. Throughout the text, the narrator emphasizes Funes’s atypicality and presents himself as the norm to mask the possibility that the narrator himself is characterized as disabled. With the juxtaposition between the narrator’s corporeal ability compared to Funes’s damaged body, the narrator

establishes a binary between normality and atypicality based on superior ability; however this binary falls apart when applied to cognitive ability. Funes's body effectively becomes a symbolic representation of what the narrator perceives as Funes's mental failing. Like many texts involving disability, the narrator conveys the grotesque; yet the grotesque in "Funes, His Memory" departs from the usual physical depiction to instead present a cognitive form of the grotesque. Although perfect cognition would seem to merit the binary of "normal," the narrator inverts concepts of ableism to label Funes's perfect cognition as neurodivergent. The narrator does so by faulting Funes for a lack of social engagement, orienting Funes, and imbuing Funes with cyborglike qualities. Ultimately, the interplay between Funes and the narrator reveals disability to be a brittle categorization.

In "Funes, His Memory," the narrator reinforces the norm as an ordinary, non-heroic protagonist, much like in other 19th-century ableist-centered novels. The narrator embodies "the inquisitive gaze", a metaphorical and physical trope, directed toward the disabled (Davis xvi). Although the narrator "saw [Funes] no more than three times," the entire narrative centers around the three times the narrator visually observes Funes (Borges 131). Opening the story, the narrator states "I recall" four times in connection to a visual representation of Funes (131). While the narrator's initial depictions of Funes don't cue physical impairment, the description manufactures a standard of normalcy. The sensory emphasis of the narrator perceiving Funes sets the narrator up as "an undamaged observer who is part of an undamaged society" (Davis 14). The narrator also seems aligned with industrialization, the particular historical moment scholars recognize as the conception of bodily normalcy and disability. The narrator conjectures that, to Funes, he must represent the labels "*highbrow, dandy, city slicker*" (Borges 131). According to Davis, industrialized production created structures of normalcy, rendering "disability" to individuals who lacked the bodily capabilities necessary for high economic production (Davis 5). As an embodiment of the city and industrialization, the narrator assumes the role of the constructor of normalcy and disability.

The narrator, an arguable representation of 19th-century ideals of normalcy, begins to manufacture physical disability by frequently drawing comparisons between his abled body and Funes's incapacitated body. The first time seeing able-bodied Funes, the narrator and his cousin "were riding along on our horses, singing merrily" (Borges 132). On horseback, the

narrator simultaneously foreshadows and juxtaposes the reason for Funes's paralysis: "he'd been bucked off a half-broken horse on the ranch in San Francisco and had been left hopelessly crippled" (132). The parallel creates a binary of abled versus disabled, reinforcing the narrator's ableness and aligning Funes with the deficit by comparison. The characters' occupation also accentuates the ability difference. Considering Funes's occupation as a ranch hand, it is ironic that Funes suffers from a fall and not the narrator. The narrator is from Buenos Aires and therefore more likely to be unfamiliar with horses. By emphasizing the narrator's capability and Funes's failure in a realm where Funes should be an expert, the narrator sets himself up as abled and Funes as disabled. Moreover, the narrator assigns emotive signposts to bodily capabilities. A cheerful attitude coincides with the able-bodied, and hopelessness corresponds with physical disability. Thus, the narrator creates a binary based on physical accomplishment.

Expanding on this binary, the narrator's presentation of Funes's paralyzed body becomes a symbol to negatively cast Funes's neurodivergence. The narrator remarks, "Twice I saw him, on his cot behind the iron-barred window that crudely underscored his prisonerlike state" (133). This visual depiction outrightly constructs disability by configuring Funes's condition as unwanted architectural confinement. The emphasis on sight and the beholding of the crippled body characterize Funes as what Mitchell and Snyder call the "visible cripple" (97). In literature and film, the visible cripple functions as a literary device to reveal an underlying villainy or a hidden character trait. Similarly, the narrator utilizes Funes's crippled body as a symbolic representation of his cognitive disability. By portraying Funes's crippled body as a prison, the narrator introduces Funes's mind as a prisoner. The idea of a prisoner suggests two different kinds of individuals: someone who is innocent and has become imprisoned due to misfortune or someone who is guilty of wrongdoing because they have refused to comply with the norm. Both connotations of mishap and divergence from the norm reinforce constructions of disability. Furthermore, the placement of the description of the visible cripple is crucial; the description comes before the narrator reveals Funes's heightened cognitive abilities. Such intentional placement establishes early on that it is Funes who is abnormal, ensuring that the audience doesn't embrace Funes as the norm and instead trusts the narrator.

The narrator's characterization of Funes's neurodivergence as a form of imprisonment culminates in the short story's final scene, which reinforces

normative and disabled constructions. The last line reads, "Ireneo Funes died in 1889 of pulmonary congestion" (137). By concluding the novella with this image, the narrator impresses the idea of physical failure onto Funes. Starkly emphasizing Funes's mortality construes weakness; his frail and sickly body causes death. The early death cements the binary constructed by the narrator. Funes's weakened condition eliminates his person while the narrator's healthy body facilitates his survival. The narrator endures as the norm, a lasting witness of Funes's debilitation. Ultimately, the narrator prevails, ensuring the persistence of the constructed binary.

While the ableist binary seems a given, the text itself suggests disability inversion. The text repeatedly acknowledges Funes's contentment with his new state, yet the narrator undercuts Funes, claiming his positivity to be a face-saving method: "He was such a proud young man that he pretended that his disastrous fall had actually been fortunate" (133). Not only does the word "disastrous" paint Funes's condition as a tragedy, but by employing "pretended" the narrator undermines the credibility of Funes. This attack on ethos attempts to ensure that the audience believes the narrator's established binary. Interestingly, although the narrator regards Funes as disabled, Funes regards the narrator (and every man) as disabled: "[Funes] told me that before that rainy afternoon when the blue roan had bucked him off, he had been what every man was—blind, deaf, befuddled, and virtually devoid of memory" (134). Here, Funes breaks down the established binary by inverting the norm as disabled. In this recasting of abled and disabled roles, not only does Funes assert cognitive deficiency (befuddled and devoid of memory), but he asserts physical deficiency (blind and deaf) in the so-called normal narrator.

The interplay between the narrator's and Funes's cognitive abilities unveils the aesthetic nervousness in the text. According to Ato Quayson, in literature, "even if programmatic roles were originally assigned, these roles can shift quite suddenly, thus leading to the 'stumbling'" that Mitchell and Snyder mention (25). Quayson "elaborate[s] the textual 'stumbling' in terms of aesthetic nervousness" (25). A clear instance of aesthetic nervousness, the abled and disabled roles that the narrator assigns to himself and to Funes based on physical capability early in the text break down when it comes to cognitive ability. The narrator's recollection is strewn with uncertainty. He often hedges descriptions of past experience: "I recall (I think)" (131). At times, the narrator's poor recall in comparison to Funes's perfect memory

appears ironically humorous: “My first recollection of Funes is quite clear. I see him one afternoon in March of February of ‘84” (131). The narrator also outrightly admits his fallible memory, calling himself “so absentminded” (132). Comparatively, Funes’s cognitive abilities far outmatch the narrator’s: “his perception and memory were perfect” (135). While the narrator “will not attempt to reproduce the words” of a conversation due to his inability, Funes “two or three times . . . had reconstructed an entire day; he had never erred or faltered” (135). Compared to the narrator’s “modest abilities” in Latin, Funes learns to speak perfect Latin in only a short time (133).

If disability is constructed based on inferior ability, as it was for the construction of physical disability, it should be the narrator who is cast as disabled cognitively. To maintain control of the narrative and his reputation of normalcy, the narrator needs to discount Funes. Thus, the narrator employs several techniques to subvert typical roles of cognitive ability, trying to portray himself (an underperforming individual) as perfection. Not only does the narrator dehumanize Funes by emphasizing social failing and the grotesque, but he also employs common negative representations of disability by orienting Funes and attributing him cyborglike qualities. Through these tactics, the narrator tints the narrative with what Jenny Bergenmar et al. call “affective deficit perspective,” which frames neurodivergence as a lack or impairment (204).

Social Failings

As one subtle way to discount Funes, the narrator spends significant time charting the negative social effects of Funes’s neurodivergence to depict him as a self-made outcast. According to Anna Stenning, neurodiversity is usually characterized by perceived “empathy deficits” that undergird assertions of abnormality (108). In a like manner, the narrator seems concerned by Funes’s lack of engagement with other people. The trope of seclusion is a common one within disability literature; plots usually “emphasize individual isolation as the overriding component of a disabled life” (Mitchell and Snyder 19). The narrator spins a similar narrative of Funes’s seclusion, demonstrating how Funes isolates himself in a dark room and prefers to think rather than interact with the rest of the community. The narrator also spotlights Funes’s interpersonal shortcomings. Twice, the narrator calls Funes’s voice

“mocking,” suggesting an empathy shortage and a refusal on Funes’s part to cooperatively engage (132, 134). When discussing number systems, the narrator notes, “Funes either could not or would not understand me” (136). Whether intentional miscommunication or miscommunication due to deficit, Funes doesn’t reciprocate expected social protocol. According to Arjona, “the narrator’s particular argument on Funes’s inability to think completely judges him by his lack of engagement with the public domain of discourse” (185). Unsatisfactory interpersonal interactions become an underlying motivation and method through which the narrator paints Funes as peculiar.

The Grotesque

Moreover, the narrator capitalizes on the grotesque to depict Funes as a cognitive monstrosity. The grotesque is an aesthetic category that consists of merging both human and beast-like forms to create the supernatural. The gargoyle is a classic Gothic manifestation of the grotesque. The grotesque mixes varied forms of the bizarre—capitalizing on the fantastic, the hideous, and the incongruous—to evoke either pity, horror, or humorous absurdity. Yet, whether for purpose of comical irony or horror, as Edwards and Graelund point out, “a vital component of the grotesque representations are the distinctions between the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal’; or, to put this another way, the grotesque illustrates how the normal is defined in relation to the abnormal” (8). Thus, the grotesque functions on binary logic: “grotesquerie revolves around the categories of inclusion (the norm) and exclusion (the abnormal) in order to preserve marked distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (10). The grotesque in “Funes, His Memory” similarly functions to supplementarily reinforce the disability binary created by the narrator.

Much like other presentations of the grotesque, “Funes, His Memory” possesses a build-up before the visual horror of a disabled person. Throughout the story, the narrator is fascinated with Funes yet simultaneously repulsed due to the intimidation he feels. A desire to behold and understand Funes drives the narrative. Because Funes stays in a dark room, the narrator doesn’t see Funes until the end. Yet, once the narrator can see him in his entirety, the narrator omits a detailed description of Funes’s crippled body—which would customarily be the object of description in a presentation of the grotesque. Instead, what strikes “fear” in the narrator is Funes’s unmarred

face, a representation of “his implacable memory” (137). With memory identified as the object of grotesque horror, previous descriptions of Funes’s cognitive abilities more readily indicate elements of the grotesque.

“Funes” riffs of the corporeal grotesque to illustrate cognitive monstrosity. While the grotesque can “never be locked into any one meaning or form,” critics have recognized trends of grotesque representations (Edwards and Graulund 15). One common trope includes grotesque corporality. Grotesque corporeality often takes three different forms, as described by Edwards and Graulund:

Grotesque bodies are, at times, incomplete, lacking in vital parts, as they sometimes have pieces cut out of them: limbs are missing . . . and bodily mutations become dominant traits. In some cases, grotesque figures combine human, non-human, animal, and, in the case of Sir Hugh, ‘vegetable’ attributes. In other cases, the corporal deformity consists of extra body parts: eleven toes, a human tail, a third nipple or the two heads of Siamese twins. These are excessively grotesque. (2)

The narrator employs two of these three forms—multiplicity and abnormal figure—in his description of Funes’s mind. While psychosis and madness are known to take part in the grotesque, the narrator depicts Funes’s mind using iterations of the corporeal grotesque, thus emphasizing monstrosity rather than mental instability.

Instead of numerous of physical limbs, the narrator creates horror by accentuating a multiplicity of perceptions. The narrator relates: “Funes remembered not only every leaf of every tree in every patch of forest, but every time he had perceived or imagined that leaf” (136). The excessive repetition of the word “every” emphasizes exponential increase. The multiplicity underscores the horror of unnatural cognitive profusion and works to offset Funes’s undeniable brilliance. The compounded retention of Funes symbolizes and replicates monstrosity. The grotesque of excessive perception reinforces the narrator’s binary by indicating an unnervingly atypical capability that both compels the narrator and alienates him from Funes.

The narrator also presents cognitive monstrosity through the grotesque figure. In grotesque literature, atypical shapes converge with monstrosity. For example, a wolf-man or hunchback highlights the horror of the “bent over, contract, distorted” shape (Arnds 23). The narrator demonstrates the horror

of shape cognitively, describing, “A circle drawn on a blackboard, a right triable, a rhombus—all these are forms we can fully intuit; Ireneo could do the same with the stormy mane of a young colt, a small herd of cattle on the mountainside, a flickering fire, and its uncountable ashes, and the many faces of a dead man at a wake” (Borges 135). Instead of the brain grasping simple, predictable figures, Funes’s brain attends to misshapen things, embracing the bulbous and protuberant. Funes’s mind becomes associated with pulsing, shifting deformity. Furthermore, beyond representing weird and distorted forms, the intuited figures are largely incongruous compared to each other. A sense of the bizarre surfaces with the mentions of livestock juxtaposed with the unexpected morbidity of a dead man’s face. The continuously morphing state of incongruous shapes heightens the feeling of grotesquerie, especially considering how “the grotesque body involves a perpetual, never-ending metamorphosis of one form or substance into another” (Chao 45). By presenting the cognitive grotesque in a way that emphasizes monstrosity, the narrator locks himself and Funes into a binary, a distinct “us” versus “them.” While this interaction may attract and repel the narrator, Funes is ultimately cast as the bizarre other that contrasts normality.

Orientalism

Similar to the grotesque, the narrator employs Orientalist tropes to estrange Funes as an exotic, incomprehensible figure, like how freak shows exploited Orientalist themes to generate spectacle from physical anomaly. As Robert Bogdan explains, “Although freak shows are now on the contemptible fringe, from approximately 1840 through 1940 the formally organized exhibition for amusement and profit of people with physical, mental, or behavioral anomalies, both alleged and real, was an accepted part of American life” (2). Public spectacle presented physical human oddities as entertainment. The so-called “freaks” were characterized as grotesque, monstrous bodies. Masses flocked to see circuses such as Barnum and Bailey for the chance to glimpse a bearded lady, conjoined twins, or a legless man. Victorian freak shows capitalized on a conglomeration of two categories: “the non-Western world” and “freaks of nature” (Bogdan 6). To generate mass public attention, freak shows relied on Orientalism to create marvels and oddities. One hand-drawn poster, advertising Barnum and Bailey’s “Living Curiosities”

(Durbach 10), exemplifies the meshing of Orientalism and disability in circuses. In a greenhouse, an assemblage of varied people stands in a semi-circle. In addition to the tropical plants that give homage to exotic, far-away places, the visual surprisingly emphasizes an Orientalized spectacle as much as physical atypicality. Amid other ethnically associated presentations like “Zulus” and “Aztecs,” the “Legless Man” sits in the center of the poster, dressed solely in a loincloth and necklace. His clearly non-Western dress combined with a mustache, bald head, and pole distinctly depict him as foreign and intentionally Indian. These posters indicate what postcolonial and disability scholars like Esme Cleall have realized: “disability was, in effect, Orientalised” (22).

“Funes, His Memory” demonstrates similar strains of Orientalism surrounding disability. The short story begins and ends with Oriental descriptions of Funes. Within the first paragraph, the narrator mentions the “extraordinary *remoteness*” of Funes’s face to emphasize Funes’s countenance as having origins in a distant location. The narrator also describes Funes as “a maverick and vernacular Zarathustra” (Borges 131). Although the text itself suggests an engagement with Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, evaluating Zarathustra the historical figure yields substantive connections to Orientalism. Zarathustra, also known as Zoroaster, was an Iranian prophet recognized as the founder of Zoroastrianism, one of the world’s oldest religions. Introducing Funes as Zarathustra casts him as an ancient Oriental sage, emphasizing the mystical religious exoticism typical of Orientalism. The role of the wise guru ultimately others Funes, typifying him as incomprehensible and marked as distinctly part of a separate cultural heritage.

When the narrator finally sees Funes at the end of the story, he similarly describes Funes’s appearance in Oriental terms. The narrator declares, “he looked to me as monumental as bronze—older than Egypt, older than the prophecies and pyramids” (Borges 137). In one sentence, the narrator references three Oriental aspects: Egypt as the location of the Orient, prophecies as a reiteration of the religious mystique, and pyramids as the common trope of legendary relics. In reference to this sentence, Jon Stewart recognizes Funes’s role as a blind “ancient oracle” (85). Yet, Stewart too readily compares Funes to Sybil, neglecting to heed the setting in which the narrator places Funes. The mystical Orientalizing of Funes isolates him from humanity. Although one could perhaps argue that assigning Funes prophetic

abilities places him relative to deity, the Orientalizing nature of the narrator's comments undermines possible praise. Orientalism imposes a dichotomy of superiority and inferiority onto the West and East respectively, essentially highlighting the perceived inferiority of the East as natural. As Edward Said articulates, Orientalism "characterize[s] the Orient as alien" and "is a form of paranoia" (71–72). Orientalism in the context of disability studies functions similarly. The narrator's Orientalizing of Funes marks Funes as inferior and estranged, simultaneously revealing the narrator's underlying fear of Funes.

The Cyborg

The short story's Orientalizing is not the only literary trope at play; the concept of the cyborg, a common image in disability literature, is also relevant to understanding the depiction of disability in "Funes, His Memory." Disability studies have recently recognized the cyborg as a symbolic representation of disability. According to the *OED*, cyborg means "A person whose physical tolerances or capabilities are extended beyond normal human limitations by a machine or other external agency that modifies the body's functioning" ("Cyborg, *N.*"). Thus, in addition to machine association, a crucial aspect of cyborg-ness includes physical or cognitive ability differences compared to normal humans; it's a concept inherently focused on ableism and disablism. The trope of the cyborg enforces what Allison Kafer calls "ideologies of wholeness" (106); although the cyborg functions as a markedly different character, their presence often functions to reinforce normative physical and intellectual abilities. As Kafer puts it, "Cyborg qualities become markers of difference, suggesting an essential difference between disabled people and nondisabled people" (110). Additionally, literature often positions the cyborg on a spectrum of debated humanness, ranging from a mechanism devoid of will to an individual asserting their humanity, quite similar to literary evaluations of disabled persons. While the hybridization of mechanical and fleshly body parts offers clear ties to the concept of physical disability, Isla Ng takes the cyborg trope a step further, arguing the cyborg also manifests "the abstract fetishization of some forms of mental disorders" (161). As she explains, through the cyborg figure "mental disability has been appropriated as an analogy . . . that reinforces normative ideas about the separations between mind, self, and technology (161).

To negatively classify Funes as neurodivergent, the narrator employs similar tactics, assigning cyborglike qualities to Funes's mind. Scholars like Scott Church affirm Funes's machinelike association by identifying him with modern contraptions like "the digital archive," "a human algorithm," and "Google" (9–10). Although Funes receives no prosthetics or bionic limbs to counteract his crippled state, his body still exhibits the embodied nature of the cyborg considering that Funes physically senses the world differently: "Each visual image was linked to muscular sensations, thermal sensations, and so on" (135). Moreover, his heightened level of intelligence imbues him with cyborg quality, what Herbrechter and Callus call a "cyborg memory" (22). Much like an algorithm, Funes spends time running mental exercises similar to calculations. Funes seemingly programs himself, inventing a numbering system that exchanges words for numbers. For example, "Instead of seven thousand thirteen (7013), he would say, for instance, 'Máximo Pérez'; instead of seven thousand fourteen (7014), 'the railroad'" (136). Here, the narrator describes Funes's cognition like a machine, portraying the numbering system much like an algorithmic input and output. While discussing Funes's new numbering system, the narrator exposes his personal opinion by describing the numbering system as a "mad principle" (Borges 136). The adjective "mad" conveys the idea of neurodivergence—mental disorder and insanity. With this language, the text functions alongside Ng's observation about the cyborg and disability studies; the figure of the cyborg cues Funes's abnormality of the mind just as much as the abnormality of the body.

Further utilizing the cyborg to convey disability, the fear of artificial intelligence encourages the portrayal of Funes as inhuman. While the narrator acknowledges Funes's raw intelligence, he depicts Funes's cognitive ability as artificial because he regards neurodiversity as a threat. Much like the artificial intelligence of computers, the narrator has witnessed how Funes's intelligence surpasses his own ability and fears being rendered useless due to this competition. To combat this feared possibility, the narrator must undermine Funes's super-cognition. Much like saying a computer can't think diminishes the estimation of a computer's abilities in comparison to the human mind, the narrator suggests Funes can't think to minimize Funes's abilities, subverting him as faulty. The narrator crafts his definition of cognitive normalcy, stating, "To think is to ignore (or forget) differences" (137). With the definition hinging on the word "forget," the narrator constructs the foundation of cognitive normalcy on inherent and

natural weakness. When subject to the narrator's definition of thinking, a perfect mind like Funes's must be rendered malfunctioning. By portraying a mind different from his own as defunct, the narrator preserves his mind as the basis of normalcy.

Ultimately, the binary in "Funes, His Memory" that casts the narrator as the norm and Funes as disabled falls apart upon examination. The construction of physical disability seems based upon the concept of inferior ability, yet the requisite of inferior ability does not apply to cognitive disability. On the contrary, exceptionality renders Funes atypical. With the faulty binary of disability exposed, "Funes, His Memory" becomes not just a story of a cripple or a genius, but a case study in the construction of disability.

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