CHAPTER 1

THEORIZING THE CORPOREALITY OF WRITING

We may wonder why it is important to consider blindness in conjunction with literature. This thesis tries to provide an answer to the foregoing question. It is possible that the reader will ask what, if any, impact an author’s blindness may have on his/her writings. The implication of such a question is that blindness is a medical condition which is trivial to literature. I will show in the following pages that the experiential dilemma of blindness and selfhood exercises a profound influence on the writings of three blind and visually impaired authors: the Argentine poet, essayist, and short story writer Jorge Luis Borges; John M. Hull, who was Emeritus Professor of Religious Education at the University of Birmingham in England; and the American poet and memoirist Stephen Kuusisto. Further, examining the ways in which blindness comes into their writings will reveal their subjectivities as blind persons. It will become evident through their literary works – or worlds – that “the body is [not] a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear” (Woolf 4), but on the contrary, that blindness structures the subject’s every perception and creates a different, sightless

1. My Ph.D. thesis is the culmination of nine years of thinking on blindness in literature and philosophy. While this represents a modest understanding of the subject, it is crucial in my exploration of the self 'in blindness.'

2. When a person describes himself/herself as being blind, it does not mean that he/she can see nothing. In his first memoir Planet of the blind, Kuusisto clarifies at the outset that “BLINDNESS IS OFTEN perceived by the sighted as an either/or condition: one sees or does not see. But often a blind person experiences a series of veils; I stare at the world through smeared and broken windowpanes” (5). Further, as Michael L. Melancon points out, we read in Eavesdropping “that contrary to popular belief, the majority of blind people possess some level of visual acuity” (192). Kuusisto remarks, “That the blind see anything at all is, however, often surprising to many people” (Eavesdropping xii). We need to remember this fact while analysing works both by Kuusisto and by Borges. The latter remarks on his own blindness in his lecture entitled “Blindness” that “it is total blindness in one eye, but only partial in the other. I can still make out certain colours; I can still see blue and green. And yellow, in particular, has remained faithful to me” (Selected Non-Fictions 474).
world. The following study will attempt to flesh out this aesthetic dynamic in seven chapters.

1.1. The Research Problem

I shall articulate the research problem in the form of two questions: how does the visually-impaired writer’s particular bodily condition bear on narrative choices? Is it possible to extrapolate from this on authorial subjectivity? The texts under study include the following: selected short fiction and non-fiction by Borges; two diaries, *Touching the Rock: An Experience of Blindness* (1990) and *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness* (1997); and *In the Beginning There was Darkness: A Blind Person’s Conversations with the Bible* (2001), an exegetical work on the Bible by Hull; and *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir* (1998) and *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear* (2006) by Kuusisto. The titles of the works suggest that blindness does give birth to a world different from that of the sighted.

In his earliest poetry written in the 1920s, Borges “experimented with a jagged avant-garde style he would soon leave behind” (Kristal x), and dwelt on symbols that he would return to in various genres throughout his writing career, namely “the night, the dark, and the crepuscular world of visions and dreams, themes that speak to the blindness that would overtake him slowly, over a long period of time” (Kristal ix). His

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3. This view runs contrary to the popular (mis)conception that when a person becomes blind, it is the end of the road for him/her. Becoming blind is often considered as being equivalent to dying. Losing one’s sight can definitely be a traumatic experience (as Hull’s diaries adequately show), and it is certainly the end of the visual world; but the experience of blindness does create “a new world” where the person lives with “a new consciousness” (*On Sight* xiii) with a unique artistic and philosophical potential (*Planet* 59).

4. Efran Kristal points out that Borges’s poetry of the 1920s “combined the geography (and even the history) of the Río de la Plata region of his birth with a metaphysical aura that would surround most of his subsequent literary works, and . . . rehearsed many of his characteristic motifs the mirror, labyrinth, cyclical time, and infinity” (x). Thus, we do find thematic continuity in Borges’s œuvre.
‘fictions’ and non-fictions are notable for their erudition (Selected Non-Fictions xii, xv). Eliot Weinberger’s observation on Borges’s fictional and non-fictional writings in his introductory note to Selected Non-Fictions (1999) reveals something of their character: “‘Fiction’ and ‘non-fiction’ are notoriously blurred boundaries in Borges’ fiction, but not in his non-fiction” (xv). That blindness and other disabilities receive comprehensive attention in Borges’s prose writings is less widely noted.⁵

In Touching the Rock and On Sight and Insight, Hull presents books developed from his cassette diary in which he recorded “my daily experiences” (Touching the Rock ix) over a number of years, examining “the blind condition” (On Sight xiii) in the process. In the Beginning There was Darkness is an interpretative and critical work, which offers a blind person’s perspective on the Bible and Christian theology. While Planet of the Blind is a long narrative memoir that reflects with profound artistry on Kuusisto’s life ‘with blindness,’ Eavesdropping is a collection of short personal essays which the memoirist calls in the preface “auditory postcards or tone poems” (xii). In the latter volume, Kuusisto develops an aesthetic of listening. The texts under study represent different genres of literature, which necessitates a narrative analysis that is sensitive to the aesthetic differences particular to authors and genres.

Competing formulations of the research problem – to study artistic subjectivity in selected prose writings by the said three visually-impaired authors – present themselves to the researcher.⁶ In the proposal I wrote as part of the research methodology class at the beginning of my doctoral programme, I phrased the problem

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⁵ His poetry, from the earliest to the final poems, deals with the multifarious meanings of the blind condition (Yudin 11-13).

⁶ He is visually impaired and, therefore is, as mentioned above, interested in philosophically understanding the self as a disabled entity in the world.
in the form of two related questions posed to selected literary texts composed by Borges, Hull, and Kuusisto: how does visual impairment inflect the authorial voice? How can one reflect on the use of language, and trace the contours of the author's subjectivity? These questions entail reflection on the modalities of language used by the blind authors. Tracing the (visually) disabled author's subjectivity in his/her writings necessarily involves the problematisation of the very category of disability. The interdisciplinary field of disability studies, which incorporates significant reflections on literary texts, provides helpful means of developing a critical appreciation of the problem at hand. We may conclude that the above questions would involve a study of subjectivity through the examination of literary texts composed by visually impaired writers, the authorial voice, and the use of language and interpretation.

The first articulation of the problem, however, presents a significant difficulty: the second question needs refinement in order to suggest that a blind author’s subjectivity cannot (and should not) be reduced (like that of any disabled person) to just one aspect of his/her life – blindness. The difficulty is this: how does one reflect on the use of language and trace the contours of the author's subjectivity? On the one hand, the question implies that the author’s subjectivity can be traced within the fabric of the text which is made up of language. The point of this objection is not that subjectivity is here reduced to “mere” language (the social-constructionist theorists claim that subjectivity is indeed determined by discourse). It is possible to do only so much because we are dealing with artistic subjectivity in literary texts. However, how does one read the author’s text, and point out that only certain elements therein (that is, features and parameters of the textual fabric) make up (or provide evidence for) the “contours” of his/her subjectivity? On the other hand, it cannot be said that all that we read in the
author’s text goes to form his/her subjectivity. Therefore, certain crucial changes have to be made in the way the research problem is articulated.

We may, then, rephrase the problem in the form of three new questions.
Question one, which fuses the two initial questions, conceptualises subjectivity as a composite whole: How does disability interact with other posited elements of subjectivity such as memory, culture, and so on? Questions two and three are closely related, and they are concerned with language. What is the relation between the text and its referents, namely the characters, their actions, events, and the world? What is the relation between the text and subjectivity? The latter two questions necessitate a study of the referentiality of language in narratives. Thus, the questions posed here act as pointers to the theoretical approaches to be adopted in the project.

I believe that, in literary analysis, the texts – novels, short stories, essays, poetry, and so on – must be treated as primary, and the theoretical approaches only as aids to reading the former. Instead of giving prime importance to reading philosophical and narratological theories and automatically – or ‘uncritically’ – applying concepts found therein to the texts under study, a more fruitful exercise from the research point of view would be to read the primary texts, and then elucidate issues dealt with therein with the help of a sound philosophical grounding. We may recall here Wayne C. Booth’s words which express a similar concern: “[F]or in a time when too much criticism, pursuing ‘autonomy,’ floats off into the Great Inane, with never a reference to anything but its own concept spinning, there is surely room for a criticism that is openly embedded in and respectful of the stuff that it criticizes” (xii). Contemporary theories with their

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7. I shall discuss the conflict between meaning and reference in literature in Chapter 2 (64-5).

8. I touch upon the issues raised by the above questions in the course of the thesis.
emphasis on rhetoric afford considerable freedom to the researcher in defending claims, but considering literary texts as primary in research will allow us to provide empirical evidence for the research claims. In accordance with this stance, I have further refined the focus of the problem, and have articulated it in the form of the two questions that begin the present chapter: how does the visually-impaired writer’s particular bodily condition bear on narrative choices? Is it possible to extrapolate from this on authorial subjectivity?

We may understand both the initially-phrased questions as well as the final formulation of the research problem as enabling the researcher to get at the authors’ engagement in reflection on, and their negotiations with respect to the self,\textsuperscript{9} and the decision they come to concerning who they are, or what the self is, after this reflective process on “a matrix of other, web-interrelated possible selves” (Hagberg 147). The problem at hand, then, necessitates a narratological-philosophical analysis of the texts under study. The focus must, therefore, shift from inflections of the authorial voice to the wider domain of narrative choices. Generally speaking, inflections of the authorial voice are important in longer narratives such as Kuusisto’s first memoir \textit{Planet of the Blind}. In a long work of fiction or non-fiction, there are greater opportunities to move between different voices and idioms, whereas in a work of short fiction, there is more or less a stable voice. Another reason why narrative choices assume importance is that, as mentioned above, the works I am reading include not only short stories, but also lectures, essays, diaries, and memoirs, the last two being episodic in character.

\textsuperscript{9} These negotiations take place reflexively with the self, dialogically with society and literary conventions.
1.2. Literature Review

There are two studies of Borges’s poetry which consider the literary-philosophical importance of blindness to the poet. These are the article “The Blind Spot in the Mirror: Self-Recognition and Personal Identity in Borges’s Late Poetry” (307-25) by David Laraway, and the slim but comprehensive book *Nightglow: Borges’ Poetics of Blindness* (1997) by Florence L. Yudin. In the former, the critic presents his argument against the backdrop of very little critical attention to the question of blindness in Borges’s poetry: “Given the significance of blindness as a trope throughout the western literary tradition . . . and the role it played in the heady days of deconstruction of the 1970s and early 1980s, surprisingly few attempts have been made to explore its significance as a structuring principle of Borges's poetry.” So Laraway analyses some of Borges’s later poems, and discusses themes such as “the poet’s sight,” identity, memory, and knowledge (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 308), “the figure of the face as a site where identity is at once consolidated and undermined,” “the relationship between blindness and the problem of anagnorisis, or self-recognition” (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 309), and “the motif of the mirror” (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 311) in Borges’s aesthetics. My two chapters on Borges treat the foregoing themes in some detail.

By means of a discussion of “the concept of identification at issue” (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 315), Laraway arrives at the question, “[W]hat is the nature of the identification brought to bear upon the poet himself, especially when he is ostensibly the subject of the poem?” He goes on to combine ideas that he draws from Borges’s
essay “Kafka and His Precursors” (1951), and the concept of “artistic identification”\textsuperscript{10} from Arthur C. Danto’s philosophy of art to develop his argument. The former posits the following idea: “[F]rom particular vantage points it may be possible to discern the unity of otherwise disparate texts” (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 317), that is to say, “literary works are in a deep sense constituted by the interpretations that are given to them.” Summarising Danto’s view, Laraway says that the philosophy of art “must come to recognise that artistic identification, in its interpretive character, is inseparably connected with the objects it analyses” (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 318). In the course of Laraway’s argument, it becomes evident that for Borges, interpretation is crucial for his “self-revelation” (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 321): “That the question of personal identity thereby becomes a question for aesthetics is an indication that for Borges it, rather than ontology or ethics, is the most fundamental branch of philosophy, even if traditional metaphysical problems provide the basic materials with which literature is concerned” (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 321). Thus, for the poet, his readers become crucial. It is they who establish “the identity of ‘Borges’” by reading his literary creations. The critic illustrates that blindness is not only a theme in Borges’s poetry, but that it also structures his texts because the mirror that his literary texts constitute can make evident the personal identity – or reflect the self – of the author only when they are read. It is in this way that this mirror contains a blind spot that prevents Borges from recognising the self unless his readers complete his literary

\textsuperscript{10} Writing on the “universality of literary reference,” Danto defines this concept in order to demonstrate that literature is “a kind of mirror”: “Each work is about the ‘I’ that reads the text, identifying himself not with the implied reader for whom the implied narrator writes but with the actual subject of the text in such a way that each work becomes a metaphor for each reader: perhaps the same metaphor for each” (64). Thus, artistic identification constitutes the means through which the reader discovers the self while reading and interpreting a work of literature.
texts through interpreting them in the reading process (“The Blind Spot in the Mirror” 322).

In her book, Yudin concentrates on blindness as a representational constant in Borges’s poetics (11). She presents her study to remedy the absence of comprehensive critical work on the poetry of Borges. She observes, “Odd as it might appear for a writer of Borges’ international renown, we have no comprehensive critical study of the *Obra poetica* (1923 - 1985)” (Yudin 12). Thus, the book covers “the poet’s development, in thirteen volumes, over sixty years” (Yudin 11). The author points to the crucial importance of blindness “in each of Borges’ books” (Yudin 11-2), and suggests that Borges considered it to be an integral part of his life and poetry (Yudin 19-20). She declares that her “overriding purpose in this analysis is to explicate Jorge Luis Borges’ stunning dialectical arc, from radiance to tenebrae” (Yudin 15). While Yudin’s book explicates a “stunning dialectical arc, from radiance to tenebrae” in Borges’s poetry, the Borges chapters in this thesis examine a complementary dialectic of withdrawal from the world, and the artistic turn to the experience of blindness in his fictional- and non-fictional writings.

The article entitled “‘A River that No One Can See’: Body, Text, and Environment in the Poetry of Stephen Kuusisto” (183-94) by Michael L. Melancon examines the way in which blindness and sensory variation exercise a deep influence on literary writing. Melancon bases his argument on Stephen Kuusisto’s poems from the collection *Only Bread, Only Light* (2000), and draws on two memoirs written by the poet – *Planet of the Blind* and *Eavesdropping*. In the *Poetics* (XVII), Aristotle exhorts the poet to maintain “objectivity in art” – in other words, to preserve “artistic distance” from “the object of creation” in order to achieve excellence. This view, which
incidentally is unequivocally visual in tone, has decisively guided thinking on literary composition and theory in the West. However, when the artist’s body “becomes more visible as an other, due to illness or disability,” that is to say, when the experience of disability makes the artist more keenly aware of his bodily make-up, he draws on the embodied state in creating his art. Concepts from disability studies and scholarship on “the sites of language production and reception” (183) strengthen Melancon’s argument against the dominant discourse on art and language which keeps the disabled body separate from the process and products of creativity. He examines “the way that Kuusisto’s poetry interrogates and challenges traditional concepts of language and the body, shaping a new discourse that begins within the body and travels outward to the world” (Melancon 184-85). Through an analysis of selected poems by Kuusisto, he shows how the disabled artist “is able to explore more fully the subjectivity of artistic creation” (Melancon 183), thus enabling him to throw some light on the role of the embodied self in creativity. He describes Kuusisto’s poetic technique thus: “In his poetry he explores the bodily senses in a myriad of ways, investigating how sight, hearing, and touch can serve to facilitate expression and communication by both receiving information and transmitting information” (184). By discussing the poetic figuration of Braille, recorded books for the blind, the experience of nature, and music, Melancon demonstrates the way the poet probes the relation between language, self, the blind body, and experience. At the beginning of his essay, Melancon observes, “The art of disabled people, however, is often overlooked in a society in which ‘[f]requently, corporeal otherness is viewed as an impediment to art’” (183). While this statement makes it clear that disabled artists face alienation, it becomes evident by the concluding section that artistic excellence demands a degree of separateness from the world:
This sense of ghostliness, of being in, but not entirely as one with the world [as the critic characterises the experience of the speaker of Kuusisto’s poem ‘Awake All Night’] might well describe the ethos of disabled artists as they observe, record, create, and shape their experiential world while struggling with a language system that has “inscribed and controlled the experience of disability for disabled and non-disabled alike.” (Melancon 193)

In the case of disabled artists, there is a gulf between their personal experience and language, which is difficult to close. In their practice of the art of writing poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, such artists have to struggle to fashion a language that is adequate for their needs. In this essay, the author shows how it is possible for an artist to succeed not despite but “as a result of disability experiences” (Melancon 183). Kuusisto brings the body into poetics by writing poems that explore his blindness and the aesthetic power of the other senses.

In the essay “Disabilities, Bodies, Voices” (283-95), Jim Swan articulates ideas that are crucial for this thesis. Explaining the significance of disability studies, Swan asks, “[W]hat’s new about the new field of disability studies . . . How does it stand apart from other instances of historically silenced groups making themselves heard?” (283-84). We find in his answer to the two questions the seeds for a fresh examination of the selfhood of disabled writers: “The answer, I think, is the particular viewpoint that disability studies brings to an understanding of the body—an understanding that writing is not only about the body but of and from the body too. As Nancy Mairs puts it—in words that should be stitched permanently into the memory of every writer, disabled or not: ‘No body, no voice; no voice, no body’” (Swan 284). Thus, disability scholarship
gives importance to the body and voice, both in relation to writing. Corporeality is, then, a significant factor in narrativising subjectivity. It is noteworthy that Swan is concerned not merely about our understanding of the body but about writing and the understanding of the body in writing. He states:

The embodied perspective of disabled persons . . . is the necessary ground for realising the agency of the disabled subject, and it must be a fundamental part of any curriculum in disability studies. Otherwise, the pervasive cultural studies model, with its strong Foucauldian commitment, its tendency to view the body as no more than the site of contested cultural discourses, renders the question of the disabled subject unapproachable. (Swan 284-85)

This is the thrust of Swan’s argument. As the above quote makes clear, he wishes to broaden the scope of disability studies by including writings by disabled persons and thereby prevent disability writing from being hindered by the cultural studies model in its efforts to make the voices of disabled subjects heard. He considers it important to examine a number of issues such as the self, subjectivity, body, “cognitive difference” (Swan 286), disability experience, language, and writing. Important in this regard is his perceptive analysis of Hull’s diary, *Touching the Rock* (290-92).

It is clear from the critical literature reviewed above that there exists a gap in scholarship on literature produced by Borges, Hull, and Kuusisto. The study of blindness as it relates to literary aesthetics is restricted mainly to their poetical works. This thesis fills the scholarly lacuna by presenting a study of prose narratives by the
three authors. It concentrates on, as stated above, the question of narrativising subjectivity in relation to blindness.

1.3. Theoretical Approaches and Concepts

In this section of the chapter, I will write about the philosophical arguments and conceptual nets that have shaped my literary research. The idea of lived experience is important in thinking about corporeality, which may be understood as including various kinds of bodies – disabled and non-disabled ones. This in turn bears on the question of (differential) perception and epistemology. We are present in the world as incarnate subjects. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty asserts, sense experience “always involves a reference to the body” (61). The kind of body the subject possesses conditions how he/she experiences the world, lives in it, knows it, and knows the self. Thus, any kind of disability exercises an all-pervasive influence on the experience of the subject. S. Kay Toombs asserts that phenomenology provides “a window into lived experience” (10). Coming to the study of narrative, Monika Fludernik introduces the novel concept of experientiality in developing a ‘natural’ narratology. This narratological system is different from the older, formal models of narratology. Fludernik explains, “Unlike the traditional models of narratology, narrativity (i.e. the quality of narrativethood in Gerald Prince’s terminology) is here constituted by what I call experientiality, namely by the quasi-mimetic evocation of ‘real-life experience’” (italics as in the source, 9). Thus, for Fludernik, “narrativity” is constituted by the representation of human experience. We may, therefore, understand the notion of “experientiality” by considering her understanding of mimesis. She defines this concept as follows:
[M]imesis must NOT be identified as imitation but needs to be treated as the artificial and illusionary projection of a semiotic structure which the reader recuperates in terms of a fictional reality. This recuperation, since it is based on cognitive parameters gleaned from realworld experience, inevitably results in an implicit though incomplete homologisation of the fictional and the real worlds. (Fludernik 26)

Clearly, the reader of the literary text interprets the thoughts and actions of characters in the fictional world on the basis of “cognitive parameters gleaned from realworld experience.” This means that he/she understands the experience represented in the literary world by consulting – and depending upon – his/her experience in the environment he/she shares with humans and other living beings. Thus, Fludernik says with reference to oral narrative, which she takes as the model for her analysis of narrative: “Narrative mimesis evokes a world, whether that world is identical to the interlocutors’ shared environment, to a historical reality or to an invented fictional fantasy” (27). When the literary text deals with the experience of disability, the reader can interpret it in such a way that the shape of that experience and its relationship to the real world become evident through the concept of “experientiality,” and its underlying cognitive parameters.

This model may be applied to both fictional and non-fictional texts. Fludernik clarifies that the two concepts of narrativity and fictionality are closely related through the notion of human experientiality (28). She defines the former “as mediated human experientiality (which can be plotted on the level of action or on the level of fictional consciousness)” (Fludernik 26). So “narrativity” in this model may be found in a wide
range of texts,\(^\text{11}\) and is not limited by “the criteria of mere sequentiality and logical connectedness,” which play a “central role . . . in most discussions of narrative” (Fludernik 19). She defines “fictionality” as a literary concept, describing it in relation to “narrativity” as “the subjective experience of imaginary human beings in an imaginary human space, that correlates with narrativity since the emphasis on human experientiality can be manifested most perfectly in the ideal realm (as Aristotle knew very well)” (Fludernik 29). We see that literary worlds are conceived here as “the ideal realm” which enables the uncovering of human experientiality. These concepts inform my discussions of the questions concerning the experience of disability and artistic subjectivity in the texts under study. I shall, therefore, draw upon the phenomenological thinking of Merleau-Ponty, and narratological concepts based on experientiality from Fludernik, to bolster my argument about narrative choices in relation to subjectivity in literary works by Borges, Hull, and Kuusisto.

Since in our literary exploration of the topic the question of sensation gains significance as an ordering principle, a brief sketch of some of the more significant problems that modern philosophy is concerned with will help in preparing the ground. In *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (2000), edited by Karl Ameriks, we read that German idealist thought, taking off from Immanuel Kant’s work, responds to Enlightenment philosophy. In “The Enlightenment and Idealism” (18-36), Frederick Beiser traces the relationship between the two philosophical movements: “the fundamental principles” of the former, namely “rational criticism and scientific naturalism,” lead to the following “disastrous consequences” for knowledge: skepticism and materialism. The two principles and their results have serious implications for

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11. Narrativity may be found in texts that cut across the traditional divide between fiction and non-fiction.
conceptions of the self and the external world: “If skepticism undermines our common-sense beliefs in the reality of the external world, other minds, and even our own selves, materialism threatens the beliefs in freedom, immortality, and the sui generis status of the mind” (Beiser 18). Starting with René Descartes, European philosophers had been finding it hard to account for “the reality of the external world” because of conflicting concepts of reason, namely “criticism and naturalism” (Beiser 21). Enlightenment thought seems to lead to the subject being irrevocably separated from the world and other subjects due to the uncertainty inherent in knowledge. In dealing with reason, then, the idealist philosophers grappled with epistemological questions, thus thinking about how to establish verifiable contact between our knowledge of the world (and, therefore, the knowing subject), and the world in which we live and of which we are a part. Another important question that they thought about was intersubjectivity: how to establish contact between different subjects in the world? Thus it is that “intuition” assumes importance starting with Kant’s philosophy.

Kant’s explication of truth has significant implications, from the point of view of the argument here, for an account of experience:

…Kant proposes that we see truth as the conformity of objects with our concepts, as the agreement of our perceptions with certain universal and necessary concepts that determine the form or structure of experience. If we adopt this conception of truth, it is no longer necessary to get outside our own representations to see if they conform to objects in themselves. Rather, the standard of truth will be found within the realm of consciousness itself by seeing whether a representation conforms to the universal and necessary forms of consciousness itself. (Beiser 23-4)
Kant’s “conception of truth,” therefore, offers a solution to the unacceptable consequences of Enlightenment philosophy, viz. skepticism and materialism. The experience of all conscious beings is structured by “certain universal and necessary concepts,” that is, by the ways in which subjects perceive and know (Guyer 37). This conception of truth, by its reliance on “the universal and necessary forms of consciousness itself,” links the subject to other subjects/minds in the world. Beiser highlights Kant’s belief that “knowledge requires the most intimate interchange between understanding and sensibility” (28). While “understanding and theoretical reason” (Guyer 39) deal with concepts, the body with its sensory faculties plays a significant role in “sensibility,” and helps in the generation of intuitions. Intuition is the immediate experience of objects in the world by the subject. The paramount importance of intuition in talking about lived experience can be seen in the following words which summarise Kant’s understanding of it: “[A]n intuition [is] a singular representation that is in immediate relation to its object, while a concept is a general representation that can be related to many objects but is not in immediate relation to any, and for that reason can be related to an object only through an intuition” (Guyer 40). Intuition is important, then, in talking about experience (and thus about “all cognition”) because it enables the subject to have “an immediate relation to objects” which “concepts alone” cannot do. Writing on Kant’s arguments leading to “the distinction between intuition and concept” (41), Paul Guyer explains that, in the 1760s, the former developed an argument in favour of “the contrast between logical and real relationships” (42), and “the argument that we can recognise features of the spatial structure and orientation of objects that cannot be contained in the concepts of those objects” (43). Both arguments show that “sense perception” puts the subject in immediate touch with the world. Further, they
demonstrate that concepts in the mind do not directly relate to the world as an intuition does. The immediacy of intuition arises, as suggested above, through “the medium” (Guyer 42) of sensations (sensing with the faculties of perception) or, in other words, by means of the subject’s bodily experience of objects. Kirk Dallas Wilson states:

“Intuitive representations ‘show forth’ ['anschauen'] their object by representing its mereological structure [the ‘part-whole relation’ characterising ‘individuals’ 254] and, in the case of empirical intuitions, its empirical properties” (258). As a result, sensual contact between the body and objects in the world assumes importance. Taking into account the fact that “the immediacy-mediacy distinction is critical” in distinguishing between concepts and intuitions, Wilson gleans “a definition of immediacy” with the help of the doctrine of transcendental idealism, that belongs to “the Aesthetic,” and states that “appearances, the objects of empirical intuitions, are just representations in the mind” (264):

Now one cannot distinguish within consciousness of an object its appearance from its intuition. I cannot distinguish within my perception (intuition) of my desk a separate item which is my desk. The implication of transcendental idealism is that we must identify the appearance qua object of intuition with the intuition itself. Thus, we can define immediacy as isomorphic identity between an intuition and its object.

(264-65)

This line of thinking, where the subject’s contact with the world moves centre stage, enables us to give a fuller account of lived experience. I draw on the metaphysical thought of the French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson, particularly his insights on
duration or subjective time, intuition, and selfhood to make my argument in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

We cannot overstate the significance of the works of the 19th-century Danish philosopher Soren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-55) for his unique investigation of philosophical questions in distinctly literary ways. Kierkegaard was deeply concerned with questions regarding the self, subjectivity, and representation, questions to which he offered sophisticated answers. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino offer the following observation concerning the question of selfhood, which Kierkegaard made on Socrates and himself in their “Introduction” (1-15) to The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard (1998):

Writing of himself Kierkegaard was reminded of what he had once written pseudonymously about Socrates . . . that “his whole life was a personal preoccupation with himself, and then guidance comes along and adds something world-historical to it.” This was Kierkegaard’s own perspective on his life in retrospect. He came to believe that he had had a religious mission from the start. (3)

As these words make it clear, the concern with the self is present throughout Kierkegaard’s authorship. He believed “that what he had to say could not be proposed in some direct, blunt manner” (Poole 59). Roger Poole explains, “His irony and his many-voiced-ness, his heteroglossia, distance him from any position that could be asserted to be finally ‘his’ position” (48). By means of the pluriform method of indirect

12. This observation may be found in Soren Kierkegaards Papirer (Pap. X1 A 266 p. 177).
communication.\textsuperscript{13} Kierkegaard “has made any final ‘closure’ on the matter of ‘his’ meaning impossible” (Poole 48). This intention to treat “meaning” as something that is not definitely fixed, not one, that which precludes the pinpointing of a position as “finally” Kierkegaard’s “position,” parallels the intention to present in his various works, signed and pseudonymous, different forms of subjectivity that are mutually exclusive. This is indicated by his suggestive words, which are reported by Poole: “‘My wish, my prayer,’ writes Kierkegaard in his own name, at the end of the \textit{Postscript}, ‘is, that if it might occur to anyone to quote a particular saying from the books, he would do me the favour to cite the name of the respective pseudonymous author’” (62). This intricately literary reflection on the question of subjectivity in Kierkegaard’s writings will be important for our study.

Shelley Tremain claims in her article “On the Government of Disability: Foucault, Power, and the Subject of Impairment” (185-96), “In short, the ways in which concepts, classifications, and descriptions are imbricated in institutional practices, social policy, intersubjective relations, and medical discourses structure the field of possible action for humans.” If we accept the position that “the field of possible action for humans” is structured by discursive practices, the question that arises is, where is in all this the place for the human will to perform independent action? Tremain elaborates, “[T]he approach assumes that the materiality of ‘the body’ cannot be dissociated from the historically contingent practices that bring it into being, that is, bring it into being as that sort of thing” (187). If our corporeal being and activity is at its root structured by language or descriptions,\textsuperscript{14} the person is reduced to a non-entity that can be conceived

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Chapter 7 (238-41).
\item According to Tremain, “that intentional action always takes place under a description” (187) is a truism.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
as being, from root to tip, a mechanical part of a complicated machine. This conclusion stands despite what she says next to explain her Foucauldian stance:

Disciplinary practices enable subjects to act in order to constrain them.

For juridical power is power (as opposed to mere physical force or violence) only when it addresses individuals who are free to act in one way or another . . . the production of seeming acts of choice (limits of possible conduct) on the everyday level of the subject makes possible hegemonic power structures. (Tremain 187-88)

Although this “juridical power” is said to act upon “individuals who are free to act in one way or another,” that is to say, its forces “enable subjects to act” as free agents, only they cannot do so. Significant phrases such as “in order to constrain them,” “the production of seeming acts of choice” (with emphasis on the word ‘seeming’), “limits of possible conduct,” and “hegemonic power structures” make it clear that this philosophical system does not recognise or allow for the functioning of free will. In fact, Tremain indicates this in her article:

Foucault introduced the term “dividing practices” to refer to modes of manipulation that combine a scientific discourse with practices of segregation and social exclusion in order to categorize, classify, distribute and manipulate subjects who are initially drawn from a rather undifferentiated mass of people. Through these practices, subjects become objectivized as (for instance) mad or sane, sick or healthy, criminal or good. Through these practices of division, classification, and ordering, furthermore, subjects become tied to an identity and come to
understand themselves scientifically. In short, this “subject” must not be confused with modern philosophy’s *cogito*, autonomous self, or rational moral agent. (186)

This passage summarises Michel Foucault’s genealogical explanation of how subjects come to be governed by bio-power which classifies them, segregates them, and objectivises them as “mad or sane, sick or healthy, criminal or good” in order to separate the disabled and other unwanted people for the purpose of excluding them from society. Thus, Tremain’s nominalist analysis relies on the archaeology of medical and social practices with a view to begin resisting them as people who want to be free of such government (188). In the institution of these practices, it is said, subjects “are initially drawn from a rather undifferentiated mass of people.” Is this to say, then, that no criteria are used to achieve these classifications? This explanation rests on a vague notion of how, in the first place, subjects are classified before they are distributed and manipulated. Although this analysis gives a grim explanation of the subjugation of people by bio-power, by describing them as being completely determined by disciplinary practices, it fails to recognise the power of the human body to tell his/her story – in other words, narrate their experience – in their own voice. When Tremain concludes that “this ‘subject’ must not be confused with modern philosophy’s *cogito*, autonomous self, or rational moral agent,” she precludes the possibility of a free will that can act to resist subjugation.

I argue, in opposition to the Foucauldian stance represented by Tremain (as just outlined), that our corporeal existence must not be thought as being constituted by discursive practices because this denies value to the person’s experiential autonomy
(and such a position sidesteps the question of experience by merely casting it as a construct). I hold that a blind person, for example, knows what it is like to (be blind or) experience his or her disability in a way that a sighted person cannot know it. If we argue that blindness as an impairment (the blind body) is constituted by socially shared language or by “historically contingent practices,” the private nature of that experience becomes lost (insignificant at best, and unthinkable at worst) due to its being conceived as a construct. This is to say that the experience of blindness (and other disabilities) is not merely produced by language and discursive practices. And it is certainly not to say that the blind person has “privileged access” to his/her experience because of the misconceived notion that “autobiographical language . . . provides a representation after and apart from the inward facts of the first-person case” (Hagberg 149). Although such a person uses shared language in describing their experience, their self-descriptions allow for the self-creative expression of experience in a way that the productive discursive practices of bio-power clearly do not. Garry L. Hagberg explains the power of self-descriptive language as follows: “Such language is in truth more self-defining than self-describing. Or (cautiously): more self-creative than self-reflective” (149). It is noteworthy that this conception of self-creative language gives the self autonomy to oppose subjection by describing his/her experience on his/her own terms.

Here is Tremain’s explanation of impairment, which she offers as a criticism of the concept as understood by the social model of disability:

If the “impairments” alleged to underlie disability are actually constituted in order to sustain, and even augment, current social arrangements, [she says,] they must no longer be theorized as essential, biological characteristics (attributes) of a “real” body upon which
recognisably disabling conditions are imposed. Instead, those allegedly “real” impairments must now be identified as constructs of disciplinary knowledge/power that are incorporated into the self-understandings of some subjects. . . . The testimonials, acts, and enactments of the disabled subject are *performativ*e insofar as the allegedly “natural” impairment that they are purported to disclose, or manifest, has no existence prior to or apart from those very constitutive performances. (emphasis as in the source, 192)

Since impaired bodies are now to be conceived as being illusions, that is to say, “allegedly ‘real’ . . . constructs of disciplinary knowledge/power” which “some subjects” ‘uncritically’ incorporate “into the[ir] self-understandings,” the disabled subject’s “testimonials, acts, and enactments” are significant only as performative actions that constitute “the allegedly ‘natural’ impairment.” Thus, as Swan points out, this “tendency to view the body as no more than the site of contested cultural discourses renders the question of the disabled subject unapproachable,” and also “runs the risk of excluding . . . the writing of the embodied subject” (284-85). Tobin Siebers describes the foregoing approach, which relies on Foucault’s exposition of the constitutive role played by bio-power, as strong social constructionism (174-75). In an endnote to his essay, Siebers points out the social-constructionist conception of the body to be “merely a ghostly fantasy produced by the power of language” (182). So he cautions, “If it is true that bodies matter to people with disabilities, it may be worth thinking at greater length about the limits of social construction” (174). In this way, Siebers brings our attention back to the body, which is the vehicle of experience. Tremain’s deterministic approach does not, as is clear from the foregoing discussion, consider the experience of
the self to be of philosophical significance as it is concerned overwhelmingly with “the historically contingent practices [that] bring [the material body] into being,” as if the will of the individual does not matter.

My argument goes against the strong social-constructionist stance represented by Tremain (and Foucault). I quote Merleau-Ponty here to support my argument:

I am not the outcome or the meeting-point of numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily or psychological make-up. I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation. I cannot shut myself up within the realm of science. All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. . . . I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead it moves out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on . . . To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematisation is an abstract and derivative sign-language . . . (ix-x)

Here the phenomenologist clarifies that the person is “the absolute source” of “the symbols of science” and of knowledge, because it is his/her experience that sustains them. To say that a bodily and/or mental impairment has been constituted by
institutional practices is to deny the radically corporeal nature of disability experience. While I hold the belief that bodies with impairments are different kinds of corporeal subjects, and not ‘abnormal’ creatures living in “a harmed condition” (Harris 96) as various societies regard them, I do think that it is important to retain impairment as an experiential category in philosophical vocabulary. The reason is as follows: having an impairment does not mean that the person experiences only pain and/or inconveniences, or that he/she is perceived as different and inferior to the non-disabled. It has an ontological value, and therefore has wide-ranging implications for epistemology. Being blind, for instance, means (1) that the person inhabits the world of the blind, which is different from (but connected to) the world of the sighted; and (2) that he/she creates – or can do so – a different world (poetry, art) based on how he/she knows, and interacts with, the world.

Virginia Woolf states with wisdom in her essay “On Being Ill” (193-203) that

[L]iterature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear, and, save for one or two passions such as desire and greed, is null, and negligible and non-existent. On the contrary, the very opposite is true. All day, all night the body intervenes; blunts or sharpens, colours or discolours, turns to wax in the warmth of June, hardens to tallow in the murk of February. The creature within can only

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15. I am aware of Siebers’s recognition that many people with disabilities very often live with pain and suffering on a daily basis. Therefore, they do not regard their disabilities as opportunities to resist various repressive “ideological constructions” (177-178). This state of affairs makes it imperative that disability theory deals with corporeal experience.

16. It is important not to consider the impaired body merely as an effect which is “always already signified and formed by discursive and institutional practices” (Tremain 190).

17. Refer to On Sight and Insight (xiii).
gaze through the pane—smudged or rosy; it cannot separate off from the body like the sheath of a knife or the pod of a pea for a single instant. . . .

(4)

Due to the importance of the (ill) body in life and for selfhood, Woolf argues for the treatment in literature of illness and, by extension, of corporeality. Nearly half a century later, Hélène Cixous opens her iconoclastic essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” (875-93) giving a passionate call to women to write: “Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement” (875). This decisive statement\(^\text{18}\) may be applied with equal truth to the position of the disabled in writing, in the world, and in history. Ecriture feminine has a strong bodily component. Cixous not only forcefully urges women to write their selves, but she also gives men the space to write: “I write woman: woman must write woman. And man, man” (877). If we proceed along this line of reasoning, it becomes clear that the disabled woman and man must write “her self” and his self respectively. To write one’s self as a blind person, for example, or to put one’s self “into the text,” indicates the significance of artistic subjectivity. Cixous’s words are similar to what Swan says concerning the subject matter of disability studies: “[I]t is people with disabilities making themselves heard politically, socially, culturally” (283). This reveals the bodily nature of writing subjectivity.

\(^{18}\) The statement is decisive because it recognises the importance of acting by one’s will, of breaking free of imposed constraints, in the phrase “by her own movement.”
The following words make it clear that writing and the body go together: “And why don’t you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it” (Cixous 876). It is sexual desire that unites the two: “[O]r because you wrote, irresistibly,” she explains, “as when we would masturbate in secret, not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just enough to take the edge off.” This writing in secret is similar to masturbating, as the foregoing quote indicates, not to explore the sexual potential of one’s being but always in fear. Due to this fear and secrecy, says Cixous, women’s writing was not good. She celebrates the sexual power of women’s writing when she says that the male-dominated market for books does not “like the true texts of women—female-sexed texts” (Cixous 877). She argues for the female body in desire to come to the text, thus advocating that writing be understood as emanating from the desiring body. Later in the text, she stresses the importance, to put it in Swan’s words, of the “voiced body” (284) to characterise the embodied logic of the woman who speaks “at a public gathering”: “[A]ll of her passes into her voice, and it’s with her body that she vitally supports the ‘logic’ of her speech . . . she physically materialises what she’s thinking; she signifies it with her body” (Cixous 881). This represents a fresh interpretation of the role that the body plays in writing. So she repudiates the commonly-recognised division “between the logic of oral speech and the logic of the text” (Cixous 881) in order to stress the importance of the body in women’s speech and writing. So Cixous offers a personal view that takes into account the ground of living and writing, the body, and we have seen above why this is important.

It would be fruitful to begin the study of narrative by asking a straightforward narratological question: how do narratives develop? The narrative art is, first and

19. This actually goes against the views that see writing as an impersonal exercise in language.
foremost, an art in (and with) language. Working in (and with) language and its resources (such as tropes), and using certain narrative techniques, the artist tells the story. Examining the role of language in the art of storytelling, and the techniques that are used to develop the discourse of narratives, is important for my research. The issues that need to be dealt with fall under the broad umbrella of narrative choices, and involve narratological questions of voice and perspective; narrators and characters in the stories; narrated actions, events, situations including epiphanies, and setting; temporality and causal connections in narrative; and the crucial question of lived experience in narrative. All these issues can be explored by examining “narrative discourse,” which in literature is the “narrative text” (Genette 26).

I conceive disability as difference. As Henri-Jacques Stiker states in the introductory chapter to his book, A History of Disability (1999), “the real . . . generates difference and singularity” (12). This involves recognising that the disabled body is marked as different from the ‘normal’ body. However, adopting this approach to understand disability experience requires caution, because in Western thought, difference is always, already charged with moral values which grade those that are different from one another as superior and inferior, pure and impure. As David Mitchell states in his foreword to Stiker’s book, the existence of disability in a body shows that the body is not a perfect whole (corporeal integrity being a conception that our cultures subscribe to), but that it is susceptible to illness and disability: “As a beginning principle, Stiker posits that an encounter with disability inaugurates a break in the

20. Lennard J. Davis argues that the “concept of the normal” (100) arose in Europe during the nineteenth century. This idea developed in association with “the concept of the bell curve” in statistics. “In this paradigm,” writes Davis, “the majority of bodies fall under the main umbrella of the curve. Those that do not are at the extremes and therefore are abnormal.” So people came to be forced “to conform” to the requirements of the norm. It is important to note that this “imperative” (101) of normalcy lies heavy equally on those bodies considered to fall within the bell curve as well as on those that lie outside it.
observer’s perceptual field—‘a tear in our being that reveals [the body’s] open-endedness, its incompleteness, its precariousness.’ The visceral nature of this ‘tear’ reveals the extent of our investment in the fantasy of the normal” (viii). This investment in the fantasy of ‘normal’ existence is something that disabled persons have to deal with, both in themselves and in others, on a daily basis because it determines attitudes towards disability. Both a non-disabled person and one who is blind, for instance, can be taken aback when they encounter a disability in another person (the latter may even loathe himself/herself because of his/her disability), or can have a negative attitude (such as fear, pity, disgust, horror, dislike, or even hatred) towards somebody with a different disability. This means that the blind person, like the non-disabled person, regards himself/herself as being ‘normal.’ Thus the “tear in our being that reveals [the body’s] open-endedness, its incompleteness, its precariousness” plays a major role in self-understanding. With the help of this basic conception of disability, we will consider how the experientiality of blindness has a bearing on narrative choices in the texts under study.

Hannah Arendt’s thoughts about the limit of philosophical discourse and the potential of literature with regard to the definition of the self form “an important starting point” (Kottman viii) for the philosophy of storytelling developed by the feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero. The question of selfhood receives two distinct kinds of treatment in philosophy and literature: the vocabulary of the former can manage only a definition of ‘what’ someone is (Kottman vii). This exposes

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21. I thank Upamanyu Sengupta for bringing to my notice Cavarero’s work on storytelling. Due to time constraints, I will not be able to work out the implications that Cavarero’s philosophy has for this project.
philosophy’s aim of achieving universal knowledge. The language of the latter becomes necessary to know ‘who’ someone is, that is, his/her uniqueness (Kottman viii). Kottman writes, “‘Who’ someone is . . . remains inexpressible within the language of philosophy; but does not, as a result, remain utterly ineffable. Rather, ‘who’ someone is can be ‘known’ (although this is not epistemological knowledge) through the narration of the life-story of which that person is the protagonist” (Kottman viii). This divergence in the goals achievable by the discourses of literature and philosophy has a crucial bearing on the work presented in this thesis.22 While I adopt an amalgam of philosophical/narratological approaches in discussing blind artistic subjectivities, the varied literary works of Borges, Hull, and Kuusisto reveal their respective individual uniqueness. This singularity informs my discussions of their varying aesthetic approaches to blindness and selfhood. The distinct literary imagination of each of the authors and my philosophical approach interact to produce a study that examines plural literary forms

1.4. The Research Claim and Chapterisation

Here I shall state the research claim, and subsequently sub-divide the thesis into seven chapters. Certain concerns that the narratives foreground are indicators of the fact that blindness and visual impairment23 were, for these writers, a major factor in making narrative choices. Studying the narrative choices will enable us to talk about authorial subjectivity. The process of positing the two questions forming the research problem, and making the claim requiring substantiation in the thesis, allows the researcher not

22. This fact is suggested by my phrase “who they are, or what the self is” (6). It indicates the split between the vocabularies of literature and philosophy with regard to personhood.
23. By ‘blindness’ I mean complete lack of sight, and ‘visual impairment’ indicates low vision which does not really allow the person to use the sight he/she has to do his/her work.
only to demonstrate, through the chapters, the validity of the latter, but also to show the unique, divergent ways in which the authors’ artistic subjectivities get articulated. We find crucial points of convergence in their selfhoods, but the various phases of the understanding of blindness and subjectivity evident in their works bring out the richness of interaction between blindness and literature. It is this critical analysis which lends credibility to the research.

Having laid down the conceptual framework and discussed the theoretical approach of the thesis in Chapter 1, I will now proceed to provide a brief sketch of the following chapters. In Chapter 2, “Borges’s Aesthetic of Blindness,” I shall examine – as the title indicates – the various phases of Borges’s aesthetic of blindness as evident in his prose writings. I offer readings of a number of short stories which Borges wrote over half a century from 1934 to 1983. At the heart of this aesthetic is a dialectical movement in the responses to blindness written into his short fiction from the 1940s and ‘50s. His fictional practice during this period embodies a dialectical movement between self-sufficient esoteric systems and the experiential world. The move into the archives of knowledge reflects withdrawal from the external world, while the artistic turn to the experience of blindness symbolises creativity. My contention is that Borges shows through this dialectic the importance of engaging with corporeality and selfhood while grappling with life as a blind person.

In Chapter 3, “Altered Sensation and Self-Understanding in Borges’s Fictions,” I show that Borges was keenly aware of various kinds of disability experience by interpreting six short stories which cover most of his writing career. I will focus on instances of direct emphasis on disability experiences such as paralysis and blindness in

24. See Chapter 2 (39-40) for an explanation.
these selected ‘fictions,’ and will illustrate the point that being reflective about disability indicates a deepened awareness of, and interest in, the fragility of corporeal existence. It becomes clear in the course of the chapter that deformities are, in the lives of those who are disabled, one among the many aspects of experience which define their subjectivities. The underlying premise and structuring principle of my argument in the chapter is that bodily deformities affect self-conception in diverse, observable ways. In the short stories I take up for this study, one can observe that when characters lose, in part or whole, the faculty of the senses, they come to acquire a different understanding of time; time slows down for many of them. I argue that the reasons for this novel sense of time are as follows. The character with the deformity is restricted in movement, and spends his time in physically non-active but intensely contemplative ways. He has a heightened awareness of reality, and an expansive sense of time. He also begins to notice unmistakable similarities in experiences, perceptions, and memories from day to day. The disabled character’s experiential homogeneity, thus, calls up the theme of repetition and the idea of circular time. My contention is that Borges pertinently foregrounds the consequence of bodily deformities in a differential matrix of sensations, which in these short stories appears as a creative temporal consciousness.

Chapter 4, called “The Lived Experience of Growing Blind: Narrative Subjectivity in Hull,” and Chapter 5, which is entitled “Self-Knowledge through Interaction with the World,” treat a movement in the selfhood of John Hull as evident in his two diaries – *Touching the Rock: An Experience of Blindness*, and *On Sight and Insight: A Journey into the World of Blindness*. He has developed these books from the...

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recordings he made on cassette over a period of approximately four years, starting in June 1983, as he grappled with his blindness. We find that as Hull presents narrative sections on a regular basis, he reflects on his daily experiences ‘in blindness.’ This demonstrates the dynamic connection existing between maintaining the cassette diary and realising his condition of being blind. The fragmentary form of the diaries, with their cumulative effect, is well-suited to describe and examine this process of leaving one kind of consciousness (the sighted self), and experiencing the birth of a new consciousness (the blind self). In the first of the chapters on Hull, I shall write about the relationship between his dreams and conscious life to discover how he gains a fuller understanding of the blind self that was once sighted. He regularly offers interpretations of his dreams. There he connects the experiences he has in the stories that the dreams present, with his most immediate concerns centring on interactions with his wife, children, and others as well as on other details in conscious experience. The chapter shows how Hull, through reflection on the mind’s activity in dreams, comes to integrate his past sighted life and his present blind life. In the second chapter on the diarist’s works, I examine his reflections on the question of knowledge and social relationships as they impact his selfhood. He considers both factors as having a formative influence on him as a person. The diaries show why knowledge is fundamental to the day-to-day living of life, and how this fact necessitates reflection on one’s experiences, thereby producing self-knowledge. What impact does blindness have on Hull’s knowledge? How does his ability to gain knowledge in the blind condition affect his being-in-the-world? It is clear from his reflections that the ways in which he knows the world exercise a formative influence on his existence in and passage through it. The chapter also traces a dialectical movement from Hull’s initial conception of the self as it is
visually based on the body image to one that is not determined by visual considerations but is related to being-in-the-world.

In Chapter 6, entitled “The Poetical Subjectivity of Kuusisto,” I offer an interpretation of two books by Stephen Kuusisto, namely *Planet of the Blind: A Memoir* and *Eavesdropping: A Life by Ear*, which follows a movement in his selfhood from a long-term rejection of his blindness to an eventual, full acceptance of the blind self. The chapter also deals with the aesthetic of listening that Kuusisto develops in the twenty-nine essays that form the latter work. Thus, we see that his writings embody a self-conscious art of blindness in two ways that are not separate but contiguous: the art of living as a blind person, and the art produced in and through blindness.

In Chapter 7, “Artistic Subjectivity, Narrative Choices, and the Implied Author: Their Relation as a Function of Bodily Being,” I present my reflections on the narrative modes used by Borges, Hull, And Kuusisto to tell their various stories. Doing so will help me pull the threads of the foregoing chapters together in such a way that the authors’ individual artistic subjectivities become evident. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of abstract movement as the defining principle of consciousness (139), and on Kierkegaard’s explanation of pseudonymity in his works (Hong and Hong x), I argue that Borges engages in self-examination and self-representation through his short stories which treat disability experience. I also discuss the implications of the gap between the writing – reflecting – self and the experiencing self – or selves – in Hull’s and Kuusisto’s autobiographical works. The titles and summaries of the seven chapters forming this thesis make it clear that strong connections exist among blindness in literature, corporeality, and subjectivity. This study enables us to engage in a sustained
reflection on, and discovery of, selfhood through the medium of the literary imagination as it explores the experience of blindness.