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"Algebra y fuego" in the Fiction of Borges

La crítica borgeana, por lo general, ha declarado que la prosa de Borges es deslumbrante y fría; y, en cuanto a sus personajes, geométrica y ajedrecista. Propongo que ésta es una visión demasiado parcial. Basándome en un estudio de los personajes en los cuentos borgeanos, intento demostrar que éstos están elaborados desde una perspectiva múltiple. Es verdad que por un lado desempeñan una función abstracta de "cifras" en un planteo intelectual, pero así como las ficciones de Borges no se ven limitadas a un planteo teórico, así sus personajes logran transcender esa función teórica, y adquirir, aunque sea momentáneamente, el carácter complejo e insondable que refleja el de los cuentos en que se sitúan. Hay cuentos en que la emoción humana se da con pocas palabras, a veces no más de tres sustantivos contradictorios que dejan entrever la complejidad del personaje; otros, cuyo argumento está relacionado a cierta motivación psicológica y otros que atestiguan a la individualidad irreducible del hombre. En resumen, para invocar una metáfora borgeana, son álgebra, *pero también,* fuego.

"Of course I'm damned sentimental" was Borges' delighted reaction when I suggested to him that his writings exuded warmth, human emotion, even passion. Without wishing to shelter unduly behind authorial opinion, I would like to discuss one important aspect of Borges' writing which has up to now received scant attention, namely, the emotional content of his short stories. Focussing on the specific aspect of emotion as expressed by individual characterization, I shall argue that contrary to common critical opinion Borges' stories are not simply fictionalized intellectual propositions of an abstract nature, but are rooted in expressions of human emotion which reveal a concern for human individuality hitherto rarely identified with Borges' fiction. This article proposes to give a brief account of current critical attitudes and then proceed to argue that Borges' fictions go further than suggested by such readings in that the stories' overall complexity includes a complexity of characterization which brings to life the drama of individual existence, "las complejidades de nuestro ser, su fuego y su álgebra."[1]

Borges has been declared a cold and cerebral writer, a weaver of geo-

metric patterns of intellectual fantasies in which plot is subordinate to the idea and character is subordinate to both. In line with the argument of the unemotional quality of his fiction, his characters have been seen as mere devices or pawns in the chess-like construction of an abstract and somewhat remote argument. Thus, on coldness, Carlos Fuentes talks of "esa prosa deslumbrante, tan fría que nos quema los labios."[2] Adolfo Prieto, representing a group of Argentine critics who are ideologically opposed to Borges, accuses him of "frío esteticismo" and "jugueteo literario con las ideas."[3] In a similar vein, V.S. Pritchett writes that "nearly all the stories of Borges, except the earliest ones, are either constructed conundrums or propositions."* The geometric metaphor mentioned above is heard time and again as, for instance, in Ernesto Sábato's assertion: "si se compara alguno de los laberintos de *Ficciones* con los de Kafka se ve esta diferencia: los de Borges son de tipo geométrico o ajedrecístico y producen una angustia intelectual, como los problemas de Zenón, que nacen de una absoluta lucidez de los elementos puestos en juego."[5]

On the more specific question of individual characters in Borges' fiction, Psiche Hughes states that "these characters are in fact the central points in the exposition of a theorem," arguing that with one or two exceptions they leave us quite uninvolved emotionally.[6] The idea that Borges' characters fail to engage us emotionally is central to the critical position which maintains that there is a general quality of detachment and aloofness in his writing. This, too, seems to be the underlying assumption in one of the most acclaimed critical works to have been published on Borges' fiction in the last few years. I am referring to John Sturrock's *Paper Tigers,* a brilliant structuralist analysis of Borges' oeuvre, arguing its basic preoccupation with fictionality, i.e. with artifice, and thus emphasizing the stories' debt to art as opposed to reality. Sturrock, in fact, sees these stories mainly as illustrations of the creative art of writing. Yet his approach, which reduces character to the structuralist concept of a depersonalized "actant" has led him to miss an important dimension of Borges' work. He writes: "Borges' distaste for 'psychology' is part and parcel of his extreme concern for the *art* of fiction. He believes that an artefact should be seen to be an artefact and should not compromise with techniques indelibly tainted with realism ... Borges' fictions are think-pieces. They are stories about ideas instead of people."[7] His argument is that in Borges' stories characters are brought in simply for the sake of action in accordance with classical Aristotelian preference, stating that there is no incentive on the part of the reader to try to understand them other than as functions of the narrative. I do not entirely disagree with this last statement. Of course they can be seen as functions in the narrative, the same as everything else, dawn,

dusk, colour mazes, mirrors and tigers or knife-fights, duels and death. My argument is that at a level of reading in which we pretend to believe in either characters or plots, it is too dogmatic to make such a trenchant distinction and assert that Borges' characters are there for the sake of action alone and are simply the result of what they do. The essentially metaphoric dimension of Borges' writing, in which character as much as anything else has primarily a symbolic role to play, is not disputed. What is argued is that the abstract and more theoretical function of his characters is often enriched with human relevance, making his stories decidedly something more than "think-pieces." There are moments in most of Borges' stories in which his characters rise from their ideal anonymity and transcend their intellectual function to reveal a coexisting facet, comprised of a sense of individuality, a mortal, human emotion. It has always been a source of puzzlement to me that critics who have shown such careful understanding of the complexity, call it ambivalence, plurality, or paradox, of Borges' stories should have been as single-minded in their interpretation of his characters. Yet Borges himself has pointed very explicitly to the tension that exists between our illusions, our intellectual aspirations, our metaphysical preoccupations and our intimate personal physical reality. This tension is poignantly illustrated at the end of "Nueva refutación del tiempo" when, after an impassioned and lengthy exposition on the non-existence of objective time, with all its negative implications concerning the possibility of individual human existence, Borges affirms in positive and pathetic terms his own existence, namely his existence as a time-bound individual condemned to mortality: *"and yet,* negar la sucesión temporal, negar el yo, negar el universo astronómico, son desesperaciones aparentes y consuelos secretos ... El mundo, desgraciadamente, es real; yo, desgraciadamente, soy Borges" *(OI,* 256). The dual nature of Borges' characters has been understood most closely by Ana Maria Barrenechea who discusses the co-existence of different strata in Borges' stories ranging from the concretely particular to the archetypal. She talks about the primary importance of the interdependency of these various strata and the tension thereby created, rightly seeing this as of greater aesthetic value than the purely symbolic nature of the stories. Having argued the disintegration (caused by their multiplicity) of Borges' figures, she adds: "Pero no son la nada - me apresuro a declarar - porque todas ellas existen como forma en la sustancia de una patética aventura del hombre en el universo."[8]

It is clear that Borges is not unaware of the importance in narrative technique of proper or traditionally realistic characterization. In "El acercamiento a Almotásim" he discusses this subject and states that one of the requisites of a successful novel is "que el héroe prefigurado

por esos rasgos no sea una convención o fantasma," adding "debería dejarnos la impresión de un carácter real, no de un desorden de superlativos insípidos." Thus in the first edition, "el hombre llamado Almotásim tiene su algo de símbolo, pero no carece de rasgos idiosincráticos, personales," but in the more impoverished second edition he loses those individualizing traits to the effect that "la novela decae en alegoría" *(F*, 40). This difference seems to summarize perfectly what Borges himself has done to his best "personajes," namely, given them a symbolic role but also endowed them with individualizing idiosyncrasies.

Having suggested the dual role of characters in Borges' stories, it is necessary to distinguish different degrees of depth in their characterization. It is true that there are some stories in which the geometric function of the characters is so pronounced that psychological depth or roundness is difficult to establish. "La muerte y la brújula" has long been recognized as a fiction in which mathematical riddle is supreme and David Gallagher has written perceptively on the interplay between *three* and the triangle, and *four* and the rhomboid which lies at the basis of it.[9] Yet even the story's most abstract figure, Red Scharlach, is not devoid of individualization. On one level he can be seen as allegorical of God, a mastermind who traps his victim and counterpart, Lonnrot, with chillingly calculated precision, the complex interaction between pursuer and pursued neatly suggested by similarities in their names, "rot" meaning red in German and "Scharlach" scarlet. Yet Red Scharlach is more than a symbol. He is endowed towards the end with a whole range of conflicting and bewildering emotions, something which is quite at odds with the purely functional agent presented so far: "Habló: Lonnrot oyó en su voz una fatigada victoria, un odio del tamaño del universo, una tristeza no menor que aquel odio" *(F,* 154). It is interesting to note that his complexity is suggested by the economic but most efficient device of using three conflicting emotions, illustrated by the passive, the active and the pathetic range of *"fatigada victoria," " odio,"* and *"tristeza"* (my italics). Similarly, just three adjectives alone are used to build up the character of the reporter from the Jewish newspaper: "Era miope, ateo y muy tímido" *(F,* 145).[10] Three nouns are often all that is needed by Borges to show complexity of emotion. Thus, in "La espera" we read: "con ira, con indignación, con secreto alivio, se encaró con el insolente" *(A,* 140) and in "Las ruinas circulares," at precisely the moment when the greyish undefined protagonist realizes his phantasmal condition, three nouns are used to convey his deep human emotion: "Con alivio, con humillación, con terror, comprendió que él también era una apariencia, que otro estaba soñándolo" *(F*, 66).

In "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" the protagonist is Yu Tzun,

a Chinese in the service of German Intelligence, who, like his enemy Madden, belongs to one country that is fighting on behalf of another; and as such, each is a cipher demonstrating the interchangeability of opposites. Both have a common quality: they are implacable; Madden in hunting his victim, and Yu Tzun in hunting down his. Yet dullness or easy predictability are skillfully avoided since we are largely told about the first whereas we experience the implacability of the second. The main interest of the story does not lie precisely here and the tale is extended and inflated most convincingly to illustrate a number of allied intellectual concepts. Thus, a geometric pattern emerges in this garden of forking paths illustrating the coexistence of many realities some of which may be at odds with each other. But this geometric intellectualism concerning bifurcation and mirror images is but one aspect, to which the character of Madden does full service. In his counterpart Yu Tzun, however, Borges fleshes out the strictly functional two-dimensional figure by endowing him with conflicting emotions which bring life and individuality to this most cryptic of stories. If one recalls that the mystery or enigma of the plot is elucidated when Yu Tzun reveals his plan to kill the sinologist Albert in order to communicate via his name the next German attack, it is interesting to note that the final paragraph ends on two parallel sentences: the first completing the cerebral tale, the second perpetuating the reader's memory of the individualized protagonist: "El jefe ha descifrado ese enigma. Sabe que mi problema era indicar (a través del estrépito de la guerra) la ciudad que se llama Albert y que no hallé otro medio que matar a una persona de ese nombre. No sabe (nadie puede saber) mi inumerable contrición y cansancio" (*F*, 111). This last sentence, unnecessary with regard to the more overt theoretical arguments of the fiction, completes a series of observations which lend to Yu Tzun's presence its emotional appeal. Yet if it is accepted that nothing in Borges' stories is simply incidental, that there is no merely gratuitous ornament, then this sort of detail must be given proper consideration in the aesthetic as much as in the conceptual evaluation of his work. It is here suggested that this double aspect in Yu Tzun's character (cipher and individual) adds not only to the reader's enjoyment of the story, but is consistent with a world view which holds that there is never one final way of looking at anything, that we can never feel that we have apprehended reality in its ultimate meaning.

In "Historia del guerrero y de la cautiva" Borges places first two and then three characters in a similar situation, thus showing cycles of repetition with their attendant implications of the illusory nature of individuality. But since Borges very clearly points to other readings in the abovementioned story, the experience of Droctulft is shared by "la cautiva"

and by implication also by the author's own grandmother. This drawing together of shared experience can be termed the essentialist point, but the existentialist potential is not denied, as is clear from the following: "Imaginemos, *sub specie aetermtatis,* a Droctulft, no al individuo Droctulft, *que sin duda fue único e insondable,* sino al tipo genérico" *(A,* 48, my italics). Situations of rivalry and/or repetition such as described above serve to underline on the one hand what all men have in common, and on the other that which separates them and defines their uniqueness. This sense of uniqueness demands a certain psychological insight which Borges reveals with his usual economy of means. In "El duelo" love and obsessive rivalry co-exist in the feelings of Clara Glencairn and Marta Pizarro. This is expressed with what could be considered a deep understanding of human nature: "Clara Glencairn pintaba contra Marta y de algún modo para Marta; cada una era el juez de su rival y el solitario público. Es importante no olvidar que las dos se querían y que en el curso de aquel íntimo duelo obraron con perfecta lealtad" *(B,* 96). This theme of poignantly poised rivalry had been treated earlier in "Los teólogos," a most evocative story, in which the Latin flavour of medieval church disputes is suggested by the ablative absolutes of the opening line: "Arrastrado el jardín, profanados los cálices y las aras" *(A,* 35). In this story, Aureliano, coadjutor of Aquilea, had conducted a bitter campaign of rivalry against his rival Juan de Panomia, all in the name of zealous orthodoxy. The ambivalence of his hatred is described with perception: "Hay quien busca el amor de una mujer para olvidarse de ella, para no pensar más en ella; Aureliano, parejamente, quería superar a Juan de Panomia para curarse del rencor que éste le infundía, no para hacerle mal" *(A,* 36). In "La intrusa," a story in which jealousy causes the greatest act of love as well as the greatest cruelty, the complexity of feelings of the rival brothers is expressed as follows: "Discutían la venta de unos cueros, pero lo que discutían era otra cosa" *(B,* 18). The difference noted between words and thoughts serves as yet another example of Borges' understanding of psychological ambivalence.

Individual identity is not only sharpened and defined in relationship to another character. In "El inmortal" it is the paradoxical joy of mortality which emphasizes the precious uniqueness of the individual. The rueful declaration of belief in personal identity given at the end of "Nueva refutación del tiempo" is here reversed into a positive hymn to mortality. The ecstasy, felt in a dream about mortality whilst in the city of immortality, is but a preparation for a final return to mortality which is expressed in jubilant terms: "En las afueras, vi un caudal de agua clara. Al repechar la margen, un árbol espinoso me laceró el dorso de la mano. El inusitado dolor me pareció muy vivo. Incrédulo, silencioso, y feliz,

contemplé la preciosa formación de una lenta gota de sangre. De nuevo soy mortal, me repetí, de nuevo me parezco a todos los hombres. Esa noche dormí hasta el amanecer" *(A,* 23).

So far I have discussed mainly characters who assume momentarily individual existence, but there are many whose individuality persists throughout the story. One such character, memorable for the depth and subtlety of his emotions, is Haromir Hladik, the man condemned to death by the Gestapo and whose dreams are made up of complex premonitions, full of fears and superstitions. Hladik's function in a story which discusses the co-existence of chronological and subjective time, reality and dream, need not be repeated here. Briefly, it is a story about time, which starts with a precise date and ends with another one, the plot taking place mainly in the lapse of time that has to pass for the protagonist to be shot with compliance to apparent formality. References to the passing of chronological time occur with metronomic precision whilst Hladik takes refuge in timeless subjectivity, dreaming, scheming and praying to be given a year's grace to fulfill his life's purpose in the completion of his play. Similarities between Hladik and his literary creation, Jaroslav Kubin, are easy enough to detect as are those between Hladik and *his* creator. He is forty years old (the story was written in 1943 when Borges was forty-four); "el problemático ejercicio de la literatura constituía su vida" *(F,* 161); he too, like Borges, was unsuccessful in his attempt to suppress the repeated publication of his expressionist poems. Thus individual identity seems to cancel itself out by these repetitions between author and character which point to the sameness of individual situations. These and many more patterns can be drawn to illustrate the intellectual backbone of the story. But when all that has been attempted, we are still left with a figure which has become "rounded," or, to quote E.M. Forster's well-known aphorism, "is like a disc modulated into the round."[11] My contention is that here as in many other instances we can find what Forster encountered in Jane Austen, namely that the two-dimensional character or "disc" had suddenly extended and become "a little globe." Hladik is a man afraid of dying. He tries pathetically to exorcise this fear by imagining countless and horrifying visions of his possible deaths; then he abruptly stops, lest they be prophetic. All this adds to his credibility or psychological roundness, but he has an even more touchingly delicate reaction which completes his unique personality. It is a small, self-effacing gesture made a few moments before he is to be shot. The scene is an inner courtyard in which his execution is about to take place: Hladik feels disappointment that all the grandeur has been taken out of the situation of his court-martial and that he is to be shot in an anonymous patio by some indifferent

soldiers, whose only concern is to preserve the wall from unnecessary bloodstains and to execute punctually: "Había que esperar que dieran las nueve. Hladik, más insignificante que desdichado, se sentó en un montón de leña. Advirtió que los ojos de los soldados rehuían los suyos. Para aliviar la espera, el sargento le entregó un cigarrillo. *Hladik no fumaba; lo aceptó por cortesía o por humildad" (F*, 165, my italics). This sort of detail, the gentle acceptance of an unwanted cigarette from the enemy, is what gives human vitality to Borges' stories, fully engaging the reader as much at an emotional as at an abstract theoretical level. The extension of the disc into the globe is in fact an integral part of the stories' aesthetic achievement.

There are some stories, however, in which characterization is not merely an important aesthetic component, but in which character has a more dominant role at the functional level of the plot. The chief example of this category is "Emma Zunz," the first and only story until the publication of the collection "El informe de Brodie" whose title consists solely of a personal name. This gives an early indication of the possible psychological intent of the story; but then one notices that the name and surname are almost palindromes and the search for intellectual machinations is fuelled once more. Tension between psychological motivation and abstract connotation is maintained throughout. For instance, Emma had lived with the secret of her employer's betrayal of her father for years, a knowledge which provided her with an intimate bond with her absent father and also gave her a sense of power over her employer. The dual role of this one piece of information is wholly in line with a conceptual tenet of the story, namely that one act or one idea may serve two different, even opposite, purposes. But on another level it helps to shape the ambivalence of Emma's emotions and to prepare the psychological motivation for the story. This whole question of psychological motivation has been sadly misunderstood by Sturrock in the above-quoted *Paper Tigers:* misled by careless interpretation in his own translation, caused no doubt by lack of familiarity with certain local habits, Sturrock jumps to the conclusion that the vulgar jokes that accompanied the medical examination called "la revisación" in the original version were vulgar jokes commenting on the "revision" of the presumably foreign sounding name. He concludes, "these vulgar jokes seem to be directed against what is for Borges the specific process of fiction, which imposes its own names as it proceeds."[12] He fails to notice that this all-important prudery of Emma's during "la revisación" (a usual examination in hot climates to ensure that one does not have anything contagious before entering a swimming pool, athlete's foot, I would surmise) reveals a psychological trait, her abhorrence of sexuality,

which serves to influence and explain her fiendish plan and its eventual outcome. In "Emma Zunz" psychological evolution takes on a complexity which is absent from most other stories. For it is Emma's sexual ignorance and intactness which help her to conceive, in the abstract, her plan of revenge for the murder of her father. Yet when she eventually forces herself to have intercourse with an unknown soldier in order to establish the motive for the murder, her whole being and personality are affected. She undergoes a radical psychological evolution which is invisibly reflected by changes in the inner motivation of her plan. Outwardly, the plan to murder Loewenthal goes on as originally conceived, but instead of seeking to revenge her father for the injustices he suffered, it serves to revenge her mother for the humiliation Emma now feels she must have suffered in similar circumstances and, by extension, for that suffered by Emma herself. The changes in Emma affect the role of other characters: from injured victim her father turns into villain; Loewenthal changes from being the object of Emma's hatred to being simply a convenient substitute.

Character plays a dominant role, too, in the motivation for the action in "El indigno." This is a singularly uncondescending story, which refuses to pigeon-hole the Jew into any traditional stereotype position whether good or bad. Santiago Fischbein, the protagonist, is a Jew and, as such, the eternal outsider living on the fringes of the criollo society, yet in a curious way forming an integral part of it since Argentina is a country whose population is largely of immigrant origin. The ambivalence of this position is expressed with great psychological insight by the first person narrator: "todos nos parecemos a la imagen que tienen de nosotros. Yo sentía el desprecio de la gente y yo me despreciaba también" *(B,* 29). In his youth Fischbein hankered after recognition by the "gauchos" and "compadritos" of his working-class "barrio." Yet, when eventually he acquired their acceptance and trust, he rnysteriously betrayed them. In his maturity, as a book-seller, he seems to have become something of a theologian, since he exchanges ideas and sells works of theology to the narrator of the story, a Borges-like figure. Writing in another context, John Spurling asserts that Borges' characters do not aspire to be individuals with a sense of interior life but types of which the traitor, the Jew, the theologian and the gaucho are given as possible examples.[13] By fortuitous coincidence, these four categories are loosely combined in "Santiago Fischbein" yet to what extent can it be said that it was a single one of these aspects which has led him to "grass" to the Police. Jew, gaucho, theologian and traitor: which of these typifies him? Surely what is portrayed here is not a type but a complex human being placed in a particular situation and reacting to it in an individual

way. In this case it is the *action* of "El indigno" which serves in fact to shape the rich complexity of Santiago Fischbein, whose history, whose family and whose temperament drew him to commit what may be seen as a repulsive act of betrayal yet may equally be thought of as an heroic act of civic responsibility, carried out regardless of the certainty that his sacrifice would remain misunderstood. There is no way of telling, for ultimately in Borges the individual remains unknowable.

In spite of Borges' own urging us to read the stories in the collection entitled "El informe de Brodie" as realistic tales, it would of course be a narrow and superficial reading if we limited our interpretation to a naturalistic level. Of course, Fischbein, like all other characters by Borges, can, and indeed must, be seen in a symbolic light. But why would the man who wrote "no hay en la tierra una sola página que lo sea [sencilla] ya que todas postulan el universo, cuyo más notorio atributo es la complejidad" *(B,* 7-8) have been content with creating transparent archetypal characters? One does not need to rehearse here any argument about literature's not reflecting reality in a mimetic way, nor to explain the shortcomings of language in dealing effectively with realism in literature. But, given that all literature is fictive, that every character in every novel is an artificial creation, arbitrarily conceived, in a language which cannot adequately represent reality, it still seems legitimate to invoke a certain suspension of disbelief and to talk within this framework of fictionality of that old-fashioned concept of character. After all, it is what those who deny its importance in Borges' stories are still doing.

The ineffable character of Borges' stories, their lack of centrality or commitment to any finality, has been percipiently argued by Sylvia Molloy, who talks of the ultimate anonymity of his multifaceted characters. Emphasizing this essential anti- nomalism in his writing, she remarks: "obra a lo largo de las ficciones el rechazo ilusorio del nombre, de la posible palabra que podría fijar, de modo peligroso e inequívoco, un ser, un itinerario, un objeto." Yet the Argentine critic concedes that there exists another level of reading: "Obra también, paralelamente, la tentación de aceptar ese nombre y esa palabra, de incurrir en el simulacro."[15] It is with this *simulacro* that this study is concerned. Its aim is not to disprove contentions about the abstract character of Borges' writing, but to show that coexistent with such a reading lies another, one in which character can be seen to step out on to the forefront of the stories and assume, if only momentarily, a hitherto undetected importance. What is suggested is that, far from being simply expedient archetypes, many of Borges' characters are in fact endowed with a dual role, one which makes them appear both as undifferentiated ciphers, illustrating man's essen-

tial uniformity, his insignificance as an individual in the light of certain pantheistic or idealistic philosophical preoccupations and, at the same time, if seen from a different perspective, as sentient individuals, full of complex human emotions, isolated in their own despairing subjectivity, each the centre of his own universe. This duality is in full accordance with Borges' refusal to interpret the universe in any one sense alone, a duality so neatly encapsulated in the metaphoric phrase "álgebra y fuego," which Borges uses on several occasions. Thus in "Otro poema de los dones" the poet gives thanks for the existence both of intellect and of passion in the world: "Por el álgebra, palacio de preciosos cristales" and "Por el fulgor del fuego." It may be worth noting (on the question of the relative importance of character) that the first thanks in this poem is precisely for the variety and multiplicity of humanity.

> Gracias quiero dar al divino
> Laberinto de los efectos y de las causas
> *Por La diversidad de las criaturas*
> Que forman este singular universo. *(OP,* 261, my italics)[16]

Having talked about the "fuego" in some of Borges' characters, I should like, in conclusion, to note the "fuego" that warms and gives emotional life to his prose even when conveyed through the voice of a nameless and faceless narrator whose plea for individuality emerges from the tone of the narrative. There are a number of critics who have acknowledged the presence of emotive description in Borges' work. Ana Maria Barrenechea, for instance, notes that "pocos han visto que con ese rigor intelectual convive muy a menudo el más exaltado apasionamiento,"[17] and David Gallagher writes: "Borges' work abounds in emotive descriptions of that moment of reassertion and its consequent defeat of the intellectual quest," and also "Borges' stories, in the end, are not only coolly lucid cerebral games, but often highly poetic expressions of the fragility of the world and of man."[18] A detailed study of Borges' emotional narrative is still awaited, but two examples of this may be found in stories which are traditionally considered the most impersonal, such as "La lotería en Babilonia" and "La biblioteca de Babel," in which a deep human involvement can be seen to filter through the interstices of geometric intellectual exposition. Thus, in "La lotería," human anxiety is carefully veiled in the following terse admission: "He conocido lo que ignoran los griegos: la incertidumbre" *(F,* 67). This statement, which is not gratuitous, prepares the reader for a later confession that all may not be according to the rigorous permutations hitherto described, for subjectivity and emotion have crept into the account: "Yo mismo, en esta apresurada declaración he falseado algún esplendor. Quizá también

alguna misteriosa monotonía" *(F,* 74). "La Biblioteca" is of course an obvious metaphor for the universe and as such embodies the essentially chaotic nature of the universe as well as man's categorizing efforts in a vain endeavour to penetrate the meaning of that chaos. Since it is, however, a metaphor for the universe, we the readers must be part of it, and we are most skillfully and emotively involved when as part of an enumeration we find ourselves addressed directly: e.g. "la relación verídica de tu muerte" *(F,* 90) and more pointedly, in "tú, que me lees, ¿estás seguro de entender mi lenguaje?" *(F,* 94). The emotional passages of this work are too lengthy to quote here and surpass the character- based study of this article, but I should like to finish with one short extract in which the narrator's emotion is heightened at the aesthetic level by the incantatory musicality of his prose. Talking of "La Biblioteca," once mankind has destroyed itself and It alone remains in God-like splendour and futility, he says with obvious feeling: "sospecho que la Biblioteca perdurará iluminada, solitaria, infinita, perfectamente inmóvil, armada de volúmenes preciosos, inútil, incorruptible, secreta" *(F,* 95). It is of this story that Borges has said, in an interview with G. Charbonnier: "Dans ce conté, et je 1'espere dans tous mes contes, il y a une partie intellectuelle et une autre partie - plus importante je pense - le sentiment de la solitude de l'angoisse."[19] Once again, Borges' own words seem to confirm what this article has sought to demonstrate, namely, that Borges' stories are metaphors of a complex view of the universe conveyed by a similarly complex interaction between the intellectualism of "álgebra" and the emotion of "fuego."

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NOTES

1 *Historia de la eternidad* (Buenos Aires, 1963), 152. Reference to Borges' works will be abbreviated as follows: *HE: Historia de la eternidad* (Buenos Aires, 1963); *D: Disensión* (Buenos Aires, 1964); *F: Ficciones* (Buenos Aires, 1957); *A: El Aleph* (Buenos Aires, 1957); *Oí: Otras inquisiciones* (Buenos Aires, 1960); *B: El informe de Brodie* (Buenos Aires, 1970); *OP: Obra poética* (Buenos Aires, 1978).

2 Carlos Fuentes, *La nueva novela latinoamericana* (México, 1969), 26.

3 Adolfo Prieto, *Borges y la nueva generación* (Buenos Aires, 1954); quoted in A.M. Barrenechea, *La expresión de la irrealidad en ¡a obra de Borges* (Buenos Aires, 1967), 106.

4 V.S. Pritchett, *The Myth Makers* (London, 1979), 176; see also 184: "The risk is - and there are some signs of this already - that criticism of Borges will become an accretion that will force us to see his stories as conceits alone."

5 Ernesto Sábato, "Los relatos de Jorge Luis Borges," in *El escritor y la crítica,*

ed., J. Alazraki (Madrid, 1976), 69-74, at 71.

6 Psiche Hughes, "Love in the Abstract: The Role of Women in Borges' Literary World," *Chasqui, 8, no.* 3 (1979) 36-42, at 36.

7 J. Sturrock, *Paper Tigers* (Oxford, 1977), 4 and 3.

8 A.M. Barrenechea, "Notas y los símbolos," *Revista Iberoamericana,* 100—101 (1977), 605.

9 D.P. Gallagher, *Modern Latin American Literature* (Oxford, 1973), 96-110.

10 In "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" Borges refers to the juxtaposition of two different categories of adjectives in Shakespeare's line from Othello, V. ii, 354, "Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk" *F,* 51.

11 E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel,* edited by Oliver Stallybrass (Harmondsworth, 1976), 73-80.

12 Sturrock, *Paper Tigers,* 70.

13 J. Spurling, *Times Literary Supplement,* 12 June 1981, 672.

14 On the question of reality in fiction with particular reference to Borges, see G. Josipovici, *The World and the Book* (London, 1971), 297 and passim.

15 S. Molloy, "Dios acecha en los intervalos: simulacro y causalidad textual en la ficción de Borges," *Revista Iberoamericana,* 100-101 (1977), 381-97 (384).

16 Other places in which the metaphors *álgebra* and *fuego* appear are *F,* 19 and *OP,* 188.

17 Barrenecha, *La expresión de la irrealidad,* 24.

18 Gallagher, *Modern Latín American Literature,* 95 and 121.

19 G. Charbonnier, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges* (Paris, 1967), 20; quoted in D.L. Shaw, *Borges: Ficciones* (London, 1976), 36.