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IN PURSUIT OF THE DETECTIVE GENRE: "LA MUERTE Y LA BRUJULA" OF J. L. BORGES

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> *There is something tragic in the fate of the murder-mystery writer; his goal is to contest verisimilitudes, yet the better he succeeds, the more powerfully he establishes a new verisimilitude, one linking his text to the genre to which it belongs. Hence the murder mystery affords our purest image of the impossibility of escaping verisimilitude: the more we condemn verisimilitude, the more we are enslaved by it.*
>
> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose* [1]

The central conflict of la "Muerte y la brújula" of Jorge Luis Borges is the lack of contact — and the fortuitous contact — between reality (the explanation of Treviranus, the police inspector) and pure reason (the solution as conceived by the detective Lönnrot). Lonnrot dispenses with the murders themselves, delving instead into the perfect, hidden symmetries which link them and which, by his logic, portend divine revelation. As Lönnrot himself suggests at the start, his method is Kabbalistic and, thus, well suited aesthetically to the nature of the crime: *He aquí un rabino muerto; yo preferiría una explicación puramente rabínica.*[2] Like the Hasidic scholars of old who sought the hidden meaning of God's Word in the formal disposition of

the Holy Scriptures, Lönnrot sets out in search of a higher truth than that revealed by empirical observation. In essence he seeks to interpret reality without regard for the real events which are its content. As a result, the abstract model which he constructs functions only when reality happens to coincide with It, either through chance or through the intervention of the master criminal, Red Scharlach. Lönnrot's model throws light upon the formal problem of the crimes, their disposition in time and space, but fails to understand their true significance and purpose: to isolate and trap the famous detective Lonnrot by appealing to his mania for "interesting" solutions attained through abstract reasoning. Lönnrot is the victim of his own logic, caught when reality overtakes reason. Like Abenjacán el Bojari, Lönnrot winds up dead in a Labyrinth of his own design.

The genre to which Borges pays homage in "La muerte y la brújula" is that of the detective story. As Viktor Sklovskij's study "The Mystery Novel" (1925) has demostrated, the mystery tale — and the detective tale in particular — makes use of certain structural constants: among others, the manipulation of false and true solutions, simultaneous actions and parallel intrigues, and the device of inversion.[3] The detective is a professional solver of mysteries[4] who invariably rejects the "obvious," prosaic and usually false solutions of the police inspector before revealing the unexpected secret of the mystery, this through the powers of deduction and removed, near-mystical contemplation of the facts of the case. On a purely formal level, this is, indeed, what we find in "La muerte y la brújula." Only here the initial crime is a chance happening, a random fluke unrelated to the criminal process (that is, the "mystery") into which it is incorporated by the detective. The series of murders responds to a different motive and, as a result, the solution to its "mystery" cannot explain the initial crime, its presumed first element, the death of Rabbi Yarmolinsky. As the narrator observes with irony: *Es verdad que Erik Lônnrot no logró impedir el último crimen, pero es indiscutible que lo previo. Tampoco adivinó la identidad del infausto asesino de Yarmolinsky, pero sí la secreta morfología*
de la malvada serie (p. 143).

Despite the many twists, reversals and inversions of "La muerte y la brújula," the reader has no problem in identifying it as belonging to the detective genre. Indeed, one may, following Sklovskij, assert that the principal device of detective fiction is precisely the provision and denial of false solutions, and thus the reader of Borges' story, "expecting the unexpected," accepts it into the genre. Still there are certain differences in "La muerte y la brújula" which transform it, at least in part, into something new. In short: the genre's characteristic device of inversion — denial of the obvious, traditional and pragmatic logic of common sense in favor of more abstract and analytical, "elegant" reasoning — is used by Borges to show, ironically, the supremacy of the former over the latter.

In addition to this bifurcation of truth and the solution offered by reason, unheard of in the traditional mystery tale, a fundamental reversal of roles has taken place. It is the criminal who analyzes the detective's modus operandi, lays a trap for him and, ultimately, reveals the true explanation of the events which have transpired. As Scharlach himself confesses (p. 156), the series of crimes was devised to justify and conform to Lönnrot's Kabbalistic conjectures. The criminal purpose guiding the course of events originates, therefore, from within the process of crime-solving, and thus the pursuit of the criminal becomes, as it were, the pursuit of crime itself. The detective of Borges' story is transformed, in a sense, into the criminal mastermind behind the murders. As a result, his execution is justice done, poetically, with irony.

It is interesting to compare this turn of events in "La muerte y la brújula" to an observation made by a character in Michel Butor's novel, *L'emploi du temps: ...all detective fiction is based on two murders of which the first, commited by the murderer, is merely the occasion for the second, in which he is the victim of the pure and unpunishable murderer, the detective.*[5] It would appear that Borges has seized this basic, though silent, feature of detective fiction — the cold-blooded predatory fashion in which the detective tightens his noose around the criminal — and chosen to dramatize its flawed logic and inherent lack of justice. Just as the unrelenting practice of pure reason reveals its lack of rationality, the pursuit of the criminal by the detective becomes quite literally premeditated murder.[6] In each of these instances Borges observes the conventions of the traditional detective tale, incorporating them, however, on the level of plot rather than on that of structure. The world of "La muerte y la brújula" becomes itself a critical reading of detective fiction and, as we shall see, this Ironic adherence to the constraints of genre bring into question the nature of genre itself. By way of approximation, let us consider what Borges himself has said about the detective story. In an essay written in 1978, Borges makes the following statement:

> Tenemos, pues, al relato policial como un género Intelectual. Como un género basado en algo totalmente ficticio; el hecho es que un crimen es descubierto por un razonador abstracto y no por delaciones, por descuidos de los criminales. Poe sabla que lo que él estaba haciendo no era realista, por eso sitúa la escena en Paris; y el razonador era un aristócrata, no la policía; por eso pone en ridículo a la policía. Es decir, Poe habla creado un genio de lo intelectual.[7]

Borges' explanation of Poe's motivation aside, it is true that Poe situates his "Murders in the Rue Morgue" in Paris rather than in New York and chooses foreigners of the upper class as his principal actors, creating a

cultural and social distance between the action and the reader. Similarly, Poe's detectives, as characterized by Borges, act in a conspicuously atypical manner: drawing the drapes shut at dawn, they light candles, while at dusk they emerge to walk the empty streets of Paris.[8] What Borges stresses, then, is the anti-realist tendencies of the genre which both intensify the exercise of reason and draw it toward the fantastic:

> Poe no quería que el género policial fuera un género realista, quería que fuera un género intelectual, un género fantástico si ustedes quieren, pero un género fantástico de la inteligencia, no de la imaginación solamente; de ambas cosas desde luego, pero sobre todo de la inteligencia....[9]

Bearing in mind that Borges has on numerous occasions characterized all of metaphysics — including theology and philosophy — as branches of fantastic literature,[10] we arrive finally at a better understanding of what in particular has drawn Borges to the detective story. As we have seen in Borges' scenario, Poe's detectives are moved to solve crimes as an exercise in pure reason, just as Borges himself is moved *a estimar las ideas religiosas o filosóficas por su valor estético y aun por lo que encierran de singular y de maravilloso.*[11] Indeed, the detectives which Borges evokes and attributes to Poe appear, rather, obsessed with *Borges'* metaphysical speculation: *Yo me imagino a los dos amigos recorriendo las calles desiertas de París, de noche, y hablando ¿sobre qué? Hablando de filosofía, sobre temas intelectuales.*[12] In this imaginative evocation — which, curiously echoes Borges' memories of his own youth: *Caminábamos por todas aquellas calles, sin hablar de ellas, hablando de literatura, hablando sobre la metáfora, que era una obsesión de aquella época... —* we find the early prototypes for Borges' own abstract reasoners, Don Isidro Parodi and Erik Lonnrot.

Interestingly, it is not merely the detectives of Borges' stories who are obsessed with metaphysical consideration: rather, the very world in which they move is dominated by the constructs of human thought. As Marcial Tamayo and Adolfo Ruiz-Diaz have observed, the names of the characters may be traced to literary antecedents:

> Una revisión de los nombres enumerados nos descubre, debajo de su múltiple disparidad y también múltiples analogías particulares, el funcionamiento de la intención constructiva. Todos los nombres pertenecen, ya por propia índole, ya por emparentamiento lateral, a la historia de la literatura; taxativamente, son nombres lierarios.[14]

Similarly, the primary geographic references of the story all contain within themselves evidence of previous literary transformation. For example, the Hôtel du Nord where Rabbi Yarmolinsky is murdered takes shape, echoing the words of Leopoldo Lugones and Eduardo Mallea, and

redolent with the eeriness of the traditional mystery tale, as *ese alto prisma que domina el estuario cuyas aguas tienen el color del desierto. A esa torre (que muy notoriamente reúne la aborrecida blancura de un sanatorio, la numerada divisibilidad de una cárcel y la apariencia general de una casa mala)...* (p. 143).[15] Equally charged with echoes of Argentine literature, the second murder takes place on the western outskirts, the *orillas,* of Buenos Aires:

> A izquierda y a derecha del automóvil, la ciudad se desintegraba; crecía el firmamento y ya importaban poco las casas y mucho un horno de ladrillos o un álamo. Llegaron a su pobre destino: un callejón final de tapias rosadas que parecían reflejar de algún modo la desaforada puesta del sol. (p. 147)

In keeping, the third crime of the series — which is, in fact, a carefully staged farce — depicts the Carnaval celebrations along the waterfront reaches of the Rue de Toulon, *esa calle salobre en la que conviven el cosmoramay la lechería, el burdel y los vendedores de biblias* (p. 148). And, finally, the closing scene withdraws into the dream world of Triste-le-Roy, an abandoned villa which *abundaba en inútiles simetrías y en repeticiones maniáticas* (p. 153), and in which Herbert Ashe of "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertlus": *recibió, y tal vez no leyó, el tomo undécimo de una enciclopedia ilusoria* (p. 115). What we have found, therefore, is that the "reality" in which the detective of "La muerte y la brújula" operates, and the way in which he operates, are far removed from the normalcy of the reader's everyday world and experience. They are literary stylizations or, to use Borges' terminology, fantastic fictions of human intellect. To the extent that a real geography exists, it is a personal one whose spatial relations correspond to the associations Borges makes between the streets of Buenos Aires and the literature of Argentina.[16] The detective attempts, nevertheless, as would a Kabbalistic scholar, to read the world as an absolute, logically predetermined text, unable to recognize not only the role of chance, but also the very fictionallty of what he considers real.[17] As a result, he both fails to make sense of the world — (and It is unclear that the Kabbalists had much greater luck) — and, in addition, contributes to its chaos by effectively fictionalizing what is already the product of previous imagination. The rational, measured logic of the detective, which traditionally unlocks the secrets of the mystery and restores order, appears unable to penetrate an already ordered (and, thus, "fictionalized" to Borges) sphere. In a world of fiction, the non-realistic mode of operation of the detective becomes a dated convention. And like the conventional reasoning of the police inspector of the traditional detective tale, it is capable of supplying only false solutions. Once more the roles have been reversed; the detective is now Sklovskij's "permanent idiot" while the police inspector — acting as pragmatically as any real-life inspector,

recogizlng the fantasy of Lönnrot's logic — intuits the true explanation of Yarmolinsky's murder.

Because of what we have seen to this point, it is tempting to read "La muerte y la brújula" as an allegory of man's inability to penetrate the order of the world as it truly is, a theme prevalent in both the fiction and the essays of Borges. Unable to comprehend God's order, man invents an order of his own. (Hence Borges' assertion that philosophy and theology — all metaphysics — are indeed fictions, branches of the fantastic.) Following this line of reasoning, Ana Maria Barrenechea juxtaposes "La muerte y la brújula" with the essays of *Otras inquisiciones,* commenting the "logic behind the illogicalness," and observes: *Borges concludes by showing it to be the instrument consciously created to unveil the true nature of a dream world.*[18] This seems a more than adequate analysis of the thematic content of Borges' story, but it leaves aside the narrative aspect, the way in which this theme takes shape. More apt in this operational sphere are Tamayo and Ruiz-Diaz who characterize the story as "el conflicto entre la realidad y una interpretación de ella.[19] But this too is not fully satisfactory, for the "reality" of "La muerte y la brújula" in itself presupposes the transformations of abstract, human reason which operate, in the traditional detective story, through the detective. And since for Borges these transformations are in essence anti-realistic literary conventions, the resultant "reality" is patently unreal. The conflict, therefore, becomes one between two fictions; a stylized, literary universe and a stylized, literary convention, the "rational" interpretation of fact at the hands of the literary detective. If then there is an allegory in "La muerte y la brújula," it depicts the falseness of the fictional detective's logic, the absurd conventions of the detective genre.

Returning to Borges' essay on the detective story, we find his analysis prefaced by a curious and astute comment on genre which helps to explain the transformations present in his own work: *los géneros literarios dependen, quizás, menos de los textos, que del modo en que éstos son leídos. El hecho estético requiere la conjunción del lector y del texto y sólo entonces existe.*[20] The reader's sense of genre — in this instance, his identification of "La muerte y la brújula" with the detective tale — is preconditioned by the practices of, and his exposure to, earlier works of a similar nature. Here, however, it is as if the world of the story were *itself* a prior reading, the product of an earlier detective. And, as one might expect, the resulting narration is doubly ironic. Not only are the traditional roles inverted — Lônnrot becomes both the "permanent idiot" and the criminal mastermind — , but the narration underlines the artificiality, rather than the art, of the detective's use of reason. In short, the function of the detective genre has changed while its narrative devices and basic structures have not, fulfilling, in this way, Jurij Tynjanov's criteria for literary evolution.[21] Where traditionally

the rational intervention of the detective reestablishes order to a world in chaos, in "La muerte y la brújula" this intervention serves to further undermine the reader's sense that he can understand, through reason, his world — a world which is, moreover, of his own design. In the final tally, then, man's existence once more is ruled by chance and fate. The power of reason is doubly denied.

By way of conclusion, and in light of the generic difficulties posed by "La muerte y la brújula," it is interesting to consider the treatment the story has received at the hands of its critics. As we have seen, the fundamental physical realities of the city and its inhabitants embody within themselves the resonance of prior fictionalization and personal geography. The setting is at once real, yet still consciously not realistic. Nor is it a mere poetization. It is, rather, a world which knowingly, and ironically, accepts literary convention as fact. Here, once more, the locales of the four crimes serve as clear examples. The metaphorical descriptions of Buenos Aires, given life in the work of authors such as Lugones, Mallea and Borges, become literal attributes of the stylized city of Borges' story. In this sense its taxonomic relation to the planet Tlön — which conforms exactly to the idealist philosophy of Berkeley — is undeniable. Physical reality is the result of metaphysical speculation. The detective tale, right down to the world in which it operates, becomes quite literally "un género fantástico de la inteligencia."

In spite of this evident literary parentage, a number of critics have sought to explore the city of "La muerte y la brújula" in much the same fashion as Treviranus and Lônnrot. One group of critics, recognizing the marked resemblance between the city and Buenos Aires, has regarded the story as a problem in geography whose solution is obtained by correlating the murder sites to actual locations within Buenos Aires. In this, their guide has invariably been a note written by Borges for his readers and expanded in the English translation:

> A few topographical elucidations may perhaps be in order. The Hôtel du Nord stands for the Plaza Hotel. The estuary is the Río de la Plata, called "the great lion-colored river" by Lugones, and, far more effectively, "the unmoving river" by Eduardo Mallea. The Rue de Toulon is the Paseo Colón, or rather, in terms of rowdiness, the old Paseo de Julio, today called Leandro Alem. Triste-le-Roy, a beautiful name invented by Amanda Molina Vedia, stands for the now demolished Hotel Las Delicias in Adrogué.[22]

With a compass and a map of Buenos Aires this point-to-point transposition may easily be accomplished. To the best of my knowledge, however, no critic has actually attempted the complete procedure. As they were for Lônnrot, the results are quite unexpected. On the true map of Buenos Aires the four points do not describe a rhombus as we are told by the story;

moreover, the first three crimes — *los vértices perfectos de un triángulo equilátero y místico* (p. 151) — all fall within the downtown quarter, rather than on the North, East and Western outskirts (see the Appendix). The careful reader, noting the literary citations upon which this geography is based, should perhaps have anticipated the failure of this exercise. In addition, the geographic question aside, Lônnrot's experience should have dissuaded him, as should the logic and materials employed by the fictional detective. First, the *minucioso plano de la ciudad, arrancado notoriamente de un Baedeker* upon which Lonnrot plots the crimes is problematic: Baedeker has published no guidebooks to South America. But even assuming that "Baedeker" is employed here in its generic sense of "guidebook" (as it is on the cover of *The Aleph and Other Stories),* the logic governing the space-time array is flawed. The crimes, we are told, are equidistant: *simetría en el tiempo (3 de diciembre, 3 de enero, 3 de febrero); simetría en el espacio, también...* (p. 151). If indeed this is true, there is no reason whatsoever to expect the fourth crime to fall on the 3rd of March — Lönnrot's deduction — since there are fewer days in February than in December and January. (And why would a cult ruled by Jewish mysticism follow the Gregorian calendar to begin with?) But this blind acceptance of what, on paper, *seems* logical is precisely the undoing of Lônnrot. It Is likewise so for the members of the geographic-minded critical community. As was the case for Lonnrot, their exercise fails to see the true mystery.[23]

Much the same may be said of the geometricians of the literary world. Once again, it is a comment by Borges that sparks their interpretation:

> Ya redactada esa ficción, he pensado en la conveniencia de amplificar el tiempo y el espacio que abarca: la venganza podría ser heredada; los plazos podrían computarse por años, tal vez por siglos; la primera letra del Nombre podría articularse en Islandia; la segunda, en Méjico; la tercera, en el Indostán. (p. 115)

This prologue to *Artificios,* the collection in which "La muerte y la brújula" first appeared, seems to suggest that the story is only one possible manifestation of an infinite series, one enactment of a timeless Kabbalistic ritual. This is, in fact, the story's principal premise or paradigm. An additional consideration must be made, however, and this is the ironic treatment which this premise is accorded in the particular case of "La muerte y la brújula." As with the conventions of detective fiction as a whole, the "truths" of he Kabbala and conceptual geometry, though intellectually appealing, are illusory; they cannot contain the real substance of existence.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of critics has sought to reduce "La muerte y la brújula" to its philosophical bases, viewing it as a system of

abstract, logical relations. Ernesto Sábato, for example, notes the absence of precise geographic references, the unfeeling actions and atmosphere, and the incredible names of the characters: in short, the elements which distance the city in the story from the real Buenos Aires and which, for him, reduce the crimes to points on a mathematical grid and transform the "mystery" into an unproven theorem:

> Se necesita una ciudad un poco genérica, con nombres cualesquiera; un Buenos Aires donde todo haya sido suficientemente generalizado como para ser geometría, no mera historia y geografía. El cuento podía (y en rigor debía haber empezado con las rituales palabras del universo matemático: *Sea una ciudad X cualquiera.*[24]

In a similar vein, Luis Murillo chooses to emphasize the vacillation between individual elements and their ensemble, a notion central to the Kabbalah, and concludes: *the final irony is that the components with which we grasp that there is a riddle to be solved are reiterating the elusiveness and insolubility of the ultimate mystery. This is the antithetical sense with which every detail of the story is charged.*[25] To "understand" the story, therefore, the reader need but realize that the explanations indicated are, in fact, never given. This process of vacillation, however, while certainly true both as a metaphysical element embodied in the story (the inability of man to know if his ordering of the universe is the true ordering) and as a characterization of the story's structure, is not able in itself — as a formal statement — to explain *why* there is no solution to be found. To borrow an analogy from the field of logic, Godel's theorem has proven that no system of abstract relations — here, geometric (Sábato) or philosohical (Murillo) — is sufficiently rich as to include its own interpretation. In the case of "La muerte y la brújula," the vacillation and uncertainty, the "mystery" embodied in solutions suggested and subsequently denied, is a fundamental feature of the detective genre (although, clearly, not in the far-reaching epistemological sense of Murillo). Only on the level of genre, therefore, do theme and treatment come together as co-elements in a single system. In the final tally, the geographic and geometric tendencies of the critics — like the solutions of Treviranus and Lonnrot — prove useless, one without the other. The true explanation, the one with meaning, considers both form and content, observation as well as reason. The ironies of "La muerte y la brújula" make sense only in the context of detective fiction; it is a self-conscious exercise in the limitations of genre.

Borges has often commented, only partly in jest: *If I were asked to name the chief event in my life, I should say my father's library. In fact, I sometimes think I have never strayed outside that library.*[26] Expanding on this notion for the prologue to *Evaristo Carriego,* Borges continues:

> Yo creí, durante años, haberme criado en un suburbio de Buenos Aires, un suburbio de calles aventuradas y de ocasos visibles. Lo cierto es que me crié en un jardín, detrás de una verja con lanzas, y en una biblioteca de ilimitados libros ingleses. Palermo del cuchillo y de la guitarra andaba (me aseguran) por las esquinas, pero quienes poblaron mis mañanas y dieron agradable horror a mis noches fueron el bucanero ciego de Stevenson, agonizando bajo las patas de los caballos, y el traidor que abondonó a su amigo en la luna y el viajero del tiempo, que trajo del porvenir una flor marchita, y el genio encarcelado durante siglos en el cántaro salomónico y el profeta velado del Jorasan, que detrás de las piedras y de la seda ocultaba la lepra.[27]

This autobiographical notion takes a literal shape in "La muerte y la brújula." Physical reality is but a projection of literature; geography, an exercise in geometric ideals. And genre becomes an exercise in the study of genre. In "La muerte y la brújula" the fictional conventions of the detective story become the bases of reality, and in this transformation we find that we cannot live by the tenets of fiction. When the awareness of literary operation replaces the operations of literature, the function of genres — here the detective tale — changes. The power of reason to provide order gives way to chaos. The logic of the detective is powerless. No more is life elementary, my dear Watson.

APPENDIX

To plot the locales of the four crimes, following Lönnrot's methodology but on the real map of Buenos Aires, one begins at the Hotel Plaza — the "Hôtel du Nord" of the story — on the Plaza San Martin, which defines the northern extreme of the North/South axis. Since the first three crimes | describe an equilateral triangle, the eastern point is located where a ray of | 30° to the North/South axis intersects the Paseo Colón. The western point is found equidistant to the west, measured, similarly, at 30° to the North/South axis. Although the settlement of Buenos Aires was far more centralized during Borges' early years than it is today,* the first three primos clearly take place — when transposed onto the real map of Buenos Aires — within the core of the city (their separation is roughly 1500 meters). In contrast, the fourth point, lying beyond the *ciego riachuelo de aguas barrosas, infamado de curtiembres y de basuras* (p. 152) to the south of the

* The demographic and social history of Buenos Aires is described and analyzed in James R. Scobie, *Buenos Aires. Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

city, is far beyond the city limits. Despite the fact that the Hotel Las Delicias in Adrogué is indeed nearly due south of the Plaza San Martin, it is roughly 22 kilometers distant. As a result, the four crimes do not describe a rhombus and the four crimes evoke a sense of the storied neighborhoods of Buenos Aires rather than geographically true locations.

(See map on next page)

BUEN PASTOR
INVALIDOS
DOCK Nº 1
DOCK Nº 2
DOCK Nº 3
DOCK Nº 4
DARSENA SUD
DARSENA NORTE
DEPOSITO DE LAS CATALINAS
PASEO DE JULIO
RIACHUELO
N

NOTAS

1 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose,* trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 86-87.

2 Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1956), p. 145. All subsequent references will appear in the text. Borges' interest in the Kabbalah is well documented in a number of his essays. Among others: "Una vindicación de la cabala" in *Discusión;* "El libro" of *Borges oral;* and, "La cábala" of *Siete noches.*

3 Viktor Sklovskij, "The Mystery Novel: Dickens' *Little Dorrit,"* trans. Guy Carter, in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views,* ed. Ladislaw Matejka and Kristina Pomorska (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978), pp. 220-226.

4 Sklovskij, p. 221.

5 Quoted in Todorov, p. 44.

6 The Portuguese have provided a most fitting translation of Clint Eastwood's brutal detective saga, *Dirty Harry:* "A fúria da razao."

7 Jorge Luis Borges, "El cuento policial," in *Borges oral* (Barcelona: Editorial Bruguera, 1980), p. 84.

8 Borges, "El cuento policial," pp. 80-81.

9 Borges, "El cuento policial," p. 80.

10 Speaking of the metaphysicians of Tlön,, Borges writes: "Juzgan que la metafísica es una rama de la literatura fantástica" en "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" of ***Ficciones,*** p. 23. See also *Otras Inquisiciones* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1960), p. 68: "Las invenciones de la filosofía no son menos fantásticas que las del arte" This idea also appears in the prologue to J. L. Borges, S. Ocampo and A. Bioy Casares, *Antología de la literatura fantástica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1940). With reference to this last volume, Borges writes: "pero delato la culpable omisión de los insospechados y mayores maestros del género: Parménides, Platón, Juan Escoto Erígena, Alberto Magno, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Francis Bradley," in *Discusión* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Emecé, 1964), p. 172.

11 Borges, *Otras Inquisiciones,* p. 247.

12 Borges, "El cuento policial," p. 81. My emphasis.

13 Jorge Luis Borges in *Borges el memorioso. Conversaciones de Jorge Luis Borges con Antonio Carrizo,* 2nd ed. (México, D. F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1983), p. 258.

14 Marcial Tamayo and Adolfo Ruiz-Dlaz, *Borges: enigma y clave* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1955), p. 38. See also Ronald Christ, "The Art of Fiction xxxix," in *Paris Review,* n. 40, (1967), 158 in which Borges comments upon the process of selecting names for his characters.

15 Borges himself suggests a few of the literary antecedents of this passage in a commentary to the English translation of his story: "The estuary is the Río de la Plata, called 'the great lion-colored river' by Lugones, and, far more effectively, 'the unmoving river" by Eduardo Mallea."ln Jorge Luis Borges, *The Aleph and Other Stories,* trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), p. 268.

16 This relationship is expressed by Borges most clearly in his poetry where it is perhaps ***the*** dominant theme. The sites of the four crimes — the Plaza San Martin,

the western outskirts and Palermo, the waterfront, Adrogué — figure especially prominently, particularly as points of entry into the dream worlds of national and family valor and myth.

17 Lönnrot proposes his "rabbinical" hypothesis, rejecting that of Treviranus, with the words: 'En la que usted ha improvisado, interviene copiosamente al azar" (p. 145). In an essay of 1931 titled "Una vindicación de la cabala" — which appears, ironically, among the books of Rabbi Yarmolinsky — Borges observes: "Esa premisa (que fue la que asumieron los cabalistas) hace de la Escritura un texto absoluto, donde la colaboración del azar es calculable en cero." *Discusión,* p. 59.

18 Ana Maria Barrenechea, *Borges the Labyrinth Maker,* ed. and trans. Robert Lima (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 37.

19 Tamayo and Ruiz-Diaz, pp. 35-36.

20 Borges, "El cuento policial," p. 72. Claudio Guillén reaches much the same conclusion, predicting — in the process — the innovation found in Borges' story: "Es raro que el 'receptor' tome un libro, o asista a una función, u oiga un relato, sin esperas o esperanzas previas y ultralndividuales. El escritor innovador es quien se apoya en este entendimiento para construir, muchas veces, sus sorpresas". In ***Entre lo uno y lo diverso*** (Barcelona: Editorial Critica, 1985), p. 147.

21 Jurlj Tynjanov, "On Literary Evolution" (1927), trans. C. A. Luplow, in *Readings in Russian Poetics,* ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystina Pomorska (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978), pp. 66-78.

22 Borges, *The Aleph and Other Stories,* p. 268.

23 The problem contained here — the conflict between what seems logical and what is true — has been addressed by Tzvetan Todorov in "An Introduction to Verisimilitude," In *The Poetics of Prose,* pp. 80-88.

24 Ernesto Sábato, *El Escritor y sus fantasmas,* 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barrai, 1981), p. 73.

25 Luis A. Murlllo, *The Cyclical Night; Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 193.

26 Jorge Luis Borges, "An Autobiographical Essay" in *The Aleph and Other Stories,* p. 209.

27 Jorge Luis Borges, *Evaristo Carriego,* 2nd ed. (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1979), p. 9.