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Author(s): Leo Corry and Renato Giovanolli

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Jorge Borges, Author of *The Name of the Rose*

Leo Corry
The Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and the Ideas, Tel Aviv

Few books have been as quickly and unanimously acclaimed throughout the world as Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose* (1983 [1980]). Its most obvious reading—as a detective story—is probably also its most exciting one; throughout the development of the plot, the reader's effort is concentrated on answering one question: *Whodunit*? But besides the book's value as a fine mystery novel, *The Name of the Rose* has fostered a brisk commentary industry from the very first day of its appearance on the shelves.[1] It quickly became a commonplace that the secret of the book's somewhat surprising success derives from the multitude of layers underlying its plot; this multilayered structure renders the book

Some of the ideas contained in this article also appeared in an earlier, much reduced sketch in *Moznaim* 21(3–4): 48–51 (1987). I wish to thank Noah Effron, who significantly improved my English prose.

1. A score of such interpretive articles, which appeared in literary supplements of newspapers throughout the world, were collected (in Italian translations) by Renato Giovanolli (1985). For other collections, see Hans-Jürgen Bachorski (1985) and Theresa Coletti (1988), as well as an issue of *SubStance* (Rubino 1985) which included articles from a colloquium held at the University of Texas at Austin in the fall of 1984 and an issue of *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts* (17:1 [1989]) which included articles from a symposium held at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, on April 18, 1988. In the latter collection, Myrna Solotorevsky (1989) deals with issues closely connected to those that I consider here, and our two articles interestingly complement each other in approach as well as in the details analyzed.

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attractive to an astonishingly wide spectrum of readers.[2] The present essay is yet another contribution to the interpretation industry generated by *The Name of the Rose*, which is intended to shed new light on some of the book's central features.

While it is rather typical for artists with a fruitful career behind them to take a pause in their creative work in order to reflect on the nature of their art and thereby produce some kind of theoretical book, Eco is a unique example of a theoretician with a fruitful career behind him who takes a pause in his critical work in order to confront his theoretical ideas about art by way of artistic creation. Hence, when Eco the theoretician becomes Eco the novelist, his own interpretation of the novel has been, in a sense, written beforehand. Because of this, we must approach Eco's novel with prejudice.

The least we might expect from Eco is his having built a text in accordance with a foreseen audience and, consequently, his having anticipated the most likely interpretations. Yet, to claim that this foresight is part of the generative process of the book would still be, according to Eco, no more than a generality. What is necessary is "to represent an 'ideal' text as a system of nodes or joints and to establish at which of them the cooperation of the Model Reader is expected and elicited" (Eco 1979: 33).

I do not intend to uncover here all the "nodes" which require the "cooperation" of a "model reader" of *The Name of the Rose*; this would be far beyond the scope of a single article and far beyond my own competence. I will, however, attempt to uncover the "nodes" that call for the "cooperation" of a particular type of reader, and I will claim that these "nodes" play a central role in the semiotic strategy of the book. I am thinking, namely, of the "nodes" which elicit the "cooperation" of readers well versed in the writings of Jorge Luis Borges. A detailed study of the intertextual interplay between Eco's novel and Borges's works presents a twofold interest. On the one hand, it brings to the fore many hidden aspects of the novel and helps to actualize its literary potential. On the other hand, it leads to some theoretical insights into the nature of literary allusion as a specific device of intertextuality. In what follows, therefore, I will first explore the intertextual aspects of Eco's novel and Borges's writings, emphasizing the role of allusion therein, and, in my final section, I will discuss the relevance of this remarkable example to elucidating the general mechanism of literary allusion.

2. Obviously, not only literary considerations, but also to a great extent pure marketing factors account for the book's commercial success. An interesting analysis of this issue has been done by Gerd Kruse (1985).

Jorge de Burgos—Jorge Luis Borges

The strong Borgesian flavor of Eco's novel and the transparent similarity between Eco's character Jorge de Burgos and Jorge Luis Borges were readily noted by many commentators on *The Name of the Rose*. Eco has since explained that this name resulted from a desire to pay his debts to Borges (Eco 1985: 27–28). What kinds of debts is Eco talking about? It would be enough to glance briefly at some of Borges's writings in order to grasp the degree to which Borgesian ideas pervade the conceptual world of Eco, especially concerning the active role of the reader in the literary experience. For example, in his article on George Bernard Shaw, Borges addressed himself to the problem of the possibility of creating art through mechanical devices. After mentioning some of the thinkers who had contributed to that debate, either by enthusiastically encouraging such a possibility or by sadly accepting it with resignation, Borges expressed his own opinion on the issue by succinctly stating his belief in the active role of the reader, as follows:

> A book is more than a verbal structure, or a series of verbal structures; it is the dialogue in which it engages with the reader. . . . The book is not an isolated entity: it is a relationship, it is an axis of innumerable relationships. One literary tradition differs from those previous or subsequent, less in the text itself than in the fashion in which it is read. (Borges 1974i [1952]: 747 [translation mine])

We could, then, follow the path leading from Borges's ideas to Eco's theories and from Eco's theories to *The Name of the Rose*. This path would indicate the nature of Eco's debts to Borges and would show how they are repaid in the novel. But Borges's ideas are much more central to *The Name of the Rose* than this path would suggest. The presence of Borges in the novel is a constitutive feature and not a superfluous detail imposed upon the writer by the initial setting of the plot, as Eco's claims in *Reflections* would have us believe. The intertextual relationship between the novel and Borges's writings is not simply one of borrowed ideas and motifs, but is a much subtler and more intricate one.

Certainly, from the outset of the story, we are confronted with classical Borgesian motifs: labyrinths, mirrors, libraries, and books about books. A considerable number of the issues discussed in the novel, either as part of the intricate plot or through the philosophical debates implicitly or explicitly conducted in it, are typical of Borges. But, as a matter of fact, Borges's presence is felt even before the plot begins to unfold.

In his introduction to *The Name of the Rose*, Eco describes his sources in a typical Borgesian fashion: we are told that we are dealing with a

French, neo-gothic version of the seventeenth-century Latin edition of an original manuscript from the end of the fourteenth century, which was written in Latin by a German monk. This introduction brings to mind the opening paragraphs of many short stories by Borges: a painstaking description of characters, dates, recondite historical facts, erudite philosophical debates, and detailed bibliographical references, each of which serves to blur the border between reality and imagination.[3] Certainly, this literary resource is neither Borges's invention nor his monopoly; however, hardly anything else could be considered more characteristic of his writing than that blurring of reality and imagination which perplexes the uninitiated reader and causes him to read and reread in order to solve the mystery. This blurring effect is created in Borges's works, in the first place, by the recurrent use of introductions like the one presented here by Eco. Eco himself has elsewhere explained the centrality of the introduction to determining the character of a fictional text, since, by means of the introduction, "the reader is invited not to wonder whether the reported facts are true" (Eco 1979: 12–13).

The profusion of characters, the scholarly quotations, and the endless references to books and writers which appear throughout *The Name of the Rose* reinforce our feeling of definitely being in Borgesian surroundings. But the interesting point is that neither Borges's name nor his books are explicitly mentioned; they are, instead, *alluded to*. Literary allusion has been persistently cited as the essential characteristic of Borges's style: "His stories are allusions to other stories, his characters are allusions to other characters and their lives are allusions to other lives" (Christ 1969: 38). Borges developed the aesthetic strategy of allusion throughout his writings, which, in turn, are liberally alluded to in *The Name of the Rose*. In fact, Eco alludes to several different levels of Borges's work: to Borges's favorite themes, to Borges's plots, to Borges's own allusive techniques, etc. It is this variety of connections which makes the study of the intertextual relationship between Borges and Eco worth pursuing and, especially, which sheds new light on the theoretical aspects of literary allusion as a particular device of intertextuality.

In "The Library of Babel" Borges (1974c [1942]) describes a library representing the universe, and through an analysis of the structure of the library and its contents, he discusses the possibility of know-

3. Of the innumerable instances of such a technique in Borges's writings, the best known is perhaps found in Borges (1974b [1940]). For other examples, see Borges (1974d [1942]) and (1974j [1970]). In particular, the introduction to Borges (1974g [1947]) strongly resembles Eco's.

ing the world. Borges, a staunch skeptic, denies such a possibility. A similar analysis is carried out as part of the detective's investigation in *The Name of the Rose*: the detective succeeds in deciphering the secret interior layout of the library only through examination of its exterior and with the help of mathematics. The very possibility of discovering the design of the library is properly founded on epistemological grounds akin to the detective's general philosophical approach.

> Here is the point: we must find, from the outside, a way of describing the Aedificium as it is inside. . . . We will use the mathematical sciences. Only in the mathematical sciences, as Averroës says, are things known to us identified with those known absolutely. . . . Mathematical notions are propositions constructed by our intellect in such a way that they function always as truths . . . and the library was built by a human mind that thought in a mathematical fashion, because without mathematics you cannot build labyrinths. And therefore we must compare our mathematical propositions with the propositions of the builder, and from this comparison science can be produced, because it is a science of terms upon terms. (Eco 1983 [1980]: 215)

Eco's and Borges's libraries are similar in some ways and different in others. Both libraries are mazes representing the labyrinth of the universe. The plot in both stories concerns the search for a book found on the shelves of the library—a book containing the sum of all the books in the library, in the case of Borges, and the second book of Aristotle's *Poetics*, in the case of Eco. Borges suggests searching for the desired book by examining the contents of the library's other books, but this entails an infinite regression and, hence, is impractical. Eco's detective succeeds in finding his book with the help of other books in the library, but his success is only fleeting and the book soon disappears before the detective's astonished eyes.

An interesting difference between the two libraries lies in their physical design, a fact that seems to underline, as it were, their essential identity. In Borges's library, we find an infinite number of hexagonal rooms; in Eco's, there are fifty-six rooms: four are heptagonal and the rest, "more or less square." The building is composed of four towers with five rooms each, one of them being heptagonal and the others having four walls. An octagonal fossa forms the center of the building. With this design, which seems to avoid by any and all means the number six, the library builders achieved the "maximum of confusion" through "the maximum of order" (ibid.: 217). Borges's library also attains total chaos by means of its compulsive order since, for Borges, absolute order and absolute chaos are nothing but two sides of the same coin.

Epistemological Metaphors

Up to this point, we have considered some aspects of the Borgesian atmosphere in which the plot of *The Name of the Rose* unfolds: the introduction, the intermingling of reality and imagination, Borges's obsessive images, and so forth. However, as Eco himself has emphasized, "what matters is not the various issues in themselves but the maze-like structure of the text" (Eco 1979: 9). The next step, then, is to see if the plot itself is Borgesian; as a matter of fact, Eco takes an actual Borges plot and introduces some variations to it in order to present an epistemological picture that differs from Borges's. The plot in question is that of Borges's detective story "Death and the Compass" (Borges 1974e [1942]).

In "Death and the Compass" we meet a detective investigating a series of murders. He believes that he has discovered the series to have been designed in accordance with a plan taken from written sources: in this case, all of the clues are derived from works of Jewish mysticism. Eco's detective, Brother William, discovers a similar plan, but all of his clues are, naturally, derived from works of Catholic mysticism. Detective stories provide an appropriate framework for the formulation of conjectures; both Eco and Borges are deeply interested in the philosophical issues entailed by such formulation of conjectures.

An underlying meta-conjecture of most inquisitive activities based on conjecture formulation is "that all the events have a logic, the logic that the guilty party has imposed on them" (Eco 1985: 54). However, as we shall see, this meta-conjecture is considered by Eco and by Borges in different terms. We shall next proceed, then, to explain the ways in which Eco's and Borges's detectives elaborate their conjectures and how these conjectures are related to reality. We thus return for now to Eco the theoretician.

Eco coined the term "epistemologic metaphor" to describe the manner in which a literary work can illuminate unrecognized aspects of scientific theories or philosophical systems, either by developing the tenets of such theories to their most extreme consequences or by turning their central images into literary ones. In this way, we can sometimes consider artistic productions as mediating agents which link the abstract categories of science to everyday life, while pointing out hitherto unknown aspects of the world and of the theories as well (Eco 1965: 120). This is one of Eco's key tools in his work as a literary critic; it is also very well suited to defining Borges's literary work[4] and, as we shall see, Eco's own novel as well.

Borges has stressed the centrality of metaphor as the foremost rhetorical device. In fact, his mature writing has sometimes been char-

4. This has been shown by Jaime Alazraki (1983: esp. 275–301).

acterized as an effort to develop an entire story as one big metaphor. But Borges does not limit the centrality of metaphor to its place in literature. He goes further and considers all philosophical and scientific writings as no more than metaphors; according to Borges, the whole intellectual history of humanity is nothing more than the history of a small number of metaphors. Borges is an extreme relativist who believes that all theories about the universe must fail because they presuppose the existence of a "cosmos," or a given order. To Borges, the universe is, on the contrary, in a state of chaos, or, at best, it is a maze in which we can never find the right path. Hence, claims Borges, we should refrain from judging theories according to their truth-value—since all of them are equally wrong—and instead judge them only according to their aesthetic value. Epistemological metaphors, such as those written by Borges, may indeed help us to assess the aesthetic value of the philosophical theories behind them.

In the epistemologic metaphor, "Death and the Compass," Borges contrasts his own view of the universe with the implicit view in the traditional detective story. He challenges the traditional presupposition of a "cosmos." Eco's novel represents, as well, a further epistemologic metaphor concerning chaos and cosmos.

The classic detective in literature is usually interested only in finding out the truth; neither justice nor law enforcement is his business. The process of discovering the truth is based on the assumption that the detective's universe of inquiry—including the world of human thoughts and drives—is a cosmos which behaves according to an already established scheme as well as according to the principles of logic and to simple, fixed laws. The aim of the detective is to decipher that scheme and those laws, which will lead him directly to the murderer. It is precisely this assumption which is challenged by Borges in "Death and the Compass."

Eric Lönnrot, the detective of "Death and the Compass," is precisely the classical type. His insatiable intellectual curiosity enables him to become absorbed in the study of any subject—however abstruse and complicated—whenever it may help him in his pursuit of the truth. However, Lönnrot is willing to acknowledge from the start what most of his colleagues and literary analysts would be ashamed to admit: that his aim as a detective is just to produce conjectures. The only requirement imposed upon these conjectures is that they be interesting. Even less, however, is required of reality—reality can afford to be uninteresting. Lönnrot rejects any conjecture in which randomness plays a significant role, even when it is plausible, only because it is uninteresting.

The first victim in the series of murders investigated by Lönnrot is a Talmudic scholar named Marcelo Yarmolinsky. The following unfin-

ished sentence was found on the piece of paper left in his typewriter: *The first letter of the name has already been pronounced.* Since the case deals with the murder of a rabbi, and the only clue is a rabbinical one, Lönnrot begins an intensive study of Jewish mystical tradition in order to produce an interesting conjecture stated in purely rabbinical terms, in open contradiction to the police inspector, who suggests an easy (although uninteresting) solution. Lönnrot's sudden interest in Jewish philosophy is reported by the newspapers. Next to the second victim in the series, Lönnrot finds written on the wall: *The second letter of the name has already been pronounced.* He can then easily guess what text will be found near the third victim in the series.

At this stage, the basic rabbinical presuppositions held by Lönnrot have been fairly well corroborated, and he sets about deciphering the meaning of the series in order to discover the murderer. Assisted by several clues and a liberal dose of geometry, Lönnrot is able to predict the time and place of the next murder, which is to be the last in the series. According to the plan discovered by Lönnrot, it is absolutely clear that there will be exactly four murders in the series, as there are four letters in the Jewish name of God. Lönnrot arrives at the location of the expected crime (a maze-like country house), where he meets the murderer, who is waiting for him; indeed, Lönnrot himself is to be the fourth victim, but he has not anticipated this particular detail. A brief exchange between detective and murderer is enough to clarify the "whole truth." Red Scharlach (the murderer) has been planning Lönnrot's murder for several years, after the latter had sent the former's brother to prison. An unexpected opportunity presented itself when Lönnrot was commissioned to investigate a murder in which Scharlach had been involved. Hearing of Lönnrot's sudden interest in Jewish philosophy, Scharlach decided to support Lönnrot's conjecture by creating corroborative evidence. Lönnrot convinced himself of the truth of his conjectures, as Scharlach had planned, and Scharlach's scheme led Lönnrot—driven now by a slight arrogance due to the success of his discoveries—directly into the hands of the murderer, who, before shooting him, explains to his victim all the details of the crimes as they really happened.

That is the plot of the story. What then is its epistemologic moral? Borges here clearly rejects the basic assumption that the universe is a cosmos whose code the detective (as well as the scientist and the philosopher) is trying to decipher. Lönnrot builds theories upon details collected from reality, and with the help of mathematics he tries to predict the next murder in the series. But in the end he is deceived: there is nothing in common between his conjecture and reality. Any attempt at knowing the universe is hopeless, claims Borges, and every theory is arbitrary and no more than a conjecture. We do not even

understand the concept of universe, and we do not know whether that concept refers to something real. Even so, Borges insists, "the impossibility of penetrating the universe's divine scheme cannot deter us from planning human schemes, even when these are merely provisional" (Borges 1974a: 708 [translation mine]). The formal similarity between *The Name of the Rose* and "Death and the Compass" should be evident to the reader at this stage. However, before we proceed to analyze this similarity in detail, let us return once more to Eco the theoretician.

In 1983 Eco edited (with Thomas Sebeok) a book devoted entirely to the analysis of detective stories in terms of the philosophy of C. S. Peirce (Eco and Sebeok 1983). The short time that elapsed between the publication of the novel (Eco 1980) and of the theoretical work suggests that it would be worthwhile to digress and briefly comment on the latter. One of the articles collected there (Truzzi 1983) explicitly deals with Sherlock Holmes's method. The author had discovered a fact which Holmes scholars typically overlook (but which Borges had clearly seen back in 1942): that is, despite Holmes's avowed empiricism, a close inspection of his methods shows that Holmes resorts to hypothesis more often than not; more specifically,

> although Holmes often speaks of his *deductions*, these are actually rarely displayed in the canon. Nor are Holmes's most common inferences technically *inductions*. More exactly, Holmes consistently displays what C. S. Peirce has called *abductions*. . . . Peirce sometimes called abductions *hypotheses* . . . and in the modern sense, that is what the conclusion in the abduction represents: a conjecture about reality which needs to be validated through testing.[5] (Ibid.: 69–70 [Truzzi's emphases])

Eco's own article in this volume deals with the conjectural character common to both the scientist's and the detective's work. Usually, claims Eco, our conjectures are produced within conceptual frameworks which are themselves taken for granted. Johannes Kepler's theory of elliptic orbits, for instance, is a bold conjecture grounded on a very stable framework, namely, that planets move in regular orbits. However, it may also happen that particular conjectures lead us into questioning the very paradigm in which we are working and a further conjecture must be added, namely, that the "possible universe outlined by our first-level abductions is the same as the universe of our experience" (Eco 1983: 207). Eco calls this last kind of conjecturing "meta-abduction," and he remarks on the importance of considering these two levels of conjecturing separately. As a matter of fact, it is by means of the meta-abduction that Eco classifies diverse types of conjectural

5. A detailed exposition of Peirce's theory of inference and abduction, and of its connection to the Sherlock Holmes stories, can be found in Thomas Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok (1983).

thinking. For example, rationalistic thinking in general is characterized by the very passage from simple abduction to meta-abduction that presupposes a perfect correspondence between the conjecturer's mind and the outside world. Holmes's simplistic meta-abductions provide the basis for his certainty in the soundness of his own abductions.

As Eco remarks, Karl Popper and Peirce both knew, in contradistinction to Holmes, that science does not enjoy this certainty regarding its meta-abductions. Borges asserted, as long ago as 1942, the conjectural character of any inquiry (detectivesque, scientific, or metaphysical) and refused to endow it with any kind of certainty at any level. Eco's detective too, conducting his fourteenth-century investigation, was able to acknowledge the conjectural character of science within a strictly scholastic conceptual world. Some of the views expressed by William of Baskerville had already been clearly stated in Eco's 1983 article, while the plot of the novel seems to follow rather closely, although not identically, that of Borges's skeptical detective story.

William of Baskerville is depicted by Eco as a classic British detective. In language heavily flavored with Scholastic terminology, William claims that his interest is only in the truth, disavowing any concern with questions of justice or ethics. Despite such claims, however, we find many instances in the plot where William seems to be more troubled by problems of morality and the administration of justice than his modern colleagues in detective fiction are. Moreover, as Adso—William's apprentice—points out, William seems to be amusing himself by "imagining how many possibilities were possible" (i.e., formulating conjectures), rather than pursuing the truth (Eco 1983 [1980]: 306).

The first display of William's abilities takes place at the moment of his arrival at the outskirts of the monastery, when he correctly guesses that the abbot's horse has run away from the stables, thereby impressing Adso and the other monks with his analytic abilities. This episode is taken, almost word for word, from a fragment of Voltaire's *Zadig* which Eco quotes in full in his article on Holmes, where he explains his own ideas on abduction and meta-abduction. This self-allusion by Eco to a quotation from one of his own works, a typical Borges device, is rather significant in the present context and may indeed throw some light on the meta-story of *The Name of the Rose*. As Eco explains,

> Whereas in criminal stories an omnipotent God verifies the hypotheses forever, in "real" scientific inquiries (as well as in real criminal, medical, or philological detection) meta-abductions are a frightening matter. *Zadig* is not a detection story but a philosophical tale because its deep subject is exactly the vertigo of meta-abduction. (Eco 1983: 219)

Borges tacitly declared his own meta-abductional position very clearly through the philosophical tale "Death and the Compass": any

meta-abduction bestowing the status of reality upon a conjecture is nonsense because all conjectures about the universe are equally false and can *never* reflect its true structure. By now it should be clear that "Death and the Compass" is "not a detection story but a philosophical tale," and that the same holds true for *The Name of the Rose*.

William starts his inquiry into the series of murders and soon conjectures that the series is part of a preconceived plan, with the circumstances of all the cases fitting the description of the seven trumpets of the Apocalypse. The first murder takes place during a day of hailstorms, the second victim is drowned in a barrel full of blood, and so forth. Based on this assumption, William's investigation does lead him to the murderer's hiding place. This scenario, in which the victim waits patiently (very often in the center of a maze, as is the case in *The Name of the Rose*) for the one who must come to execute him, is also typical of Borges. Usually, in these cases, a transmutation takes place, with victim and executioner exchanging roles, and it is hard to decide finally who is who. In "The House of Asterión" (Borges 1974f [1947]), for example, the Minotaur waits in the center of the maze for Theseus's arrival; in "Abenjacán the Buckharian, Dead in His Labyrinth" (Borges 1974h [1951]), Zaid waits for Abenjacán, who must come to execute him. Likewise, Scharlach waits for Lönnrot in a maze-like country house. There are many other examples of this kind. In *The Name of the Rose*, William discovers the real identity of the murderer and succeeds in getting to his hiding place. When William finally meets the murderer, a very erudite conversation takes place between them, and William learns that the first two murders in the series occurred in circumstances which were not originally related to any plan; rather, it was only chance that united them into an assumed series. Despite the crimes' coinciding with William's assumptions, to have considered them as part of a preconceived series was misleading.

But the interesting point (and here the plot begins to differ slightly, but meaningfully, from that of Borges) is that, somehow, the murderer had heard of William's conjecture and had himself become convinced that his crimes were, in fact, part of a divine plan forced upon him by the will of God and that it was his duty to carry out that plan. The murderer, accordingly, consummated the plan by committing the crimes it entailed, as though those first two murders had indeed been part of a scheme imposed on the murderer against his will.

The whole process can be summed up as follows: in the course of his inquiry, William conjectured a correspondence between the series of murders and the book of the Apocalypse; consequently, the entire course of his investigation was biased in that direction. Although William came across a great deal of data contradicting his theory, he decided to stick to it while simultaneously elaborating possible alternative conjectures. Toward the end, sunk in a deep despair because his

original conjecture had failed to lead him to the right person, William almost rejected that theory, but decided to give it one last shot in deciphering the sixth murder. Then, almost by chance (and, incidentally, with the help of a dream which, in the style of Borges, intermingled with reality), an improvement in the conjecture led him to the murderer's hiding place. In solving the mystery, William exploited the most important tools that fourteenth-century knowledge had to offer: Aristotelian logic, Scholastic theology, and the philosophy of nature of Roger Bacon, his teacher and friend.

When he finally does meet the murderer, William finds that his quarry has been waiting for him with the same feeling of self-confidence, tinged with excitement, with which Scharlach had awaited Lönnrot's arrival in Borges's story. William's fate, however, is different from Lönnrot's; he is not shot to death and he even manages to escape, while the murderer dies in the burning monastery. Eco's murderer character behaves like many executioners in Borges's stories: he expresses his sincere belief that his deeds did not proceed from coarse human drives, such as love, hate, or greed—"I have killed no one. Each died according to his destiny because of his sins. I was only an instrument" (Eco 1983 [1980]: 471).[6]

Eco not only tells us his philosophical tale, but he also analyzes some of its epistemological implications through the discussion that William and Adso hold at the end of the novel. William expresses his doubts about the possibility of ever knowing the truth. Adso, who has slowly mastered his mentor's methods of analysis and inference, disagrees with this conclusion: at various points along the investigation, he claims, William did succeed in correctly interpreting many clues leading to the discovery of hitherto unknown facts. Indeed, replies William, it is possible for us to learn from signs about *individual* facts, but we should refrain from formulating conjectures which attempt to explain the universe. Any connection between our theories and reality is only accidental, and, even though those theories may be useful, we should always be aware of their fictitious character. William's epistemological formulations display a rather modern spirit, and he even "quotes" Wittgenstein in ancient German:

> The order that our mind imagines is like a net, or like a ladder, built to attain something. But afterward you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that, even if it is useful, it was meaningless. Er muoz gelîchesame die leiter abewerfen, sô er an ir ufgestigen [*sic*]. (Ibid.: 492)

William's exhaustive inquiry has led him to the same pessimistic conclusion that Borges had reached before him: it is beyond our capa-

6. A long, although not exhaustive, list of executioners in Borges's stories who act in a similar way has been compiled by Alicia Jurado (1980: 107–8).

bilities to decipher the mystery of the universe. To assume, to guess —perhaps; to apprehend God's plan of the universe—never. However, William should in fact listen more carefully to Adso, his meta-inductive consciousness, and accordingly, his conclusion should be slightly more optimistic than Borges's. After William had conjectured the existence of a preconceived guiding plan for all of the crimes, the murderer actually began to act in accordance with William's theory, and this fact did enable the detective to predict the murderer's behavior. Both Lönnrot's and William's investigations were guided by the presupposition that the crimes were part of a pattern whose essence might be elucidated. But while Lönnrot was led astray by an artificial plan designed by Scharlach deliberately to deceive him, William's conjecture did have the power to constrain the murderer's deeds and, finally, to enable his predictions to be fulfilled. Both detectives discovered at the end of the story that the logic of events was no more than "the logic that the guilty party had imposed on them"; but the logic imposed by Borges's murderer character was an arbitrary one, while that imposed by Eco's character was a logic constrained by the investigator's own conjecture.

As we have seen, Borges asserts the conjectural character of any scientific or metaphysical theory. No theory, in his view, may be considered true. Nevertheless, as it happens, when a single conjecture must be chosen from among the various possible ones, it must be evaluated according to some kind of criteria. In making his choice, Borges relies on aesthetic criteria. Thus, Lönnrot chose a "purely rabbinical" conjecture when analyzing Yarmolinsky's murder. Borges's epistemological metaphors address the abductive and the meta-abductive simultaneously: since all theories are equally conjectural, they are all equally false, and, therefore, there can be no connection between them and the universe out of which they are formulated. Eco recognizes the conjectural character of science as well, but he also recognizes a historical fact which Borges reluctantly ignores, namely, the predictive power of science. These diverging positions are reflected in the different metaphors that inform the works of Eco and of Borges. For a better understanding of this divergence, let us return once more to Eco's theoretical views on the issue, views which, in fact, constitute an elaboration of Peirce's epistemology.

Peirce has been widely praised for having been able, back in the nineteenth century and before the Einsteinian revolution, to formulate and develop ideas that later became so central to contemporary philosophy of science concerning the fallible character of the scientific enterprise. Peirce's views on the issue are, in some senses, similar to those found in Popper's philosophy of science, but there are important differences between the two.

According to Popper, the way in which hypotheses are attained is of no interest to philosophy of science. Science begins from ideas and leads to further ideas, while facts enter the scientific process only in order to refute hypotheses. Although Popper firmly believes in the objectivity of science and in its constant advance toward truth, he has no means of explaining how, among the infinite number of possible conjectures, scientists happen to choose highly improbable ones, including those which are hard to refute and, hence, quite close to the truth. Likewise, Popper does not say how the elimination of a finite number of refuted hypotheses from among the infinite number of possible ones moves us any closer to truth. Peirce seems to have posed, beforehand, questions which address these particular aspects of Popper's philosophy.

> A man must be downright crazy to deny that science has made many true discoveries. But every single item of scientific theory which stands established today has been due to abduction.
>
> But how is it that all this truth has ever been lit up by a process in which there is no compulsiveness nor tendency towards compulsiveness? Is it by chance? . . . Think of what trillions of trillions of hypotheses might be made of which one only is true; and yet after two or three or at the very most a dozen guesses, the physicist hits pretty nearly on the correct hypothesis. (Peirce 1965: 106)

Peirce's theory of abduction proposes an answer to the questions elided by Popper, as Peirce attempts to explain the act of reasoning which starts from data and moves toward hypothesis formulation, namely, abduction. Plain trial-and-error methods, claims Peirce, cannot account for the historically rapid development of science. Man must be naturally predisposed to penetrate the secrets of nature, and studying the logical process of abduction should enable us to elucidate the essence of such a predisposition. We are not concerned here, of course, with assessing Peirce's theory of abduction vis-à-vis Popper's philosophy of science, but only with describing the background of Eco's epistemological metaphor. In his above-mentioned article on detectivesque inquiry, Eco (1983) elaborates further on some of Peirce's ideas about abduction which are more central to the present analysis.

At least in terms of face value, we could consider two different kinds of abduction. First, as in the case of scientific discoveries, there are abductions in which a series of surprising facts leads to the formulation of a general law. Second, as in the case of crime detection, a series of particular facts may lead to the identification of another particular fact as what has generated all of the relevant facts in the case. These two kinds of abductions, one proceeding from facts to laws and the other, from facts to facts, are suggested in Peirce's texts. Eco refers to them as abductions dealing with *universes* and with *texts*, respectively, denoting

by the word "text" any sequence of "propositions linked together by a common topic or theme." Thus, a sequence of events investigated by a detective can be considered a text in such a sense (and, significantly enough, William finds the key to the series of crimes precisely in a text—in the literal sense of the word). The interesting point is that Eco does not consider these two kinds of abduction as essentially different.

> I think that the general mechanism of abduction can be made clear only if we assume that we deal with universes as if they were texts and with texts as if they were universes. . . . [In] scientific discovery one figures out laws through the mediating discovery of many further facts; and in text interpretation one identifies new relevant facts by presupposing certain general (intertextual) laws. (Ibid.: 205)

This description is quite interesting in the context of an intertextual reading of Eco and Borges. Eco starts with Peirce's epistemological claims, discusses them in the light of some central Borgesian metaphors (the universe as a text, the text as an open universe, detectivesque inquiry as text deciphering, text deciphering through intertextual reading, etc.), and develops his own general theory of abduction. Like Borges, Eco recognizes the epistemological value of considering all conjectural thinking from the same point of view. Like Peirce, but unlike Borges, he believes that, sooner or later, abduction will lead him to truth. In the framework of this discussion, then, he is led to distinguish two levels in the process of inquiry: abduction and meta-abduction. Eco agrees with Borges at the abductive level, but disagrees with him at the meta-abductive one.

Now we come to a very subtle point in Eco's theory, as well as in his metaphor. Eco began by postulating a single process of abduction: conjecture formulation is the same whether one is speaking of "scientific" (from facts to laws) or "detectivesque" (from facts to facts) inquiry. Here the terms "scientific" and "detectivesque," let us note once more, denote the kind of conjecture formulated and not the professional training of the researcher. However, the unitary approach disappears when one reaches the meta-abductive level, where, Eco believes, the attitudes of scientists and detectives are significantly different: the latter, according to him, demonstrate a greater meta-abductional flexibility than the former.

One of the central features of scientific activity, in Popper's opinion, is the critical attitude of the scientist toward his own conjectures. Eco remarks that this critical attitude pertains to the meta-abductive level. Unlike the scientist, a detective can afford a more relaxed meta-abductional attitude. Not only can he afford it, but he is, in fact, *socially conditioned* to adopt that attitude.

> This is why "real life" detectives commit more frequent (or more frequently visible) errors than scientists. Detectives are rewarded by society for their impudence in betting by meta-abduction, whereas scientists are socially rewarded for their patience in testing their abductions. . . . Their difference from detectives stands in their refusal to impose their beliefs as a dogma, in their firmness not to repudiate their motivated conjectures. (Ibid.: 220)

Obviously, the terms "scientist" and "detective" each denote here a professional group and not, as above, a typical strategy of conjecture formulation. Eco's epistemological views may now be summed up as follows: All intellectual activity based on conjecture formulation proceeds according to a single process, namely, abduction. Particular activities based on conjecture formulation differ at the meta-abductional level, and this difference may be *socially conditioned.*

This summary corresponds, to be sure, to a very small portion of Eco's article, but I emphasize it here since it underlines a significant difference between Eco and Borges. His distinction between two levels of abduction enables Eco to introduce sociological considerations into his epistemology. Naturally, such factors are absolutely alien to Borges's worldview, in which only disembodied ideas count. Here lies also the difference between the fates of Eco's and Borges's detectives.

Eco follows Peirce in his belief in science's faculty for eventually attaining truth, and William is indeed led to the hiding place of the murderer. Lönnrot's uncritical approach to his own abductive reasoning leads him directly to death, at the hands of Scharlach. William, in his double role of detective and scientist, meta-abduced ambiguously—sometimes carefully and sometimes less carefully. And, indeed, this ambiguity came close to misleading him in his inquiry. Fortunately for him, Jorge de Burgos, by failing (like Jorge Luis Borges) to distinguish between the two levels of abduction, believed himself compelled to act according to William's conjecture and, finally, burned himself to death amidst his beloved books. However, as William's last statement quoted above shows, he did learn his epistemological lesson and did finally understand the need for a more critical attitude toward any tentative interpretation of signs.

Adso and William escape from the burning monastery. This marks the end of the plot but not of the book. As Borges does for many of his stories, Eco adds a final chapter intended to undermine, once more, our belief in the manuscript's authenticity. To be more precise, in the final section of his story "The Immortal," Borges not only suggests the possibility that the whole manuscript on which his story is based might be apocryphal, but he also closes with a sentence which Eco seems to have paraphrased in concluding his own novel: "Words, words displaced and mutilated words, words of others, were the poor

pittance left him by the hours and the centuries" (Borges 1964: 149 [Spanish original]; 1974g [1947]: 544). As one of his critics has put it, "Borges demands that we make a distinction between the labyrinth *in* the story and the labyrinth *of* the story" (Christ 1969: 172). William of Baskerville disentangled for us the labyrinth *in* Eco's story; in the discussion above, I have tried to shed some light on the labyrinth *of* that story. We can now turn to some theoretical lessons that we might draw from Eco's allusions to Borges.

Some Theoretical Implications

Allusion, as I said above, constitutes Borges's most prominent literary device. Borges's use of allusion does not merely reflect his aesthetic inclinations but, rather, is deeply rooted in his metaphysical convictions and in his idea of literature, both of which are tightly interwoven. A study of the theoretical implications of Borges's art of allusion would certainly be rewarding.[7] Unfortunately, such a study is far beyond the scope of the present article, and I shall postpone it for another occasion. I shall undertake here a much more modest task: building upon my analysis of Eco's allusions to Borges, I shall discuss some theoretical aspects of literary allusion in general.

An illuminating study of literary allusion as a peculiar mode of intertextuality has been done by Ziva Ben-Porat, who defines literary allusion as "a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts" (Ben-Porat 1976: 107). According to Ben-Porat, this simultaneous activation is triggered by a special sign within the alluding text, which she calls a "marker" in order to distinguish it from the literary device itself. Furthermore, she claims, the marker points to a larger "referent," which "is always an independent text" (ibid.).

The crucial difference between literary allusion and allusion in general (in the intuitive sense of "indirect reference" or "hint"), in Ben-Porat's theory, lies in their divergent processes of actualization. The actualization of a general allusion is rather straightforward and yields an expected interpretation which remains strictly within the context of the alluding text. Literary allusion, on the contrary, has much more complicated interpretative consequences (minutely described by Ben-Porat), which result in "the formation of intertextual patterns whose nature cannot be predetermined" (ibid.: 108).

Eco's allusion to Borges's work, described above, is certainly a good example of the complex intertextual relations provided by literary allusion, but at the same time it seems to suggest the need for further

7. As stated in his title, Ronald Christ (1969) does deal with *Borges' Art of Allusion*. However, he only analyzes certain traits of Borges's style and does not address the issue from the wider perspective of literary allusion in general.

clarification of the "marker" and the "referent," as described by Ben-Porat. It is clear that Ben-Porat's concept of "marker" is meant to be as comprehensive as possible. However, what is implicit in her formulation is that she has in mind only clearly delimited word combinations: a single word, a phrase, maybe a whole paragraph. *The Name of the Rose* points to Borges's work through an entire system of markers of a more elusive nature.

The question thus becomes: *Which* marker is *the* marker of Eco's allusion to Borges? Chronologically speaking, *the* marker is the introduction to the book. My analysis above shows that a reader acquainted with Borges's works will recognize this marker immediately (I, for one, had this experience when I read the book). However, even if the reader is unfamiliar with Borges's writings, he might still identify the marker provided either by Jorge de Burgos's name or by some of the character's features (e.g., a blind librarian). Moreover, even if all of these markers are not identified, the Borgesian elements comprising the plot (e.g., mirrors, libraries, etc.) might still trigger recognition of the allusion. Finally, it is possible that, none of the above having done the trick, the reader could directly identify the homology between the plots of the novel and of "Death and the Compass." Clearly, then, whatever functions as a "marker" here appears to be a reader-dependent property.

As a matter of fact, Ben-Porat's theory contemplates the possibility that the simultaneous activation of two texts will be triggered by "many different elements dispersed throughout" the alluding text (ibid.: 126). That is the case when two texts are initially so closely connected that it becomes possible to interpret the alluding text only inasmuch as all of its literary relations with the text to which it alludes are actualized.[8] Yet the case under consideration here is quite different. For one thing, the interpretive contribution of Borges's work to *The Name of the Rose*, however extensive, is neither exclusive (since the novel is intertextually related to many other works) nor conclusive (since the novel may be interpreted without actualizing this particular intertextual aspect). Secondly, and this is my main point here, the nature of Eco's "markers" and "referent" is essentially different from those contemplated (at least explicitly) by Ben-Porat. Let me consider this point in greater detail.

The four possible markers I mentioned above (and there are perhaps many more) are rather different in nature from one another. The introduction to the novel reminds us of some similar instances

8. Ben-Porat analyzes the example of the 1966 poem "Dantès, No" by the Israeli poet Nathan Zach. She shows that the poem can be sensibly interpreted only by fully actualizing its allusion (and its multilayered links) to Alexandre Dumas's *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (Ben-Porat 1976: 122–26).

occurring throughout Borges's writings. However, we cannot pinpoint any particular word, or combination of words, as the one that triggers recognition of the allusion. Rather, it is the introduction in its entirety that brings to mind similar constructions in Borges. The same may be said of the novel's plot as a marker pointing to Borges's "Death and the Compass." We might call these kinds of markers "structural markers," although it must be noted that there are important differences between the two examples. While, in the first case, a section of the alluding text points to similar sections appearing in various works by Borges, in the second case, the general structure of the novel's plot points to the general structure of a specific short story by Borges.

The remaining two kinds of markers certainly consist of specific combinations of words, yet they are worth some attention in their own right. "Jorge de Burgos" is an obviously direct hint to Borges, but the hint could work equally well had the character been differently named. The character and the writer share enough traits to make the identification easy. Again, in such a case, the allusion-triggering would be accomplished by some means other than a delimited, particular wording. Finally, the Borgesian elements dispersed throughout the novel (e.g., mirrors) are diverse enough to render problematic any attempt to pinpoint and explicate all of them.

The device of allusion is activated in Eco's novel, then, through a wide variety of markers which cannot be instantiated by a single word or a particular combination of words. Furthermore, the discussion above has already brought to light some peculiarities of the referent in Eco's allusion. In the novel's allusions to Borges's "Death and the Compass" and "The Library of Babel," the referents are "independent texts," as stipulated by Ben-Porat. However, if we consider all the markers mentioned above, we can identify other kinds of referents as well. In the first place, we have the reference to Borges the man. This is, of course, an indirect way of addressing his writings, but it is by no means an "independent text." Clearly, the real referent of Eco's allusion is Borges's corpus as a whole. For specific purposes, individual works from this corpus are activated as interpretive devices, but it is only after we have understood the necessity of taking the real referent—that is, the whole corpus—into account that the full power of the allusion is activated. Ben-Porat's description of the structure and the process of activating literary allusion is essentially valid in the case of *The Name of the Rose*, but the novel clearly shows that the nature of the elements involved in this process is more variable than initially believed.

Finally, I would venture to say that Eco's mode of alluding to Borges's writings overall is a meta-allusion to Borges's own style of allusion. It should be noted that, while many other books and authors are inter-

textually linked to his novel, Eco takes special pains over actualizing his many relations to Borges exclusively through the Borgesian device of allusion. By considering meta-allusion as a further manifestation of literary allusion, we can extend, in a completely new and unexpected direction, the list of possible markers and referents in literary allusion. Moreover, such a move brings us back, full circle, to where my discussion began: We have returned, as it were, to Eco the theoretician, who becomes involved in a theoretical discussion of literary allusion. By alluding to the peculiar traits of Borgesian allusion, Eco seems to be pointing to hitherto unnoticed aspects of this literary device.

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