

MODALITIES, LOGIC, AND THE CABALA IN BORGES'
"THE THEME OF THE TRAITOR AND THE HERO"



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PREAMBLE

*"I saw the starry tree eternity
Put forth the blossom time"
Proteus, Robert Buchanan*

This paper will attempt to plumb the literary depths of Jorge Luis Borges' labyrinth, but in such a way as not to limit ourselves with merely a literary theory or criticism; rather, we will intersperse such an endeavour with an added triple focus: a philosophical, semantic and slightly cabalistic approach. We will focus primarily on "The Theme of the Traitor and Hero", with a relevant mixture of a few of his other works, and some valuable intersections with Derrida and Deleuze. We will open with a preamble discussion on the notion of the labyrinth, and then proceed with a more detailed logical and semantical discussion on metaphor, context, deixis, and disjunction. We must first set the stage for our discussion by talking at some appreciable length on our view that re-

presentationalism can only bring us to an unfecund value space where judgements will be ascribed to the work. To avoid this, we will defend a more Lyotardian and Deleuzian view. Hopefully this paper will not lend itself to gauche over-interpretation of the extremely interpretation-sensitive character of the works, fragile as they may be to the rough handling by Borges' posthumous critics.

It will appear that we are weaving through a multitude of Borge-sian topics, performing intersections across various planes of understanding. But as we hop from one plateau to the next, we will accrue a particular relevance from the surface preceding, a kind of extra clue that may appear superfluous for the moment, but will act as a kind of a decoding of the cipher.

1. THE INFINITE EXERGUE

*"Whatever shall we do in that remote spot?
Well, we will write our memoirs.
Work is the scythe of time."
Napoleon, 1815*

Borges is an architect of literary labyrinths, of textual transgressions, of interlocking deictic tiles born in the Heraclitean spirit of *po-lemos* (as two passing things pass through one another while maintaining their distinction), and how these tiles are not some fanciful kludge that ambles about and exhausts its possibilities. It is of a text within a text, an intertextuality that unfolds with great precision and an astounding amount of perspicuity. Of the modern writers, Borges is arguably the first literary alchemist of his sort, combining a rich heritage of mythemes with a veritable horde of philosophical interruptions and historical data, produced in a harmonious architec-tonic array that resists both codification and completion. It is necessary that we paint the man in his context, to place Borges in his own creation: the labyrinth. His method of combination resists conventional forms of logical symbolization, yet we can extract a few common rules that correspond with his labyrinth, this literary structure. Irby's introduction to *Other Inquisitions* heaps on Borges these adjectives: "whimsical bookishness", "conversational discursiveness",

“elevated diction”, “informal opinion”, and “formal analysis”. We will venture to derive our own image of Borges, hopefully without as many adjectives that only serve as representational devices, and we know that Deleuze would not approve of representationalism to mar the proceedings, especially where literature is concerned.

The idea of the infinite library figures prominently in the immense, condensed character of his writings. There are an infinity of possible spatio-temporal coordinates. We stand there with Borges—us, the readers, and he the writer. With his text, he does not hazard to take us to any space or time, or even to exhibit a simultaneous multiplicity of places and moments.

At times, as we can note from the multiple surfaces (the rich topography of references), Borges is more of an academic sleuth than a writer... a kind of polymath. The stylistic aspect of the work itself is not highly poetic; in fact, it is quite poor (though it is more elaborate in its original Spanish). This sleuthing tradition we can trace forward to Umberto Eco (especially *Foucault's Pendulum* which, ironically, shows the dangers of sleuthing), William H. Gass, and to a lesser degree, Henry Miller's erudite rants and constant raids of the public library. What is the essential character of the writer-sleuth? 1) To be well-read in an exaggerated sense, to become a biblibibuli, to possess an academic concupiscence across many disciplines; 2) to hazard seemingly strange and bizarre connections between people and events; 3) to create new horizons, landscapes, topographies of interpretation of multiple facts; 4) to be personally transformed into a convergence point of all history.

Borges is one of the first writers in a particular turn in literature, a kind of marked finale to the romantic age. His work, and others of its kind, marked the waning of 19th Century prudishness and sublimity in literature, and the upsurge of post- or transmodern literature. Borges, being one of these pioneers, could not help but to stand in both eras: one foot firmly positioned in the past and the other gradually making contact with the age that had yet to be given shape. It would appear that Borges is constantly mediating his literary presence through an ambivalence, a furtive attempt at escaping the seductive and powerfully potent literature of what preceded him. But there is nothing remarkable in this, for every writer of re-

pute has to at one time or another summon the courage to transcend and overcome his or her influences, to overcome the lulling seduction of the past.

2. DEIXIS

*"It is completely unimportant.
That is why it is so interesting."*

Agatha Christie

Who is the narrator in Borges' "The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero"? In our treatment of the text, Borges is the first narrator, the meta-narrator; however, there are smaller narrators in the text, no less instrumental or worthy of our attention.

The narrator changes places, surrenders ownership of the dialogue as we descend through a cavalcade of historical moments. As an interassemblage, each temporal reference interlocks with all the others, creating a totalizing effect, a historical *tour de force* enabling its audience to view these moments in this manner. Borgesian temporality, it must be noted, is multi-layered, but also cyclical; events repeat themselves in different cloth, with different actors and cultural backdrops. It is no wonder that Borges implants this line: "Kilpatrick was killed in a theater, but the entire city was a theater as well, and the actors were legion, and the drama crowned by his death extended over many days and many nights" (*Labyrinths* 74). Time, in the Borgesian sense, is vast historical stage that re-enacts the same moments with different actors. "All the world's a stage and we are merely its players", this one Shakespearean line that must have fascinated and kindled Borges (and hence, the appropriate Shakespearean references throughout the text). With each passing era, and though the events repeat themselves, there is a building of the labyrinth, a synthesis of the universal "I" of some eternal watcher (the readers themselves?) through time itself. For Borges, history is nemetic—a measure of all history—while the particularities or singularities (the people who are affected by the repeating events) are anamnestic: the Platonico-Leibnizian doctrine of reminiscence. Time and history can be analogized as a kind of ammonite:

the circular coiling away of events and the recoiling of events toward the center. What Borges does is make the labyrinth emerge from the depths of the historical unconscious, to make us aware of its intricate designs and repeating patterns. And in fact, history does repeat itself in the form of Borges' text, though it is transfigured and modified to suit the interests to suit the interests of the narrative. It is a cyclical history, but the preface by Maurois to *Labyrinths* unfortunately continues the misunderstanding of Nietzsche's conception of history as the eternal return in the most vulgar sense. History is only an eternal return insofar as the motor of nihilism conks out and necessitates a transvaluation of all hitherto existing values—it is the typology of forces in all bodies, as Deleuze notes, that “returns”, not the events themselves. Active forces of becoming never disappear, but are suppressed by reactive forces, and so do not “return” in the literal sense (as becoming-active is more akin to substance in the Spinozistic sense, literally “that which stands beneath”). Reactive forces do not return, but are eventually vanquished when reactive forces oppose and emasculate themselves. This is far afield of our inquiry into deixis, but it serves us to understand that Borges' reading of Nietzsche was not entirely accurate. However, this is excusable because the predominant understanding of Nietzsche at the time of the writing still held to this notion of eternal return as cyclical. But this again is inaccurate, for in *Otras Inquisiciones*, Borges himself reacts against such an unfair and mistaken reading of Nietzsche.

Borges sets up an entire matrixicality of narrators placed in a multiplicity of historical contexts. In this way, it is a difficult task indeed to analyze the spatial deixis from moment to moment, line to line. Due to its temporal matrixicality, this temporal labyrinth where the spatio-temporal coordinates keep shifting and compounding upon one another, the reader (and who is the reader?) is confronted with a rich tapestry of temporal interassemblages. Judge how the reference to Julius Caesar transforms: 1) as a comparison of the actions of a past-present character (Kilpatrick) with those of a remote past (Caesar); 2) as an event recorded in its past setting in Rome; 3) as the actual historical figure is appropriated as a textual figure, as a Shakespearean reference.

The presence, or at least mention, of Shakespeare is a transformative event. In fact, it would be my claim that this story's pivot acts on the Shakespearean notion of history as drama unfolding, as pre-inscribed and enacted. History, even in its multiplicity and infinity, is deterministic in Borges' understanding. The pivot is the transformative substrate, the nexus of change: the Shakespearean text transforms Caesar into a literary reference who is carried into an act of repetition by Nolan. However, Macbeth is never presented as anything but a textual reference, which may be of interest to us later in the discussion.

The tower of history rises up from the intricate labyrinth of repeating events, and so the Yeats poem situated at the beginning of the story is imbued with a special meaning power, and is not just some accidental placement on Borges' part and neither is it amphygorous. The "Platonic year" is a composition of time and Plato's theory of the Forms. In this sense, events in time are copies from some archetypal Form, and hence the repetition and proliferation of similar events that are deposited at different spatio-temporal coordinates. But the ambiguous phrase concerning the relationship between Caesar and Kilpatrick as to their respective fates being biconditional events seems to displace the notion of an archetypal form. Where would it be placed? It is perhaps here that it would be useful to adopt Derrida's *khora*, as that which acts as a non-situated situator without a definite temporal origin.¹ As we wind up the tower of history², whirling as it were, the Platonic year "whirls in the old instead," which reifies the notion of repetition, as a drawing from the Forms of history. What are we to make of the last two enigmatic lines: "All men are dancers and their tread/ Goes to the barbarous

¹ Khora is the third class mentioned in Plato's *Timaeus*. The first two are Being and Space (or Nothing), with khora acting as Generation (Time or Becoming). Other tripartite derivations stem from this: Mythos, Khora, Logos; in Hegel, Being, Idea, Spirit; in Deleuze, Chance, Becoming (or Difference), Necessity. For a more detailed discussion of khora, consult Jacques Derrida's "Khora" in *On the Name*.

² Two senses of the tower readily spring to mind: 1) The tower of Babel as the space of convergence of diverse languages and cultures, and 2) Jeremy Bentham's notion of the Panopticon. However, it is this notion of the panoptic space that will aid us most in our foregoing discussion.

clangour of a gong?" The gong represents the commandment, the cue for the dancers (or actors) to enter and exit the stage of history for re-enactments. The Babel aspect of the tower as a notion must have intrigued Borges, himself believing that the motor of historical return was universal, transgressive of political and cultural borders. In this aspect of the labyrinth, we are all separated from our universal Forms, lost in a maze where we fumble towards reconnection. History, seen in this totality, unites all humanity in its tapestry. Borges would be the first to point out that despite the diversity of historical events, there is a common root, a collection of tropes or archetypes from which all events spring. History figures prominently in Borges' works; in this particular story, he makes use of Vico, Condorcet and Hegel, all of whom had philosophical theories of history. We could digress here and consider these individual theories in greater detail and see how they aid in the construction of Borges, but we will resist that temptation...even though the text sets itself up so readily for such an ever-expansive analysis, an analysis that would become an infinite labour of associations, of compounded interpretations (we will speak more of traces later). What intrigues us about Borges' text, as well as his conception of an infinitely repetitive history, is that it is not a closed text. Rather, we could continue building on it, continue expanding the labyrinth ad infinitum. We could create, just using Borges' text, an infinite encyclopedia, a veritable Library of Babel. It is no wonder that Borges is instrumental in contemporary literary theory.

Linguists utilize deixis in such a way as to plot particular coordinates on temporal and spatial axes. If the speech act occurs in the present (say, "I went to the party last night" which makes an implicit reference to a speaker who is now talking) we situate the speaker in a particular spatio-temporal space on the axes. If the content of the speech act is in the present, then the reference would be identical in space and time to the speaker. If the content is situated in the past or future, and perhaps in a different space, then the coordinates will be plotted at a different spatio-temporal point from the speaker, i.e., the coordinates for party (space) and last night (time: past), at a different location on the axis from the speaker who is in a different space at present. But there is an inherent weakness in co-

ordination in terms of space-time when we consider the way in which Borges expresses it. To recall our first question of "who is the narrator", we find this question essential in understanding the temporal reference point of the speaker (is it Borges in Argentina?). Without the speaker being established, we have no reference point to plot the contents of the speech act. For instance, if we take a random phrase such as "in my past, I was a drug fiend," we are not given enough information to plot the contextual reference in terms of space and time, for "my past" could mean at any point. Moreover, if we do not know who uttered the statement, it will have less meaning to us in the sense that we have been left devoid of the context of the "I" who is speaking. All we can do at this point with such a phrase is speculate. Perhaps someone might state that the contextual reference is to Aleister Crowley or William S. Burroughs, for "drug fiend" are words we may associate with either of these figures (and Crowley did write *Diary of a Drug Fiend*). This is not the only problem, and in no way the most serious, for if we are given the context of the utterance, we could begin plotting our coordinates with relative success. The deeper problematic lies in the structure of a parabolic system: space and time are depicted in a linear, two-dimensional way. What of simultaneous events in two distinct places at the same time? For example: "I was at the party last night, and my house burnt down." In this instance, we have two events that occur in the same time, yet are spatially different. For Borges, this can be problematized further, for the references to times past and yet to come seem to be cyclical and mutually referential. In fact, all the temporal and spatial references have their root in Borges himself, as the one who has both read these events in books and the one who re-authors them. However, it may not do us well to scrap the coordination aspect of space-time, but to suggest a modification which can accommodate Borges' use of spatio-temporal reference as well as other forms of literature similar to this. The modification would necessitate a polyradic, multiple sense of possibilities being successfully depicted on a coordinate diagram, to account for the multiplicity of simultaneous spatial and temporal events. What we propose to the X and Y model is the addition of a Z axis that would allow for such possibilities that arise in temporal references in Bor-

ges. This would mean that we could plot spatio-temporal points in their varying possibilities while maintaining the integrity of reference itself. But we must also account for the direction of time in this way, a complex affair in Borges. As we know, for Borges, time does not necessarily follow a progressive tract or line of flight; it sometimes splits and recedes into the past. So in addition to plotting our coordinates on the tri-axial graph, we must indicate the direction or flow of time with arrows. This will make our diagram complete, yet very complicated. To overcome the complexities that this produces, and to make the diagram intelligible, a legend should accompany the diagram that will explain the relation between spatio-temporal events; for this, I suggest the use of the conditional, biconditional, and disjunction. It is in this way that we could draw relations of entailment, presupposition, mutual entailment, and bifurcations between various events in the speaker's utterances.

3. CONTEXT

Borgesian context is one of inclusion and growth. If we picture his text (or labyrinth, as it were) as a machine, we find that Borges imports a variety of memes (usually historical, mystical, or philosophical—though there sometimes does not appear to be a very clear distinction), and uses these as “growth points” that unfold in the greater scheme of the narrative, sometimes transgressing the borders between stories³. On the topic of retrievability concerning context, Borges makes several imports that appear to violate Grice's maxim of Manner, i.e., they are ambiguous, obscure, disordered (or at least ordered in a fashion not amenable to logical appropriation), and dense. Note here that I substituted dense as the antonym of brevity (rather than, say, long-winded), for two reasons: 1) though Borges usually wrote short pieces, they are concept-rich, dense, and require a deeper reflection that comes through a multiple reading; 2) the text grows from an exuditious and inexhaustible middle —the

³ Note how a reference in Borges' "The Garden of the Forking Paths" prefigures an event in "The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero": "in the third chapter the hero dies, in the fourth he is alive" (*Labyrinths* 24).

text builds on itself ad infinitum in that it never has done with the subject matter.

Considering the discursivity of Borges' topics, they range from historical events to Cabalistic and Talmudic ideates to philosophical memes. The reader is faced with the absolute challenge of being nearly as knowledgeable of the topics alluded to in the text as Borges. As a sidebar, it is a style of writing that expects of its audience a scholarly reading, and where the characters in the stories are not made less intelligent than the author himself. A great deal of modern literature (save for autobiographical work) attempts the opposite, where the characters are endowed with less intelligence than the author, whereas Borges (and we could include Knut Hamsun here) prefer to stand on equal footing with the characters where intelligence is concerned.

Another related challenge to the reader concerning discursive topic is the highly marginal aspect of the text itself, making obscure references intermixed with generally recognizable references (it should be of note that the majority of academic references, with some exceptions, are predominantly European or Asian). The discursivity of the text determines the way in which we read and appropriate what is being stated, and we are able to read the entirety of the *Labyrinths* anthology with one symbolic sign in mind: the fusion of the labyrinth and book. The stories that lend themselves more explicitly to this itinerary are those like "The Garden of the Forking Paths" (a telling line: "Ts'ui Pen must have said once: *I am withdrawing to write a book*. And another time: *I am withdrawing to construct a labyrinth*. Everyone imagined two works; to no one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thing" (*Labyrinths* 25). Another example would be "The Library of Babel" (with its labyrinthine architecture of repeated hexagons, and the further element: the labyrinthine arrangement of orthographical symbols to produce an infinite number of books). In less explicit ways, we are still to understand the labyrinth reading strategy, as shown in "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero" insofar as the narrative thread winds through an interconnected maze of spaces and eras (and perhaps sets up its own space and time, as we will later argue).

It is no mystery that Borges displays encyclopaedic knowledge, and that he readily applies this in a playful act of communion upon the dual surfaces of academic and literary writing. The question arises, since it is a contextual question concerning the aspect of context as genre, for whom is this written? And the publisher's infamous question, the question always posed of a fresh and unpublished manuscript in terms of market viability and practical value to its production: What sort of community would this text be best situated? This latter question incites a very large discussion on the connections between writing, economy, and to a larger extent, how writing corresponds to political forces and interventions. But we leave that question to those like Foucault or Deleuze. We are given a host of clues, for the subject matter, dealing with scholarly references, is geared toward a more scholarly market which could best effect a retrieval of the text's content. Reifying this fact, the language itself exhibits sophisticated usage more akin to the understanding of those who are in the habit of using or reading such language, i.e., the academically minded. What marks Borges off (at least lightly, like a light impression of a borderline) is his quasi-fictional content, and the expressive poetic voice (or tone), his recourse to mystical references, and his incorporation of academic information which is not focused (like we would expect in an academic journal), but seems to perform an inclusive act of wide-ranging totalization of a variety of academic ideas. What appears misleading, and to which increases the playful aspect of these communion of surfaces, is Borges' occasional use of footnotes that make reference to real texts. He also precedes several of his stories with scholarly quotes (which is less infrequent a practice in literature, and has contextual value in that it sets the tone of the foregoing narrative).

We have alluded to both content and expression, and so must pause here to consider these in turn. What is content and what is expression? Do they necessarily correspond in a unity within text itself? It would perhaps be useful to adopt Deleuze's conception of the strata, where content and expression are localized as stratified layers with intersecting contour lines that connect them. However, it may be the case that expression and content are in a disharmony, that the expression does not correspond with the nature of the con-

tent. We could easily conjure examples that would prove this case. For example, to read a neurophysiology paper written in literary prose or as a poem disrupts a seemingly fundamental understanding that content of such advanced and scholarly nature should be expressed in likewise manner. However, these fundamental assumptions are, in some cases, gradually being re-evaluated and dismantled, as in the case of Bataille's work on Nietzsche that seems to be both a personal odyssey and a critique of Nietzsche, written—not in a highly respectable academic style—in a more vividly rich prose style.⁴

Perhaps a discussion of context in terms of literary text is illusory, a kind of insupportable, structuralist monster that assumes a parallelism between reader-type and text-type. Perhaps a typology of both audience and literature would confirm that these divisions are merely conceptual, a continuation of an idealist position that has somehow been carried over into a mediation of the textual phenomena. To suppose that a particular text is best suited for a particular audience is to suppose, among many other things, a polarity—or at least a dualism—between text and reader. A true, affirmative, differentiating literature—for we will not consider empty genres—resists the archetropic codification of some pre-established textual order conferred upon literature by some larger mechanism (or canons of any type). This “type” of text, in a continuum rather than situated in marked domains, repeatedly break its form. Moreover, to suppose that we should cordon certain texts off from particular readerships is to employ a subtle and heinous form of censorship, elitism, and the promotion of exclusion. Borges would agree with this, for if all knowledge is universal and transcends all national, geographical or temporal borders—which Borges implicitly advocates—then every text is suited for any reader; the only prohibitive aspect, or at least inhibitive, is the reader's intellectual and literacy abilities.

⁴ For a more detailed discussion on content and expression, the reader is directed to Deleuze's notion of strata and stratification. This is succinctly discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

4. METAPHOR

Let us take this occasion to consider the potent and overarching metaphor in Borges' work: the book as maze. What is a metaphor? A figurative speech act, a convergence of two word units in a dynamic relation where there is interchange—yet the one word always enriches the other and vice versa. In most cases, as Derrida notes, metaphors eventually perish from overuse, especially when they have been so deeply embedded in language for such a long period of time that their meaning effect fades away. In the traditional literature, a metaphor is clearly divided into target and source, or tenor and vehicle (Rpt. in Saeed 303). Lakoff and Turner would have us understand that “metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another” (Saeed 304). We could expound further on these cognitive aspects of the metaphor, to show how the terms are of a linked resemblance between the domains of the signifier and signified, but there is more that is transported here than the arbitrary likeness of signs. For Borges' metaphor, there is a thematic transport of sense (Derrida *Margins* 215).⁵ What is imported to our understanding is the double book, or the book's double; we are holding the book, a book is mentioned, and it is metaphorically a maze. One step leads to another in our comprehension of the very nature of this text, and we come to realize that we are holding a maze—a Borgesian maze. A fictional character has had to inform us of this relation, and we must note the reference is to a book, not specifically to Borges' book. Could any and all books be mazes? Certainly, if we consider Derrida's Trace theory in *Writing and Differance*. With the progression of any syntagm, as we produce more orthographical marks or phonemical sounds in an array we call a sentence, there is an increase in an irreducible plurality. We may view this plurality as an immanent plane of possibilities, as the germs of trace itself. But we must also recognize that the work itself is imbued with a multiplicity of traces from former works (since no speaker, writer, or

⁵ It should be noted that one may easily be tempted to import a Fregean style argument here on sense and reference, but the relationship Derrida outlines shares a different dynamic that speaks of thematic thresholds.

book exists in isolation), producing a matrix (or maze) of strange historical convergences and intersections. In a sense, the traces are held down temporally in the hard text, like Lacan's "points de capiton". However, there is a soft text, a malleable text that proliferates itself (meaning and traces) in our minds. We begin associating the hard text with ideas we derive from reading the text or with what we already know before approaching the text... we may continue to evolve particular traces at the exclusion of others. In Borges, the traces are held together in historical and thematic bundles, making the book more akin to a maze than the strict definition of metaphor would allow.

The Borgesian book is not only heavily saturated in trace-ridden bundles, it is also a rhizome. We find here an intersecting point with Deleuze in a threefold manner: 1) the book as rhizome, the root-book with its inexhaustible, non-linear middle; 2) the notion of nomad art and minor language that resonate in their singularity; 3) the notion of a full, textural immersion, the creation of a haptic space. However, concerning the third point, Borges' work is less haptic than panoptic, for we do not experience a full immersion into a scene of singularity that erases the totality of the dimension of possibilities (Borges does not pad his work with sensuous descriptions, rather he makes his literary spaces transient and secondary to time, and synthesizes events through this). We do not rub our eyes raw on particular scenes, as the haptic would suggest, but the reader is situated upon a raised middle to view this strange labyrinthine synthesis of time panoptically.

The major metaphor acts as a guiding principle, as the reading lesson in an otherwise highly transient set of works of combination and recombination.⁶ Perhaps it would be erroneous to unravel the tight knot of Borgesian text, for this would compromise the labyrinthine sense of the text. Perhaps we are to remain lost, or, in that po-

⁶ To serve as an example of the way in which Borges utilizes recombination, Derrida notes in *L'Oreilles de l'autre* that in Borges' story "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote", Pierre Menard is actually a combination of two people: Pierre Mesnard and Jean Mesnard. It must be noted that the presence of the 's' in the surname is indistinguishable to the ear--much like difference and difference.

tent moment in Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* when the narrator jumps on his hat saying, "I am a lost man." But to be lost in this labyrinth is not despairing, it is merely a state of affairs (though what has caused us to be lost in the labyrinth in the first place may be cause for grief). Being in the labyrinth, we witness a most beautiful panorama of interchangeable events. In essence, Borges' work is much akin to his recounting of the Aleph: seeing every possible space simultaneously. This Aleph is much akin to Leibniz's monad with its multiple reflective faces.⁷

Borges first posits this: "Perhaps universal history is the history of a few metaphors" ("Pascal's Sphere" *Other* 5), which is akin to his notion of equivocating literature and history: "Like the history of the world, the history of literature abounds in enigmas" ("Quevedo" *Other* 37). Attempts to destroy history are failed ones, for events seem to return, reconstituting themselves from some archetype. There are two ways we can view this: Borges is a platonist who believes in the Forms; or we could be intelligent about the matter and consider that the events do not "return" or become copied from some archetype, but that they become submerged into the virtual before again becoming actualized at some later time. Borges makes three potent references to the destruction of history: Julius Caesar, Emperor Shih Huang Ti (in the "Wall and the Books"), and the main character in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Earth's Holocaust" (and Borges could include a fourth, Hitler, seeing that those enumerated all share the characteristics of being megalomaniacal (cf. Borges' essay on Hitler in *Otras Inquisiciones*). Borges outlines this futility of destroying history: "the plan to abolish the past had already occurred to men and—paradoxically—is therefore one of the proofs that the past cannot be abolished. The past is indestructible; sooner or later

⁷ And here we have recourse to many Leibnizian proofs that will elucidate for the reader the reasons why Borges was very astute in making this reference. Confer Leibniz's *Monadology* 53-61. Not only do I hold Borges in a high estimation for his reading and use of Leibniz, but he would have fared as equally well as a Voltaire-esque critic of said system.

all things will return, including the plan to abolish the past" ("Nathaniel Hawthorne" *Other* 62)⁸.

We have considered destruction, so let us now consider creation. Metaphors, like so many other items of a text, are virtual like concepts and ideas. They have always existed, and Borges believes that they always will. This implies that they are not invented, but actualized: "perhaps it is a mistake to suppose that metaphors can be invented. The real ones, those that formulate intimate connections between one image and another, have always existed; those we can still invent are the false ones, which are not worth inventing" ("Nathaniel Hawthorne" *Other* 49). We have already discussed how a linguist defines a metaphor, but how would Borges define it? "The metaphor is the momentary contact of two images, not the methodical likening of two things" ("Quevedo" *Other* 40). This reifies the fact that the metaphor is a virtual device, an image rather than a thing. Metaphors that are invented rather than actualized from the virtual are combinations, not unlike the way in ancient times some mythical beasts were invented by way of combining heterogeneous animal parts into one organism. And so the metaphor must be actualized. If the metaphor is too fantastic as an invention, it will be rejected. "The chimera was beginning to bore people...it was too heterogeneous" ("Chimera" *Imaginary* 40). In a subtle sense, Borges is arguing against Descartes who makes the claim in the second meditation that paintings—even those depicting satyrs and other mythical beasts—are merely combinations of what actually exists in the world. Both Borges and Deleuze would share the complaint that it is the other way around, that the actual world is a combination of "things" in the virtual. But with the metaphor, how does it become extinct if they are somewhat permanent installations in the language that merely takes new forms? With the prolonged absence of a particular metaphor's usage, it becomes—not destroyed—destructuralized. In the destructuralization process, it loses its connections in the domain of current language and will be actualized again at some later point, albeit in a different formation (though the content

⁸ Borges' use of the word 'return' is perhaps either a poor translation, a bad selection on his part, or an ironic form of play in accord with his larger literary architectonic.

will be a repetition). These formations depend on current language usage, and especially if a new language appropriates the metaphor (which calls to the fore questions of translation).

What is real and what is fiction? That is the interminable question we face in Borges. Is the book that we hold a maze, or is it only the book referred to in the book that is a maze? How do we reconcile the interspersed references to real events and people conjoined with the entirely fictional events and people (or semi-fiction by way of Borges' combinations of the real)? Can these events be separated? Does this fiction reside in this world as actual, or does this world reside in the book as virtual?

The book as maze: the metaphor. The maze does correspond to a figurative and abstract notion, and so appears to conform to the traditional view of metaphor. However, nothing prohibits us from viewing the lines of the text themselves as a maze, as a pictorial representation, for we could trace a pen between the spaces of words and letters (and the maze changes with translation, a new space of reconfigured patterns). "Perhaps an archetype not yet revealed to men, an eternal object (to use Whitehead's term), is gradually entering the world; its first manifestation was the palace; its second was the poem. Whoever compared them would have seen that they were essentially the same" ("The Dream of Coleridge" *Other* 17).

THE VIRTUAL

According to Borges, "every novel is an ideal depiction of reality" ("Partial Enchantments of the Quixote" *Other* 46). It is ideal in the sense that what is depicted has yet to be actualized, and rather remains in the virtual substrate, the cosm of literature. Literature abounds with these virtualities, with these "yet-to-become" possibilities⁹; however, these virtualities already exist, and both Borges and

⁹ When we speak of the "yet-to-be" in concerns to a telos of singularities not yet actualized, this calls to mind Heidegger's discussion on the notion of Dasein's comportment toward death in that death is the yet-actualized finalization of Dasein (cf. *Sein und Zeit*). Moreover, it also forges an associational link to Deleuze's discussion on the split between virtual singularities as yet-to-be actualized possibilities as opposed to inevitable actualities.

Deleuze would say that they always have existed. Borges had also made mention of these virtualities as to their “someday to be actualized” telos: as the “imminence of a revelation that is not yet produced is, perhaps, the aesthetic reality” (“The Wall and the Books” *Other* 4). Here we can derive a comparison between this telos of the virtual singularity’s actualization (as produced revelation) and its contemporaneity (as the aesthetic reality that exists now in literature, the originary scene of their production or “pre-production”).

Deleuze imports more than just literature into this realm of the virtual; Borges has in mind strictly literature which is understandable owing to his preoccupation as a writer and literary sleuth. But it would be of interest to examine this field of virtual immanence as it pertains to Borges. For Borges, literature is a total, intersubstituting entity that has its own singularities, multiplicities, and immanent relationships. A text can stand on its own as a singularity (or deeper, the signs in the one text alone can be called singular), and it can resonate with many texts. We can choose to slacken or narrow our focus, to put into view one text or the entirety of literature. For Borges, literature is a self-contained sphere of immanence, for example: “in the sphere of literature as in others, every act is the culmination of an infinite series of effects” (“The Flower of Coleridge” *Other* 10). Note here that he mentions other spheres that share this immanent character, which would imply that perhaps Borges is more of an immanentist than we might have expected. He, however, gives us very little in the way of clues to determine how far his immanentism extends, and a critic might state that Borges is more Spinozistic and Schopenhauerian than proto-Deleuzian. And this may be correct, but once we begin splicing the fine hair of Deleuze-Spinoza, interpretation becomes more pernicious. It will suffice to declare Borges an immanentist and have done with further parallels concerning mere labels.

Borges, like Deleuze, is careful not to equate the writer with literature itself. Though the writer exhibits a set of signs or symptoms, the writer is not the syndrome itself. In this sense, there are two writers with one name: Walt Whitman the poet is not the same as Walt Whitman the empirical being. This duality is beautifully captured in “Borges and I” where this distinction is made. In fact, there are as

many Borges' as there are possible virtual and actual spaces he can occupy—but the typology of these seemingly infinite Borges' can be reduced to two types locked in a duality: Borges the being and Borges the writer. In his words: "For many years I thought that the almost infinite world of literature was in one man, That man was Carlyle, he was Johannes Becher, he was Whitman, he was Rafael Cansinos-Assens, he was De Quincey" (*The Dream of Coleridge* "Other 17"). What Borges does here is confess his former outlook, that common seduction of equating the one who writes with literature itself, as Borges states: "those who carefully copy a writer do it impersonally, do it because they confuse that writer with literature" (*The Flower of Coleridge* "Other 12"). In essence, literature is not composed of authors, but "signs", concepts, i.e., of events. Concepts and ideas are of more prominence in literature than the subject who expressed them, and this is why Borges can undergo his task, his "modest plan: to trace the history of the evolution of an idea through the heterogeneous text of three authors" (9). This "modest plan" pervades all of Borges' works, and it is crucial to our understanding that he bestows primacy to the idea, or concept.

But the notion of the sign proves problematic in a discussion of Borges. When we speak of a story, we characteristically make reference to episodic events that occur within its domain. There is a tendency—not without its own good reasons—to either equate events with signs, or to claim a primacy of signs over events as if signifiers predate the event under discussion. Even before we consider the semiotic discussion, we should first counter an older objection with the logicians. If we are speaking of Borges in terms of the event, there may be the hasty tendency to overstate the notion of determinism. One may react to one of Borges' statements in "The Immortal": "Nothing can happen only once, nothing is preciously precarious." From that one statement, though spoken through a fictional narrator, a trigger-happy logician may impute Borges with determinist designs. But apart from this unfair interpretation, let us consider this matter of determinism and Borges in a little more depth. In the above quoted passage, we observe that there is a repetition of historical singularities which are not imbued with any degree of special "uniqueness" or ephemeral "once-ness". A hasty retreat to determi-

nist theory can occur at this juncture with minimal ease, but this should be avoided, for Borges' statement does not violate the sanctity—or affirmative singularity—of the subjective individual who takes part in an event (or is in him- or herself in any invalidated of any singular identity). Though a "grand design" may prefigure the individual's actions, the individual will most likely not have knowledge of these historical plans that directly affect them (a kind of historical shortsightedness). It is the knowledge of repetition that collapses Borges' characters into despair and perhaps suicide or abject resignation. But as long as the characters believe themselves to be free in an historical maelstrom, then they may affectively be free. Belief is one condition of truth taken care of, for we could have lunatic beliefs that are radically not in accord with various matters of fact or experience. Not only does S believe that P, and S (in regarding matters of fact, i.e., possessing some factual knowledge that proves sufficiently that one's life is not determined), but S is justified or motivated that P. But what of those more acute characters, those who had hitherto believed that P, but now know that not-P? The clear course of action would be to discard matters of belief in favour of factual knowledge (and only because a positivist or neo-positivist position would hierarchically arrange fact over belief without reservation). The character to know that not-P, despite his strong belief that P presents a terrible contradiction that the character must face—perhaps even make a judgement. A judgement presupposes an exclusive selection in this matter, to choose between something factual or something relying on a matter of faith. The resolution, at least for many logicians, would appear obvious: justified (and factual) knowledge of a not-P state should hold primacy over the belief in a P state. But is this a fair resolution or an exclusionary surrender? It is a logical normalization done in the spirit of the coveted "restoration to order" that the logicians favour. However, a repetition of singularities is not a necessary and sufficient condition to presuppose determinism (as we turn the logical knife on the hasty logician). The repetition would have to occur with temporal design, to occur with an episodic rhythm whose measurements could be predicted. A theory of historical determinism lacks the sequentiality to satisfy the

needs of the logician or the scientist. Moreover, if some vast stores of data were computed about the future from some supposedly effective “determinist calculus”, the objection could be raised that these future events—if they were actualized at their appointed time—were subject to some human agency (or more difficult a point: that the event was actualized by self-fulfilling prophecy). There are a variety of arguments against determinism that span the pages of philosophic literature that are perhaps more comely and better treated. It will suffice us to say that Borges is not a determinist, though many of his influences were. We will hazard to say that he is, at most, a quasi-determinist.

These historical quasi-determinations, as repetitive singularities, are not in any way sombre moments to be recorded dryly in the infinite ledger of history, but are imbued with vital Dionysiac moments: episodes of revellry and grandeur as marked by the great sublimations of the life-world in theatre. The drama of the historical episodes, like the assassinations of Kilpatrick and Lincoln, give ammunition to the semiotician who may feel inclined to trace these “events” to primal signs. But if Borgesian episodes were privy to insensitive semeiosis, then we would be forced to say that there is nothing but the repetition of the sign, that signification is what holds prominence in this otherwise immanent network of historical relations. But Borges himself would most likely be against this, and it is a short step from signification to a representationalist theory of art and history. In reading Borges, it is the reader who will ultimately decide whether to attribute more importance to the sign or the event. Repetitions aside, these are the two available currencies at hand (*zuhanden*), though we should hazard not to think them interchangeable, or transferable in any way—but again, we should caution the reader from having to make a binary judgement between sign and event, which may be unavoidable. Is Ryan a sign or an event? As a sign, Ryan invariably signifies a narrator and the descendant of whom he narrates about. As an event, Ryan is imbued with a panoply of haecceities that are difficult (impossible?) to sublimate into a series of signs. This story could yet be another battleground between semioticians and post-structuralists, if it is territory that is at stake. If it appears that we are taking a weak stance against

semiotics, this is true: there is a seduction to both sides, and a tradition that we cannot merely slough off without more deliberate consideration. But we will let our resolution, conditional or provisional it may be, stand. And this resolution will be implicitly underwritten in this article.

Our last word on determinism will streak across this page in a polemical spirit. Mechanistic determinism implies a machinic order to things, which presupposes judgement (or the logic of exclusion and the restriction of otherwise open domains). Judgement, in its nature to limit the affirmative power of singularities and reduce all spontaneity to factually stable statements, impairs the flow (or drift) of an open text like Borges'. Judgement does this by imposing strict conditions of truth, beauty, or utility (a throwback to a medieval episteme). If we allow judgement full rein in determining Borgesian text, then the domain is restricted to the binary statements of logic (good/bad, right/wrong, useful/useless, true/false), which is yet one pernicious step away from becoming a tawdry (and logically tyrannical) representationalist theory ("what is Borges depicting, denotating?").

The aforesaid assertions hold for the concept as well. To base primacy to the concept is the same as to impose, or measure by judgement. In viewing the Borgesian rhapsody of literary events through the lens of the merely conceptual alters the text under study, rearranges the kind of in-itself quality as it could appear to consciousness if concept was not given primacy at all. But we here emerge at an old Hegelian problematic between content and form. This will, perchance, be unravelled as we go along. We will offer here a brief sidebar. A Deleuzian "ethics of the event" is one path towards an overturning of representation. We go beyond the referent, thereby stripping the structuralist of his or her most reliable tools...a prohibition from speaking of signification and referents. The event as distinguished dissimilarities (singularities), resonating, deterritorialized: Borges is more akin to a Deleuzian event than a semiotic one. The notion of Concept as Knowing becomes an a-concept, infinitely undomesticated, an abgrund, a playful and affirmative paradox of speaking. Otherwise, we may fall into semiotic nihilism: "...semiotic analysis, which is also characterized by the restricted nature of its

corpus and its inability to experience and identify effects of the energy released by formal constituents" (Lyotard 158). The sign and concept are part of what aids us in visualizing the proceedings of a narrative, and so the image plays a fundamental role in the ascription process of signification and conceptualization. But this is not the final word: the "function of image or sign is not pertinent because it presupposes what one must try to produce by a theoretical argument: negativity" (159). The search for sign and concept in the image faculty of ascription suggests a lack, a privation, a lacuna. This effectively castrates the text, for it becomes reduced to stark judgements of presence/absence distinctions. That is, a signification comportment to the text sentences the narrative to merely an arrangement of signs, whereas the in-between becomes merely filler. This would be a view, in light of appreciating Borges' work where every shred of text must be considered with equal weight, to be avoided.

SUBJECT-OBJECT

As we have just touched on the notion of the writing subject and the written object, it would be essential for us to define further this duality that is present, the duality of virtual/actual, subject/object. It may seem that we might attempt to equate the object of the written word to the actual and the subject who writes it to the virtual, but this would be incorrect. The subject resides in the actual as a body, but the subject's concepts and signs reside in the virtual. The text as product exists in the actual, whereas the concepts and signs reside in the virtual. So what we have is a dual split where the subject and object reside on both sides, depending on how we address them. In a sense, the subject is split into two, fractured from itself, as is the object. Borges ventured on this subject-object split from each other: "I suspected once that any human life, however intricate and full it might be, consisted in reality of one moment: the moment when a man knows who he is" ("A Note on *Carriego*" *Other* 33). It would appear that in the preceding, there is a harmony of subject and object, a harmony that transcends space and time (or is made possible because of it). Borges passes through this fledgeling Kantian stage and reveals a more startling proposition: that this harmony is mere-

ly imagined. This he does by way of his many parables: "In those days the world of mirrors and the world of men were not, as they are now, cut off from each other...Both kingdoms, the specular and the human, lived in harmony" ("Fauna of the Mirror" *Imaginary* 105). The "harmony" of the subject-object is illusory, and is only perceived because of reflection of the self (as the mirror suggests). But in fact there has been a tragic separation, a separation that may have been caused by some great catastrophe. Borges goes on with this parable, making the grim prediction (yet housed safely under the clever auspices of merely reporting an old Chinese myth) that one day the reflections will no longer mimic us, will escape their specular prisons and wage war against those who reside in the "real".

Various logical maxims do not appear to concern Borges. Besides his tendency to contradict himself (fully justified owing to the nature of his infinite enterprise), he feels that most maxims are merely applicable in a loose, rhetorical sense: "extension of the principle of identity seems to have infinite rhetorical possibilities" ("Note on Walt Whitman" *Other* 73). A critic may argue that what is rhetorical is the extension of these logical maxims and not the maxims themselves, but even the maxims are possibilities. That is, they are merely actualized in a world that generally accepts them. Owing to Borges' immanentist leanings, he might amend his statement to include unextended maxims as well. Or, he may be "testing the waters" so to speak, venturing that by extending the principle of identity into more radical shapes, this transgression will yield a wider array of possibilities. This implies that Borges may be unsatisfied with current logic, that it does not hold sway in a virtual space like literature. It is then literature's task to overturn these maxims, to set them to task against seemingly impossible literary architectonics. Perhaps a new set of logical maxims must be created, not to mention the ethical. It is here that we get a glimpse into Borges' more Nietzschean side.

A man so immersed in myths like Borges would not fail to be fascinated by the notion of the Hydra (though it is mysteriously absent from all his works but one, and that one only as a retelling of the myth without any modification or appropriation). The Hydra is the

perfect example of multiple bifurcation in that when one head is lopped off, two grow in its place. It was said that Heracles had devised a way to kill it, but as he was doing so, a crab who was fond of the Hydra pinched Heracles on the heel with its claws (and hence this crab has been glorified as the zodiac symbol Cancer). What could be said of this? Heracles and his mighty twelve labours, labours perhaps achieved in the spirit of logic over paradox. Was Heracles the great analytic hero who changed the world and ensured the safety of logical maxims? And what of the crab's significance, that Hydra-sympathizer beast whose name is also a medical condition akin to that of the Hydra's (cancer's metastasis akin to multiple bifurcation, the wild and abnormal growth of cells in the otherwise ordered body)? And perhaps we should examine all these as symptoms as well, attempt a clinical and critical analysis of the Heraclesian tales.

While we are speaking of bifurcation and the medical, we find this type of bifurcation in our own bodies. Take for example our hearing: when a sound reaches the cochlea, every single axon fibre coming from the cochlea bifurcates at the entrance to the cochlear nucleus. Because of the way action potentials work, when they hit the bifurcation, they continue along both pathways; one path leads to the anteroventral nucleus, and the other leads to the posteroventral nucleus. These axons also project to the dorsal nucleus. The end result is that each section of the cochlear nucleus receives all the information about the sound that is being heard. This neuro-auditory example mimics the preceding analogies on infinite disjunction and bifurcation in general.

The choices one makes in a labyrinth are a matter of disjunction. We can choose to take one path or another, to follow a thread to its very end or abandon it at some other juncture of possibility. No matter what path we choose in the labyrinth, we always end up in the center. This center is crucial to Borges and supports a determinist universe (determinist, yet not in the sense where it restricts choice insofar as it operates within boundaries), it seems reasonable that he subscribes to a notion of telos. As to when this telos is actualized is unknown, for it may have already occurred. Recall that, for Borges, time does not obey any law of progressive linearity – it may

fold back on itself, proceed backwards or forwards, or even bifurcate and move in a variety of polyradic directions. If truth is to be discovered, we must wind our way through an infinite series of labyrinths until we reach the center, to the middle point from which all possibility unfolds.

For Borges, time is a singular mystery to unlock: "perhaps the last one who dreams will have the key" ("The Dream of Coleridge" *Other* 17). And perhaps Borges does not subscribe to a telos at all. If there are infinite possibilities, and time will end when all the possibilities are finally actualized, then time will never cease. There are instances of microteleologies, when virtual singularities become actualized. But these singularities return to the virtual, only to be manifested again in different cloth.

5. TRUTH CONDITIONS AND LOGICAL DECONSTRUCTION OF "THE THEME OF THE TRAITOR AND THE HERO"

Fig.1: A list of places, characters, and temporal domains mentioned in the story.

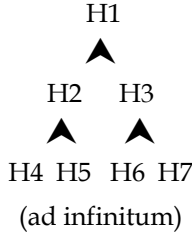
Scenes: Poland, Ireland, Venetian Republic, South American state, Balkan state, Moab, "remote regions", "place where the daggers awaited", tower of Kilgarvan, a tower in Rome, a theater, a city (as theater), Ireland II (Dublin).

Dramatis Personae: Yeats, Chesterton, Leibniz, "the narrator", Ryan, Fergus Kilpatrick, Browning, Hugo, Moses, British Police, the historians, Julius Caesar as person, Julius Caesar as textual, Calpurnia, Condorcet, Hegel, Spengler, Vico, Hesiod's men, British Druids, Shakespeare, a beggar, Macbeth as textual, James Alexander Nolan, an unknown assassin, Lincoln.

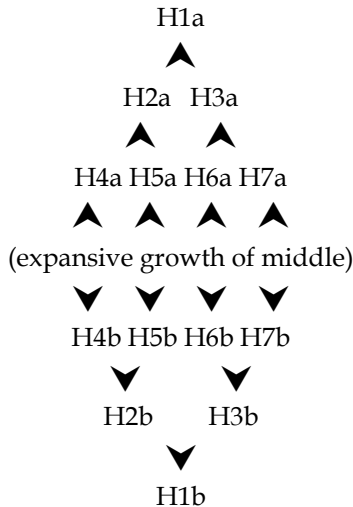
Times: January 3rd 1944, 1824, "remote ages", 1814, many days and many nights, August 2nd 1824, August 6th 1824.

A general note on disjunction: the underlying structure of unfolding events in Borges' text is a matter of infinite disjunction. There are two ways we can demonstrate this. In the first way, the text begins with a historical event that acts as a root or starting point (which we shall designate as H1), and as the text proceeds, there is

birfurcation of the one event into two simultaneous historical events that act as possibilities.



This pyramid model illustrates how possibilities multiply. We could however, note examples where more than two possibilities are derived from one, but this model is to serve as a basic illustration of this disjunction. The problem with this model lies in its lack of resolution and interconnectedness. It is a “top-through” method that relies primarily on historical events that immediately precede it. As we know, history is a matter of variable interpretations, and not just a derivation from one singular event taken from abstraction. Let us revamp our initial model to incorporate a second interpretive possibility:



Note here the outward growth that directionally extends to the two poles of possible interpretation, while simultaneously allowing for multiple historical events as possibilities to unfold infinitely. The story of "The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero" poses several implicit questions that intrigue philosophers: can the "secret form of time" be typologized into a metaphysical theory? What is the scope or domain of a nationalist-based rebellion? What are the ethics of rebellion, if any, and how do they measure up to the boundaries of ideological discourse? Does Borges support a theory of reverse mimesis? And so on, all good questions. The answers, if any (and if theory was not in itself a process, which it invariably is), may be situated within and outside the narrative, or both. But when we say "situated", we are presupposing a static domain, a logocentric view of literary examination where events unfold from some point of fixity. We know that the events (which are themselves imbued with haecceities) are constantly in dissimulation, perpetual differentiation. Nihilistic pie-in-the-sky? Perhaps. But so is, perhaps, the rigid presupposition of events being situated or localized in context or otherwise in some manner seemingly amenable to logical needling. The most we can examine with any sensitivity are the symptoms, the open textual signs. This form of sign is not of the semiotic caste nor the etiological, but the Deleuzian sign as put forth in his program of literary analysis in *Essays Critical and Clinical*. It is the symptomatology of the events in disjunction which interest us, not the notion of a logical treatment—where "treatment" implies an imposed palliation, death by judgement.

We begin our logical deconstruction of "The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero" with the opening conjunction of the main narrator's influence: Chesterton and Leibniz. With some prior knowledge, we can come to understand these two thinkers' instrumentality in concerns to the content of the text. The Chesterton made reference to is none other than Gilbert Keith Chesterton, and we may present here two essential quotes that will illustrate his importance to the text, and why the narrator felt influenced by him: 1) "The whole difference between construction and creation is exactly this: that a thing constructed can only be loved after it is constructed; but a thing created is loved before it exists" ("Preface" in Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*

2); 2) “You can free things from alien or accidental laws, but not from the laws of their own nature” (*Orthodoxy* ch. 3). From the first quote we can derive in terms of a labyrinth is that it is created, always in a state of becoming and differentiation; it is not a static structure that is in a state of completion, for it continues to unfold as does history. The second quote makes reference to nature as necessity, i.e., determinism. As we shall see, determinism (in its less strict sense) is a touchstone in this story as well as in Borges’ overall interpretation of history. The second influence is Leibniz, and as we earlier noted, there is a significant clue here that attests to one of Leibniz’s contributions to philosophy: that of the multi-reflective monad, to which Borges attributes to the character of history as not only quasi-cyclical, but of an infinite series of disjunctions depending on where we the perceivers are situated in relation to the text. Borges carves out one reflection from this historical chaosmos, but alludes to there being other possibilities (which is captured in the second paragraph of the story).

This story makes use of fragments from the literary, philosophical, and historical venues of discourse, presented as discontinuous breaks in a rumbling pastiche—a staggering fugue of immanent discourse. They mark transformative and associative events that traverse the narrative. These references are, of course, not ornamental; they are essential historical pillars that support the very substrate of the text. This is not to say that either the actual narrative or the references fulfill an ancillary function to the other, for there is a harmonious interconnection—or interactivity—between the two. Are we supposing a metadiegetical construction, some meta-theory? Perhaps, but only if we speak of overarching fragments (either originating pre-text or post-text) that extend themselves and are resolved in the larger textual continuum.

We have established one narrator who has situated himself temporally in 1944. He is faced with a disjunctive choice as to where the action of the story is to take place. Borges enumerates five possible locations (we must keep in mind this number five in the foregoing discussion in the section concerning the Cabala). Ryan, as his character is mediated through Borges, selects Ireland from the myriad of choices, thereby choosing this particular path in the labyrinth. How-

ever, is this choice an instance of an inclusive or exclusive disjunction? The matter of the location is highly contingent, for a historical event (for Borges) could happen anywhere, and it is only the particulars (in terms of a specific time or person) that differ. It is therefore an open disjunction, yet mutually exclusive in the sense that the selection of Ireland has temporarily suspended the other possible locations. That is not to say that similar events could not occur in other places (in fact, Borges would probably assert that they do, that events do not obey geographical or cultural borders), but that the narrator's chosen location of the story happens to be Ireland...For "narrative convenience" (*Other 72*)¹⁰.

Now that the "where" has been selected, the "who" for which the action has relevance must be determined, to determine the secondary subject (after Borges) of the narrative. The style of the narrative seems to select the name 'Ryan' haphazardly, presumably from an infinite series of possible disjunctions concerning a name. It is chosen with ambiguity, in an almost hesitant or neglecting manner. It seems to suggest that the name is of little importance to the overall content of the story itself—which figures quite prominently in a story that attempts to convince us that the experiencing subject of some historical event is contingent, that primacy should be given to the event rather than the one who experiences it.¹¹ It is here that the narrator exposes himself, calls himself Ryan, in an act of concealment of true identity while fixing himself into a recognizable identity for the purposes, again, of narrative convenience. Already, the narrator has distanced himself, made of himself a fictional representative that will carry out the actions of an event, while peculiarly re-

¹⁰ It appears ambiguous as to whether Borges' conception of history is apolitical or not. In this particular story, there is evidence that may support either side of this debate. Is the story historically manifest in its political particularity of Ireland, or is it historically transcendent in that the story goes beyond the particularity to illustrate the repetition of events?

¹¹ This is fertile ground indeed for those interested in theories of consciousness and the ego in some phenomenological capacity. However, it also seems to resonate similarly with Spinoza in that human beings are somewhat inconsequential to the whole, that *Deus sive Natura* possesses more reality than any of its component modes of its necessary thought.

ferring to himself in third person. It is established that Ryan is writing a biography on his great-grandfather, Fergus Kilpatrick: a conspirator, glorified in verse by the poets Browning and Hugo, a beautiful hero who was assassinated in a theater. This mention of Hugo is not accidental or through some fancy to pad the work; it is yet another essential element to the contextual framework of the narrative. Though we had stated earlier on that the name was contingent in light of the events that surround it, we must offer our caveat: the name, insofar as it is a name recognized by a reading audience as pertaining to an individual that occurs outside the story, has relevance to the framework of the story's events. That is, the recognized name acts as an indexical referent to that named individual's ideas—to which we are to pay some attention to better understand the story at hand. Perhaps Hugo's mention is relevant for two reasons: 1) Hugo was known for having very strong political views that found their way into his work, and 2) Hugo was part of the Philhellenic movement that supported the Greek war for independence, which would be akin to the subject matter in this story—that of the Irish independence movement. But again, we must provide another caveat in terms of both referent and characterization. There is an array of characters throughout the narrative that stand in for themselves and the event-spaces they contingently inhabit in the narrative space-time structure, and for the historical figures they are prefigured by. We say "stand in for" instead of "standing for" to avoid the representation trap that would only serve to preconfigure our comportment towards these characters. To "stand in" implies that the characters don the appropriate masks and costumes of the particular event-space they inhabit.

At first, we encounter Kilpatrick on these terms as a hero, or even a martyr (for the line between the two seem to blur). What is a hero? The reading audience comes to this part of the story with a preconception of what it is to be a hero, and so there is a moment where we attribute all our predicates of hero to Kilpatrick. But as Borges will challenge, our conception of hero may be too limited, and that the definition must be expanded in the light of further evidence. Our major clue, apart from the praises Kilpatrick is visited with posthumously, is the comparison between him and Moses: "like Moses,

who from the land of Moab glimpsed but could not reach the promised land, Kilpatrick perished on the eve of the victorious revolt which he had premeditated and dreamt of" (73).¹² Historians have painted him as a hero insofar as they suspect the British police (who were attempting to suppress the revolt) of killing Kilpatrick. Upon his person there was a note warning him not to attend the theater. But it would be his historical destiny to go, to be killed, and Kilpatrick realized that he could not escape his fate. This fact is true, but not in the way we first expect, as we later learn. However, once again Borges presents us with a determinist history, and it will turn out to have a double aspect: that of an overarching historical determinism that restores all subsequent events to conforming to the order of their originating historical archetype, and the designs of humankind that help bring this determinism about by way of acting in crucial roles that also conform to an archetypal history.

There is a cross-fertilization of two events: the death of Caesar and the death of Kilpatrick. Each event prefigures the other. Two linked events arborescently attached to their respective epochs, yet sharing a similar relation, occur: Calpurnia's dream of the tower's destruction, and the destruction of the Kilgarvan tower (Kilgarvan is, incidentally the birthplace of Kilpatrick). If we were to draw a pictorial representation of this relation we would discover a square, with each corner assigned to each of the four events in a dual relationship (Caesar's death—Kilpatrick's death, Rome's tower—Kilgarvan's tower; Caesar's death—Rome's tower, Kilpatrick's death—Kilgarvan's tower). But we must understand that, in Borges, time is not linear—so it is possible that Kilpatrick prefigured Caesar (which would imply backward causation), and vice versa. We can now note that the truth condition between Caesar and Kilpatrick would involve a biconditional. This appears problematic, for it may imply that there is a temporal double of the events that moves in the oppo-

¹² We are here given the clue to equate the Irish Revolt with the Promised Land, that the struggle is a noble one—perhaps even commended by some theological narrative. It would be here that one may suggest that Borges is expressing political inclinations. The British domination of Ireland is a transfiguration of the Egyptian domination of the enslaved Israelites—and perhaps, closer to Borges' home, the Spanish domination of Argentina.

site direction of the first. If time moves both forward and backward, where does it begin? Our speculative reply: the middle. Perhaps this “secret form of time” we cannot know, or it is to be understood in terms of a temporal fold: time folding in on itself to create a double surface where seemingly disparate events can resonate in simultaneity—a kind of “co-genesis” of unfolding events.

Up to this point in the plot we have come to the limit of the first phase, where Kilpatrick’s reputation is shown to be heroic, conforming to our conventional preconditions of what criteria a hero must have. Recall what we discussed in terms of disjunction and possibility: this story’s pivot on this dual notion, where we are called upon to determine or judge the resolution to the overarching disjunction: either Kilpatrick is a hero or a traitor. But this may be misleading, for perhaps it is not a matter of choice: our conception of “hero” and “traitor” may require a revamping. The second phase represents a labyrinth or paradigm shift. We are given further clues (or possibilities) that will suggest the binary opposite of the preceding judgement of Kilpatrick’s heroism, thereby repealing the judgement based on the disclosure of more in-depth and dynamic clues. So far, history has copied history. As we proceed into the next phase, history will also copy literature. But is not literature a copy of history, and this history a copy of literature, caught in an infinite regress where we cannot resolve the dilemma of the origin?

Words are uttered by an unassuming beggar to Kilpatrick which are prefigured by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*. We could easily equate the beggar’s role with the soothsayer’s in *Julius Caesar* who warned him to “beware the Ides of March”. The statement is a not accidental; it is a final sentence, a prophetic destiny delivered in a line that essentially uncovers the inescapable fate. In *Macbeth*, the witches deliver their timely warnings: 1) Macbeth would be defeated when the trees moved and he could only be slain by a man not born of a woman; 2) that despite Macbeth’s efforts to eradicate the Banquo lineage, there would still reign a generation of kings born from it (which would be a warning more suiting for Nolan who has Kilpatrick assassinated, a warning unheeded in the spirit of irony in that Nolan had translated these Shakespearean texts).

Not only did Nolan translate Shakespearean works, and made use of these in his later contrived enactment of Kilpatrick's "mysterious death", but he had also wrote on the Swiss *Festspiele*, which was the practice of re-enacting historical events in their spatial context.¹³ Kilpatrick suspects someone of being a traitor, and appoints Nolan to discover who. Nolan, playing Brutus to Kilpatrick's Caesar, betrays him. Another analogy comes to mind, that of Judas and Christ (and Judas is discussed in the *Labyrinths* anthology, perhaps not out of mere coincidence, but out of an explication of three possible resolutions to the hero-traitor problem presented in this story). Judas, in betraying Christ out of fear that order, or the Word, will be disrupted by Christ's affirmative creativity and growing acclaim, makes a martyr of Christ.¹⁴ Nolan achieves the same with Kilpatrick, creating an idol of a man he deems dangerous on the grounds that he has become too powerful. We will keep this analogy in mind when we examine Ryan. Nolan felt that he had no choice, that the destiny of the revolt's success depended on the death of Kilpatrick¹⁵, to make of him an idol (for the dead martyr is more of a motivational motor than the live hero). Kilpatrick, resigned to his fate, consents to Nolan's plan to create a dramatic fiction of his death, thereby leaving Kilpatrick's reputation of hero intact (which he may very well be, owing to his noble selflessness to the cause). Like a drama, several people are deployed to play major and minor roles in the fiction of Kilpatrick's death. The death itself prefigures Lincoln's

¹³ Recall here the deictic discussion of coordinates. In Kilpatrick's story, events are temporally similar to those of Caesar, yet take place much later, and spatially they occur in Ireland rather than Rome. The *Festspiele* differs in one element in that the re-enactment of the event occurs at the spatial point of its origin. However, could not a good argument be made for the transcendent contingency of space and time, effectively nullifying the absolute distinction between Ireland and Rome in terms of space and time?

¹⁴ Of note is this Leibnizian fragment: "For God sees from all time that there will be a certain Judas..." (*Discourse on Metaphysics* 30). This is not only a potent fragment in terms of Kilpatrick's betrayal, but also corresponds to Borges' work on the three Judases.—Not to mention the heavily saturated notion of determinism in this statement.

¹⁵ It must be mentioned that Nolan makes use of an unknown assassin, just as Macbeth did in the despatching of Banquo.

assassination at Forbes Theater, but as we know about this secret form of time, this temporal fold, Kilpatrick might have been prefigured by Lincoln...Of note is the uncanny temporal intersection of two figures, Yeats and Lincoln: Lincoln's death coincides with the same year that Yeats was born. Another Borgesian trick or merely coincidence?

The traitor leaves traces and deposits of his involvement by way of Shakespearean quotes, perhaps as a secret desire for some astute and enterprising historian to discover the truth. But this truth is forever with Nolan's noble love of his country: "not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more" (Shakespeare *Julius Caesar* Sc. 2 l.22). Does this redeem Nolan? Is he a traitor or a hero, or are these categories too narrow?

The assassination is a theatrical event, with its panoply of actors, its prescribed material. The mention of Hesiod takes on a relevance when we consider this quotation: "Oft hath even a whole city reaped the evil fruit of a bad man" (*Works and Days* l.240). This "bad man" who arranges the death of the hero is none other than Nolan, and the whole city, which is incidentally described as a theatre, reaps the reward of playing a part in this brutality. It may even be pardonable—or at least justified—in the eyes of the participants, for there is a kind of distancing one feels when one believes it is just an act. We can note this very same effect when we consider the play within the play in *Hamlet*. This distancing that theatre provides lessens the feelings of ethical responsibility in that one's comportment towards a play is that it is not real.

Why does Ryan keep this discovery a secret, and decide to publish a historically acceptable account of Kilpatrick's death? There are four reasons which we shall enumerate here: 1) the strength of any movement or public morale is only as strong as the belief that edifies it, the legends and miracles it is built upon; hence, for Ryan to come forth with an expose insensitive to this general feeling may shatter the illusion of the movement's grandiosity and pride; 2) that Ryan is playing the role of St Paul, by appropriating Christ and fictionalizing actual events in such a way as to manufacture or perpetuate a lie (and Deleuze illustrates how St Paul's Christ is an inversion of the real Christ, fictionalized and made authority in the

Gospel Word). By maintaining the lie, the reputation of the revolt retains its fortitude and thereby justifies its occurrence; 3) if Ryan obeyed his conscience in this matter, the same destined fate of Kilpatrick might be visited upon him; 4) Ryan had no choice but to obey the determinist destiny lest he caused some other horrific event in the past, as if by altering the future it will somehow alter the past. As we can see, Ryan understands the disjunctive process of history, and realizes that to choose the wrong possibility will inevitably lead him down a terrible path—a path that has already been traced through this labyrinth of time.

The story raises a very intriguing question on posthumousness. Cacciari speaks of posthumousness in terms of character transience, as the infinitely unknowable being locked up in texts that will never satisfy our passageway to the person-in-himself: “Posthumous people go through an infinite number of masks without ever staying with any one of them” (4). This sentiment appears to be echoed in Borges, especially in concerns to the notion of masking and the theatrical event. Ryan must interrogate the past through the abstruseness of artifacts that take the form of actual historical accounts and personal letters. And how accurate are these? From these shreds, he is attempting to write something elegiac about his great-grandfather. But there is something unsatisfying about the historical record, something Ryan’s curiosity needs sated.—Why else would he research so diligently, performing careful acts of historical disassembly and speculative reconnection? There had to be a historical lacuna that Ryan was determined to overcome with his research. And so Ryan discovers something almost inconceivable which goes against the grain of what is typically acceptable for the exposition of posthumous peoples’ lives. That is, though he sets out to write a formulaic work that treats the historical matter with charity and sensitivity to a readership, Ryan finds rather evidence which potentially reduces the glory of the revolution—evidence that may completely undermine the entire ideological justification for independence. And this evidence, if it were to be publically proliferated, may singlehandedly decenter or destroy the Irish morale, giving ammunition to the English in that it may be used to confirm the thesis that the Irish engage in barbaric practices which therefore necessitate

their need to be dominated under the English Crown. But every history is barbaric to varying degrees, and this barbarism permeates the historical record of every nation. That Ireland had its share of conspirators does not make the case that every Irishman is a conspirator; or, as Borges says like a kind of antidote to this ethnocentric thinking: "To be one thing is inexorably not to be all the other things" ("From Someone to No One" *A Personal Anthology* 118).

Our historical interpretation of a posthumous figure depends less on facts than it does our position towards these facts. New facts may always be discovered that upset our conception of an event, and so it does us well to have a flexible view of historical events. In fact, we should transcend our narrow views of hero and traitor—an issue perhaps purposely left unresolved in Borges' story—for these antipodes only serve theoretical rather than applicative methods of interpretation. That is, they serve as demarcations of our own interests, our own biases based on a predetermined criteria we may have culturally inherited. Evidence continues to surface that may contradict former evidence, causing us to deviate from our preconceptions, leaving us with only an non-distinct motley of greys: hardly enough certainty to assert that a particular individual who is at one point wearing a mask is either a hero or a traitor. These absolute distinctions, these archetypal natures, would require a typology which would invariably produce subsets of characteristics and some areas of convergence, i.e., that both the hero and the traitor are compelled by an ambition to succeed. But these archetypal natures are merely simplifications, designed for the ease of understanding and classification. An archetypal hero must have the appropriately prescribed traits, recognizable predicates that anyone could list off. But living in a world where the messy and empirical individuals do not take shape as easy to define archetypes is proof enough against making such designations; and Borges himself, even in his stories, would not ask of us to view the characters as simple derivations from an archetype.

We return to the issue of posthumousness. The old saw of not speaking ill of the dead is a culturally inherited practice, exhibiting the common sentiment towards a treatment of the past (and as stated earlier, we wish to avoid treatment since it is inextricably

linked with judgement). This “rule” almost acts as a threat, though subtle, that the historical researcher is obligated to tread very lightly with evidence. This in itself would not be considered an unwise practice, but recall that the researcher is being coerced into becoming very selective with his or her findings lest it cause a disruption in the accepted value of the person under study. This maxim can only be violated if it is already established with sufficient certainty that the posthumous person under research was typically and irrefutably evil. By the same token, it is considered improper to vindicate someone vilified by history, in which the vilification still stands as being true. It is here that the academic institution may enforce its mechanism of suppression. That is, the diligent researcher who attempts to vindicate the villain or besmirch the reputation of the hero will not be burnt at the stake, but the perils of his pursuit (seen as dissent) may lead to a loss of credibility and status. None of this is remarkably new to us, for the intellectual begins to learn the appropriate “rules of conduct” which covertly proscribe certain references considered unsavoury or non-academic. This is by no means a universal situation, for there are always pockets of transgression in academic circles which challenge the archetropic and canonical values. But to rely on the fixity of a person being designated good or bad severely inhibits open research, creates exclusionary discourse, imposes value schemas fashioned from the bias of the predominant sentiment or inherited from long-standing tradition. Borges challenges the inflexibility of roles in this story, showing that evidence may come along that disrupts our conceptions, perhaps making absolute distinctions untenable. This is another sense in which the signifier theory falters: in presupposing absolute signs that can be affixed to people and events. But those “signs” of hero or traitor can so readily be peeled, exposed as transient and indeterminate. The good or evil of a person or event occurs outside the person or event; good and evil conferred from the outside in the form of judgement. We take a slightly Wittgensteinian repose in this, realizing that even the most simple to determine object/person/event is without inherent value; value erupts from the self-limiting concept—or, if you will, a fixed comportment towards the life world that predetermines value from a recourse to an established archive which assumes itself

sovereign in the task of arbitrating value. The Deleuzian refrain returns: let us have done with judgement. For if we rely on those limiting forms of judgement, we only become trapped in an arena of senseless doubt. In comes the fetishism of value: “what is the alethic/aesthetic/ethical/propositional value of x ?” which could only be of utility if x was unchanging, an undifferentiated “one” rather than an intense part of an immanent network of objects/people/events.

There is a hasty tendency to make a Hegelian equivalence in this story, as a dialectical move between traitor and hero that is resolved in the synthesis as a transportation of their dual—now singular—sense. But there is no textual “smoking gun” that could provide any Hegelian dialectician with the necessary evidence, no adequate sublation, no moment of retrospective or anticipative judgement within the text. The judgement is purposely withheld, the whole story unfinished. One might object that the spirit of the dialectic is alive and well in this becoming, this incompleteness towards an absolute; however, the distinctions of traitor and hero are in a standoff; a tense inertia. For the dialectic to be at work within the text, there has to be some semblance of an ongoing friction between the two terms that progresses toward resolution. Another hint that may trigger a Hegelian response is that of a lived experience as a dialectical moment of Spirit: the theoretical perspective—or picture—that creates its own contradiction in lived experience that proves the intellectual qualification to be unsatisfactory. But once we subjectivize the notions of hero and traitor, we suffer the fetishism of these qualities, thereby relegating them outside the dialectical “machinery”, making these notions representations. To make the denominations of hero and traitor nominal entities, they must have predicates that fit them into place: they must have representation within the text that will allow them to be in opposition to one another. For that to happen, the predicates must be fixed in a serial array that we can predict. Moreover, a representationalist view of this seeming dichotomy calls back into the discourse signifier-signified distinctions that we cannot allow unless we wish to fall back into a kind of semiotic nihilism. Our proposed solution: to see these manifestations of the hero and traitor as merely events, or singularities that have been ac-

tualized in the moment of transported sense. The transportation of sense occurs when the nominalist categories of hero and traitor are shown to be singularities that spontaneously through lived experience produce their own differentiation.

ON DILEMMA

The story can be brought into a propositional form that captures the very essence of the choice the reader must make, as we shall illustrate with the use of the logical form of dilemma:

1. If Kilpatrick was a hero, then Nolan was a traitor.
2. If Nolan was a hero, then Kilpatrick was a traitor.
3. Either Kilpatrick or Nolan was a hero.
4. Either Nolan or Kilpatrick was a traitor.

As we can see, we learn nothing from this syllogism, for we could just as easily reverse the order of the conditionals in 1 and 2 to obtain the conclusion that either Kilpatrick or Nolan was a hero. Moreover, nothing in the text seems to prohibit the possibility that they were not both heroes or traitors. The problem with using dilemma in this instance lies in the fact that the conditions are never established in the body of the text; we can only infer from clues, clues that allow for interpretation either way.

A final note on disjunction to close our logical discussion. In an infinite disjunction, the selection of one possibility does not preclude other possibilities. Traditionally, infinite disjunction was only possible in God, as that multiple being with an infinite number of attributes (as noted in Spinoza) or predicates (as in many doctrines of medieval philosophy).¹⁶ The choices one makes in a labyrinth are a

¹⁶ As a further example of God and infinite disjunction, Leibniz has this to say about God's use of choice: "God chooses from an infinity of persons someone to be actualized at a particular moment" (*Discourse on Metaphysics* 31). Note here that we ignore Leibniz's notion of God choosing the best of all possible worlds, for Borges would not base distinctions on the good or the bad in terms of events. To do this would be to saturate the event with a heavy signification and to imbue it with an intentionality that is highly

matter of disjunction. We can choose to take one path or another, to follow a thread to its very end or abandon it at some other juncture of possibility. No matter what path we choose in the labyrinth, we always end up in the center. This center is crucial to Borges and supports a determinist universe (determinist, yet not in the sense where it restricts choice insofar as it operates within boundaries), it seems reasonable that he subscribes to a notion of telos. As to when this telos is actualized is unknown, for it may have already occurred. Recall that, for Borges, time does not obey any law of progressive linearity – it may fold back on itself, proceed backwards or forwards, or even bifurcate and move in a variety of polyradic directions. If truth is to be discovered, we must wind our way through an infinite series of labyrinths until we reach the center, to the middle point from which all possibility unfolds. Regrettably, Borges appears to subscribe to a logocentric view of truth. For him, if there is truth, then it is located at the center of the labyrinth, at some origin (that may not be spatially or temporally situated). Derrida has laboured significantly to illustrate the failure of such a presumption. If the antecedent of there being truth is true, and the consequent of its location is false, then the proposition is false. This being the case, then there is either no truth (which would leave the center of the labyrinth empty) or truth resides someplace else. If the center is empty, then there exists no archetypal forms from which any structures of the labyrinth can derive, unless it is by some paradoxically spontaneous, biconditional creation. This would be akin to stating that if Hegel existed, then he anticipated Nietzsche; if Nietzsche existed, then he anticipated Hegel. The latter is obviously false, but in view of Borges' temporal system it is permissible. Both sides of the biconditional co-create one another, a kind of double genesis that does not conform to our notion of causality. It is in this way, and perhaps the only way, that Caesar and Kilpatrick can simultaneously prefigure the other.

In our final analysis, we are faced with a disjunction: either Borges' system fails due to its lack of conformity with logic, or Borges'

anthropocentric in design. In a sense, Borges' Leibniz is filtered through Spinoza's notion of a disinterested God that makes no normative distinctions.

system succeeds because it displays a deeply entrenched flaw in logic. Unfortunately, this is an exclusive disjunction, and so one must be chosen at the exclusion of the other. However, logic cannot appropriate possibility (the metaphysical principle Borges promotes) like it can probability (which can be analytically based on statistical facts), for the former is not truth-functional. Possibility presents us here with one of many beautiful paradoxes which the analytic method cannot logically contain or dispel. That which is not truth-functional is not necessarily false; at most, logic can make possibility and paradox pernicious, doubtful, or something that it must attempt to solve—though in vain. If it were otherwise, and all that was not truth-functional was false, art would be considered false due to its inability to withstand the proof process of logic, which would be an absurd notion. We are here saved from choosing between Borges and logic, for neither are amenable to the other.

As an “economic” act of textual reduction, Borges is not anti-logical, but trans-logical—or, engaged in the logic of transgression. He is indeed enamoured with the notion of *apokatastasis* (cyclical history), but we must be wary of Borges’ playfully devious ways. This cyclical history, a dominant thread in Borgesian narratives, is imbued with rich irony. If it were not irony, then Borges would have merely been one more writer repeated *ad infinitum* throughout the annals of history. He raises this seemingly outrageous (at least to the average logician who shudders at paradox) notion of *apokatastasis* as a means of both faithfully recording the sentiments of past thinkers who themselves may have believed in this notion, and to bring this notion to the awareness of his readers for their own consideration of the possibility. It is not as if Borges finds the notion of a cyclical history ridiculous, or as some fanciful and subversive literary device for his exploitation. Rather, the matter is never finished, never completely resolved. As long as there are minds that can conceive, and despite the growing weight of proof against such a notion, the notion will always recur in the marketplace of ideas for many more generations.—And perhaps this in itself may be enough to strengthen the case for *apokatastasis*. But for Borges, *apokatastasis*: possibility and nothing more. The depth of this notion in Borges is more stylistic and literary rather than presented in the convincing

academic way. It is so slyly interwoven into the Borgesian text that there are not enough clues, no serious claims, for any philosopher to point at with exclamation and state that Borges is a historical determinist, let alone a staunch believer in *apokastasis*. Only a very hasty hermeneutic could lay claim to such a position, if they were not to take Borges' playfulness under consideration

6. POSSIBILITIES AND LOOSE THREADS

A) POSSIBILITY

The presence of other possibilities problematizes our understanding of the world, a world where consciousness and object were once harmonized in a unity (Deleuze, "Theory of the Other" *Deleuze Reader* 61). In this sense, these possibilities, presented as multifarious disjunctions in Borges' labyrinth, are instances of fragmentation; the fracturing of the "I" from its object. The other possibilities act as a wedge between the objective and subjective world, which is much in accord with Borges' dualism between archetypes and their repetitions (which calls to mind Plato's Forms). However, it is never distinguished what is archetype or copy, but these are left in an ambiguous non-temporal, textual space... (to Borges, ambiguity is richness, the greatest possibilities of multiple interpretations and unresolved dualisms). These instances of repetitions are, in themselves, the essence of unfolding possibilities, bifurcations, paradoxes, patterns, snakes eating their own tails/tales. Without other possibilities, this disjunctive synthesis, we could not perceive structures and would fall into a deep solipsism ("Theory of the Other" 62).

B) AUTHOR AND ACTOR

In the story we examined, there are several explicit references to theater. There are actors abounding, and what is a story but a textual space where actors enact a plot? This theme has been discussed, and we would now like to end this portion of it with a quote from Deleuze in "Ethics and the Event": "The actor is not like a god, but is rather an 'antigod'. God and actor are opposed in their readings of time. What men grasp as past and future, God lives it in its eternal

present. The God is Chronos: the divine present is the circle in its entirety, whereas past and future are dimensions relative to a particular segment of the circle which leaves the rest outside. The actor's present, on the contrary, is the most narrow, the most contracted, the most instantaneous, and the most punctual" (*Deleuze Reader* 79).

C) CATAclySM AND RESURRECTION

What kind of catastrophe has led to the emergence of this other world, a world not altogether dissimilar from our own (there are intersections between the virtual and actual)? A catastrophe begins with a harmonious resonance of growing negation points. The chorus of negation grows so strong that the former structure or stratification (to borrow Deleuze's term) of the world begins to collapse, folding in on itself until reaching absolute nullity. How do these negation points appear? When the structured world ceases to extend itself, when it exhausts its differential aspect of creative possibilities. The process may take place over an extended period of time where the decline is almost imperceptible, or it may happen in a violent moment—depending on the degree or intensity of the resonance. In Borges, the catastrophe is Babel, the ruin of harmony and universal intelligibility, when man was disconnected from his utopian universe of the Forms. Subsequent to this catastrophe was the period of individuation and alienation of cultures and histories. What is lost in the collapse is the understanding of the common heritage, the historico-cultural totality. It is this loss that Borges attempts to shed light upon, to disclose the current state of affairs and the continued separation of man from man. Moreover, he wishes to explain why there are those strange moments when things seem to follow a uniform and predestined path, why certain events from disparate ages and places seem to coincide with a common root. There is a repetition of historical patterns, and Borges hopes to show that they will continue to repeat for as long as we are lost in the labyrinth. And why does he do this? For all that we have recalled of our histories, there is still so much that can be done to show the link between seemingly disconnected events, so many events that history could not or neglected to record. It is like we each hold various pieces of an immense puzzle, and we have yet to combine our efforts in pie-

cing together the past in its Gestalt, with a view to making brave connections that may elucidate us and may bring us closer to the origin (to a kind of pan-historicism). However, many pieces have gone missing, have slid into the treacle black nullity of time, and are now irretrievable. Some pieces, like so many lives in history, have been considered inconsequential and have been discarded... Others have been burnt at the stake, or have become stillborn, or were erased by victorious conquerors, erased by pride or malice... (like Borges' "The Parable of the Palace"). We may never again touch the center of the labyrinth, we may never regain eternity and totality. We have forgotten the catastrophe, and all we have left are a jumble of broken pieces that are not enough to reconstruct the truth of history. Some pieces come together without our knowing why, or we are so imperceptible of the patterns of time that we go along in our lives not knowing the designs that predetermine our actions.

D) J. C.

Is there something to be learned from these initials in concerns to the hero/martyr/traitor? There has been an explicit mention of Julius Caesar, and we also have drawn out the analogy of Jesus Christ from the notion of Kilpatrick's death as representing the creation of an idol and the instaurator of a complete system of faith. This may just be coincidental, or it may be yet another layer in the text... Another aspect of the repeating pattern in the labyrinth.

E) BEING SHAKESPEARE

To be or not to be: that is the Shakespearean question. However, the Hegelian resolution makes the question of possibility, i.e., to be or not to be is becoming, for becoming has both Being and Nothing—Being insofar as it is not nothing and has passage toward Being, Nothing insofar as becoming is a 'not-yet' Being. A Hegelian move would perhaps rewrite this question without the disjunction: to be *and* not to be: that is the essence of becoming. Both Borges and Hegel appear to resolve the Eleatic premise of Being and Nothing, where Parmenides claims that something can only come from something, and that nothing comes from nothing (*ex nihilo, nihil fit*). Becoming is the differential aspect, but it is also the unity of Being and Nothing

(*Logic* sect. 88, 133). Borges presents us with fertile ground with which we could trace his conception of becoming up through Heidegger. This task we will regrettably omit for the moment, and will leave for a future time. What we necessarily glean from this is the simultaneous Hegelian and Borgesian move that is already seen as a glimmer in Heraclitus.

7. THE CABALISTIC DECONSTRUCTION

It is here that we will regard Borges with some suspicion, where we will engage in a highly questionable act of interpretation. This may not present us with anything true, per se, about “The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero”, but we are justified in utilizing the foregoing method owing to the fact that Borges himself had read a fair amount of Cabalistic literature. We must first assume some highly diabolical premise, some hidden and intricate architectonic that will appear to the few as a code... A code a Cabalist numerologist may decipher. We must also assume more meaning than generally allowed in an interpretation of text. In a sense, we will be performing an occult semantics of numerology using only what we find in the text. If this method appears dubious to some, chances are that it is meant to be. Hegel himself denied the relevance of numerology (*Logic* 144n)¹⁷, and it is of note that Borges makes a reference to Hegel in the story under consideration.

The Cabalistic method is the fourth type of Hebraic reading (where the first three are literal, allegory, and interpretation). The Hebrew alphabet is composed of 22 letters, each with a numerical value. We make no pretense here of committing an exercise absolutely faithful to the Cabalistic method, for we have many impediments: the text is not written in Hebrew, the alphabet is different, the text is written from left to right rather than right to left. What we

¹⁷ Hegel also goes as far as to call the efforts of secret societies intellectually deficient. Though the root of this anathema may be traced within his work in his justifications that the work of secret societies and Cabalists are deficient in terms of being far removed from revealed religion, we could only venture to speculate what personal motivations Hegel had for discrediting these groups.

will effect here is a kind of equivalent numerological enterprise, in English, yet done in the spirit of the Cabala.

In the text, five dates are mentioned: 1944, 1824, 1814, 1824, 1824 (we must not delete repetitions for fear of muddling our result—each number is essential to the calculation). Using the numerological method of addition, i.e., 1944 becomes $1+9+4+4$, as well as conventional addition, we will derive an interesting result.

Pr. 1

a) Number of dates mentioned: 5

Pr. 2

a) $1944+1824+1814+1824+1824= 9230$

b) $9230 \rightarrow 9+2+3+0= 14$

c) $14 \rightarrow 1+4= 5$

Cor. 1

a) $1+9+4+4= 18$; $1+8+2+4= 15$; $1+8+1+4= 14$; $1+8+2+4= 15$; $1+8+2+4= 15$

b) $18+15+14+15+15= 77$

c) $77 \rightarrow 7+7= 14$

d) $14 \rightarrow 1+4= 5$

Cor. 2

a) $18 \rightarrow 1+8= 9$, and so on with each in Pr. 2, Cor. 1b

b) $9+6+5+6+6= 32$

c) $32 \rightarrow 3+2= 5$

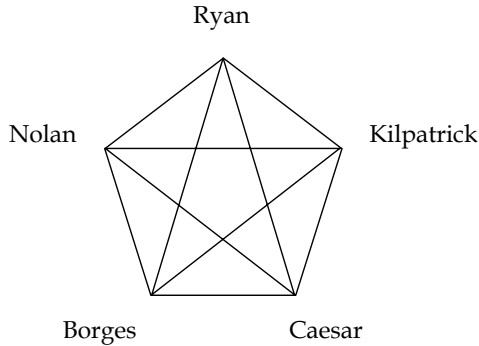
Pr. 3

Number of major characters (Ryan, Nolan, Kilpatrick, Caesar, and Borges—the main narrator): 5

Pr. 4

a) Number of enumerated locations possible (Poland, Venetian Republic, South America, a Balkan state, Ireland): 5

What arises from these four proofs in conjunction with the interrelationship of the characters in the plot, is a fivefold connection between the characters, and can be depicted in this diagram:



1. Ryan's relation to Nolan: Ryan reads about Nolan, and reads some of Nolan's work.
2. Ryan's relation to Kilpatrick: great-grandson. Ryan is writing a biography about Kilpatrick.
3. Kilpatrick's relation to Caesar: Caesar's assassination prefigures his own.
4. Kilpatrick's relation to Nolan: fellow comrades in the revolt.
5. Nolan's relation to Caesar: Nolan translates Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and later quotes from this work.
6. Ryan's relation to Caesar: numbers 3 and 5 are known to him because of numbers 1 and 2.
7. Borges' relation to all the characters: as the one who authored the relations, he has direct awareness of each of their relations.
8. A Final Word

There is still much more we can explore in this one text: the foreseen words of the dying Kilpatrick, the role of Nolan as judge, Kilpatrick's reported tyranny, the comparison of two presidents (Kilpatrick and Lincoln), the role of myth and symbol, the notion of narrative convenience, the deeper political aspects of Borgesian text... And the list goes on. But to do this effectively, this might result in the writing of a tome based on this one story alone. Imagine the vast undertaking it would be to connect all the stories together

in this manner, to perform a grandiose critique of how all the stories in the labyrinth intersect. In sum, this is not an exhaustive analysis of the text, but it does extract the more salient features and makes its own allowances for the many detours we have made.

Any book that one can hold in their hands is a collection of every book ever written, and every book that could possibly be written. Keeping in accord with the trace theory, a text is imbued with all the history collected in one writer who begins to write, and the book has in it the possibility of infinite interpretations and possibilities from which we could derive any idea. This lesson is so potent that we pause here to consider even the orthographical mark. By writing the letter/word "I", we have the entirety of history in that mark as well as the entire future. One could trace this "I" back historically to Kant's transcendental "I", or "I" as ego, or all the words that have "I" in them; we could continue making associations and speak of identity, or psychology in general, or humanity; we could write down everything we feel towards this "I", record every sentiment every poet had in concerns with it, or draw up a history of the mark itself. As we can see, the possibilities are endless, but what does this essentially mean? Something both liberating and existentially frightening in its implications: one has only to read a single book to have read all books both actual and possible. There are those who disparage over the fact that Borges did not leave a large corpus of writing, but he did not have to: he could have stopped at the first mark on the page. This is the lesson of the labyrinth: every twist and turn has within it every variation imaginable. What many have forgotten is that each letter or word is so densely packed with an infinite history, yet we tend to use words so carelessly—in some instances, believe that by adding more to what already exists will somehow exhaust all the possibilities or that we will uncover new relations; however, all the possibilities have already been determined, as infinite, as harkening back to original archetypes. This is partially the impetus to include a section concerning the Cabalistic method, for it is there that great attention is paid to every orthographical mark, that each letter can beget a series of other texts ad infinitum.

Let us part here with one of Zeno's statements that may serve to capture the very spirit of Borges' writings: "it is the same to say a thing once, and to say it forever."

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