

Borges and Ficciones, The Transmutation of a Text

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April 13, 2012

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I. Acknowledgements:

This project is indebted to the abounding aid of the Founding Curator of the UVa Borges Collection, C. Jared Loewenstein. He has been a constant supporter of my research, and it has been a privilege to work with him. The project also wishes to acknowledge The UVa Special Collections Library and staff for their kindness and patience in allowing me access to the Borges collection; The Rare Book School for alerting me to the library's rich collection of Borges material and for providing me the opportunity to take part in their academic community; the University of Virginia's Comparative Literature Department for their encouragement and advice; David Vander Meulen for his immensely informative "Books As Physical Objects" course; the College of Arts & Sciences for funding my research abroad; to Alfredo Breitfeld for allowing me to interview him and for contextualizing the publication practices of publishers Sur and Emecé, Victor Aizenman for providing me astonishingly close access to the Borges manuscripts in his possession, Eduardo Montes-Bradley and Omar Genovese for enthusiastically putting me in touch with María Kodama. I would like to give a special thanks to Señora Kodama, without whom my project would have very limited authority. She graciously answered all of my questions regarding Borges's writing practices and left an indelible mark on my time in Buenos Aires. Finally, I would like to thank Gustavo Pellón and the rest of the UVa Spanish Department, for first introducing me to the magical cult of Borges.

This project would not have been possible without said people and it has been a privilege to meet and work with them. The enthusiasm with which they have approached scholarship has set a wonderful example for the way in which I hope to continue studying literature.

II. Overview:

As an author, poet and literary figure, Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) stands as a monolithic figure over both Latin America and the rest of the world. His contributions to the written word have engendered immense international recognition in the years following his death and have been translated into countless languages — from Hungarian to Chinese (William Foster). He is appreciated for the indelible impression he has made on Latin American literature, including his contributions to genres such as Modernismo and Magic Realism, and to the birth of the Boom movement (Shaw). What's more, his enormous popularity and influence on contemporary authors from Carlos Fuentes to Umberto Eco have made him the target of extensive literary criticism.

However, much less has been said about the actual manner in which Borges's material was produced. His work is marked with a rich publication history and has contributed to the highly-valued collectorship of his material, but the implication of this collectorship has not fully been explored. This project focuses specifically on the variations of Borges's 1944 collection of short stories, *Ficciones*. This work is one of Borges's most significant, and close examination reveals extensive variation within the various editions, states and impressions of the text. These variations are previously unrecorded and present a challenge to scholars of Borges seeking to determine the "definitive version" of a Borges story. The existence of these variations — which I was fortunate to discover via extensive collection of Borges in the UVa Special Collection library — represents a new field of Borges scholarship, one which can reveal much about his authorial intentions when writing. I am specifically concerned with the way in which this important collection of stories, which has been translated and republished in countless different forms since its initial publication, has transformed. The variations between seemingly identical

copies of Borges texts demonstrate the way in which this important author was morphing over time, revealing an authorial intention that was never static. The study represents an opportunity to contribute to an area of Borges scholarship which has yet to be fully interrogated.

The significance of an author's revisions and the history of his publication interests scholars of all different kinds of writing, but I suggest that the question of change (and authorial intent) is doubly important in an author like Borges, who took up these very issues as themes within his writing.

This research is conducted under the guidance of C. Jared Loewenstein, Founding Curator of the Borges Collection at the University of Virginia. This project represents an incredible opportunity to work directly with an expert in the field of Borges collection and scholarship, and to have direct physical access to rare Borges material.

III. Biography¹:

Jorge Luis Borges was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1899, to a middle class family of *criollo*² and English descent. Borges was well-educated and he learned to speak and read both English and Spanish simultaneously. From an early age he began to write, and was very well read as a result of his unlimited access to his father's vast library. The family spent time in Geneva and Spain, where Borges was educated and took part in some of the burgeoning literary circles. Upon the family's return to Buenos Aires in 1921, Borges began to participate in Argentine literary movements such as Ultraism; he published his first collection of poetry in 1923 and even co-founded literary journals *Prisma* and *Proa*. In 1931, Borges became involved with the publication of *Sur*, an Argentine literary magazine. There, he became acquainted with other notable Argentina literary figures, and worked as a frequent contributor of literary reviews, translations and short stories. During this period, Borges began an editorial position as the newspaper *Crítica*, and contributed a variety of writings. He published *Historia universal de la infamia* in 1936, a collection of short stories. He also worked at the publishing house Emecé as a literary advisor, and wrote for Argentine newspaper *El Hogar*. Borges was appointed as an assistant at the Buenos Aires municipal library in 1938 where he frequently found time to work on his writing. In 1941, Borges published another book of short stories, titled *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, most of which has been previously published in *Sur*. Following the publication of *El jardín*, Borges began to lecture publicly. He became more and more known, though his eyesight had begun to deteriorate (his father had also gone blind in the course of his lifetime).

¹ Biographical information credited to Ruch, Williamson, Woodall (full citations at end of document)

² Of traditionally Hispanic ancestry.

From the mid-fifties until 1970, Borges held a position as director of the National Public Library, though by this point his eyesight had completely deteriorated. As a result of his blindness, Borges became reliant on his mother, who served as his personal literary secretary and frequently wrote as he dictated his writings. Throughout this time period, Borges frequently met with other groups of authors, for example the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores (SADE), who politically opposed Peronism. Borges, who was also a staunch opponent of Peronism, resigned as director of the Biblioteca Nacional following Perón's re-election.

Borges had continued to publish extensively during this time period, including 1944's *Ficciones*. In 1949 the author published *El Aleph*, which would become another of his most well-known prose collections. His writing was not immensely popular, however. It was not until 1961, when he received the Prix International for his writing that his popularity soared. His work began to be translated into other languages, and the author was invited to travel the United States, frequently giving guest lectures. He continued to publish and receive literary prizes.

Borges married Elsa Astete Millán in 1967, a widow who his mother had wanted him to marry. Three years later, they divorced, and Borges moved back in with his mother until she died at 99. During this time, Borges had struck up a friendship with María Kodama, a student of his with whom a friendship developed. She became his personal assistant and a friendship flourished. Towards the end of his life, Kodama accompanied Borges in his international travels, and also worked as his literary secretary. They married in Paraguay in 1986 so as to avoid Argentine divorce laws, and he died several months later of liver cancer at the age of 86. He is buried in Geneva, where he died.

Following his death began a long a series of disputes over the ownership of his literary works. Kodama had been made executor of his estate, and her control led to a conflict with

Gallimard, a French publisher who had been working on a translation of his works into French. Similar controversies continued regarding the control of his literary estate, though Borges continues to be published by a variety of publishers.

IV. The Borgesian Short Story:

The recurring themes of Borges are well known and well studied: labyrinths, mirrors, multiplicity, infinity, the significance of the act of writing. Many of his short stories grapple with the relationship between an author and his text, between a reader and a writer — his stories, therefore, take up some of most basic questions of literary criticism. In fact, the function and importance of the author is a central preoccupation of Literary Criticism. Schools such as New Criticism, Structuralism and Deconstruction have all attempted to address —through varying approaches— the centrality of the author in any given text. Some of the most famous of these essays in criticism grapple with the author’s role as the ultimate authority of a text, as the final decider of how his text should be interpreted. Theorists such as Roland Barthes, Cleanth Brooks, W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley have all closely considered the relationship between an author’s intention and the text he produces (Richter 754). In fact, the “death” and the “life” of the author have been dealt with extensively by these varying schools of Literary Theory, perhaps most notably with the now-seminal text by Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy.” The essay, belonging to the New Criticism school, suggests that the design or intention of an author “is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work or literary art” (Wimsatt 811).

This approach to the function of the intent/authority of a given author is immensely helpful in foregrounding the writing of Borges, for whom the question of authority and intent was a central and recurring preoccupation. His complex and often “meta” stories eschew easy

categorization as they take up the question of reader-author relations in a variety of complicated and multi-layered ways.

His stories frequently wrestle with the problematic relationship between reader and author, and complicate it to suggest that these roles are permeable and ever-shifting. As his biography demonstrates, Borges — who was a prominent participant not only in the Argentine literary community, but also in the European literary community of the 1930s onward — understood quite thoroughly what it meant to be on either side of the author-reader relationship. Aside from being incredibly well-read himself, he participated in the general production of literature during his lifetime rather than simply writing from a ‘vacuum.’ In the course of his lifetime, Borges contributed to newspapers, literary magazines, worked for a publishing house and even worked as a librarian. What’s more, he frequently and playfully responded to the problematic question of reader-author relations. For example, in the preface to *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, Borges’s very first book of poetry (published in 1923 by la Imprenta Serrantes), he reflects: “It is a trivial and chance circumstance that you should be the reader of these exercises and I their author” (*Fervor* Preface).

Borges as a critic expounded upon this issue directly in his 1938 review of French poet and essayist Paul Valéry’s *Introduction à la poétique*, which appeared in *El Hogar*. Valéry argued that “the history of literature was not to be found in an account of the life and works of individual authors [...]” (Williamson 236). Borges disagreed with this idea of author-authority, and his biographer Edwin Williamson, author of *Borges: A Life*, notes that:

“Borges found a contrast between this view and a later assertion that works of art existed only in the act of being perceived by a reader or a spectator, for the first assertion implied

a large but finite number of possible works, while the second “admits that time and its incomprehensions and distractions collaborate with the dead poet.”” (Williamson 236)

Clearly, one can see the extent to which authorship and the intentions with which an author writes weighed on Borges’s critical writings, but what of his short stories? . In fact, many of the *cuentos*³ are intimately linked with the question of authority: who is ultimately the legitimate writer of a text? Who controls a story once it has been committed to writing: the author or the reader? The stories of *Ficciones* prominently tackle these concerns in a variety of ways.

For one, many of the stories contained in *Ficciones* are predicated on a premise of false erudition as a means of establishing authorial credibility. Borges uses this schema frequently in his stories: he structures them to seem like they are newspaper clippings from real newspapers or entries in real scholarly books. He refers to real details and characters to give his stories an artificial believability, and as readers we question which parts of his fiction are, indeed fiction. This precept is significant, because it shows the immense credibility that is assumed in a written scholarly text.

Take, for example, “El acercamiento a Almotásim,” first published *Historia de la eternidad* in 1936. The story, the second in *Ficciones*, is frequently cited as a prototype for the Borgesian device of mixing the real and the fictitious. The story is conceived of as a scholarly article, a review of a book by an Indian lawyer named Mir Bahadur Ali, also titled *El acercamiento a Almotásim*. The narrator outlines the structure of the book, retracing some of the key plot details, and he analyzes the narrative technique with which the alleged Ali wrote. The story also makes use of footnotes to elucidate certain references, and in this way very much appears to be a real scholarly article. What’s more, most of the authors and works referenced *are*

³ Short story

real (for example, references to Richard Burton and G.K. Chesterton, Margaret Smith's *The Persian Mystics*, Garcin de Tassy). In this way, Borges gives Ali's novel, and thus the narrator's review, the impression of being a legitimate and authoritative text. This device is used elsewhere in *Ficciones*, demonstrating the extent to which Borges himself carefully considered the authority of the text, and the ways in which one can manipulate a reader into believing the premise and given details in a short stories. "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius;" "El acercamiento a Almotásim;" "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote;" "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain;" "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan;" "La muerte y la brújula;" "El milagro secreto;" "Tres versiones de Judas" — these are the stories of *Ficciones* that make most obvious use of the Borgesian device. They incorporate the scholarly article as a means of establishing credibility, and mix fact and fiction to give the impression that one is reading a real text.

Another way in which Borges takes up this classic consideration of textual authority and of authorship is through his characters. Many of the protagonists in *Ficciones* are themselves authors contemplating their relationship to writing and reading. This is true in the story "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain," a supposedly "real" account of the works of a recently-deceased author, Herbert Quain. The narrator writes that Quain's experimental detective fictions each played games with their reader's interpretations and that the readers of Quain's works felt they themselves had taken on the role of author/writer, since they were responsible for solving the case presented. Quain, in fact, argued that "readers were an extinct species" and that "There is no European man or woman [...] that's not a writer, potentially or in fact" (Hurley 111).

In his final work, *Statements*, Quain conceives of eight stories, each promising a good plot but "frustrated by the author" who believes that "he himself has come up with him." In the last paragraph, Borges-as-narrator interjects and states that he actually lifted *his* story "The

Circular Ruins” from one of the Quain’s stories in *Statements*. This twist is incredibly significant in understanding the figure of Borges-as-author and Borges-as-narrator, as well as understanding his conception of reader/writer relations. He has essentially sacrificed his *authorship* of the short story “Pierre Menard” in order to impose greater believability and credibility to the text — to make it appear to be a real article about an actual author named Pierre Menard. The idea that he could have lifted the idea for a short story out this fictional work proposes that the short story you are reading *must* be real and it implodes the notion of the author; he has essentially killed himself as author in order to make the very text he writes appear more real. What’s so significant about this turn he makes is that he destroys himself as an author in order to say that he took the idea for a short story from the text. Borges as narrator, then, is still an author; the final end is an immediate reinstatement of identity for immense dramatic effect.

Borges does this time and time again throughout *Ficciones*: he complicates our notion of the “authoritative text” by rejecting any clear-cut relationship between author and narrator. In fact, it is frequently difficult to grasp the distinction between the two figures. In stories such as like “Funes el memorioso,” the narrator yet again appears to be Borges, calling readers to question whether the story being told is biographical. Further compounding this problem is the fact that some stories in *Ficciones* are, indeed, semi-biographical. In “El Sur,” the narrator experiences events that occurred in the “real” Borges’s life, most notably the accidental window-latch head injury and resulting near-death septicemia. In this way, Borges continually asks us to wonder whether his writing should be seen as separate from his personal biography or as deeply influenced by his own life. The relationship between an author and his biography is, of course, another central preoccupation of literary critics. In fact, noted critic Roland Barthes, writer of the now-famous essay, “The Death of the Author,” urges us to undo the “tyrannical” link that we

have created between the author in his person, life and tastes. The danger of this link, he writes, is that it imposes a “limit on that text, [furnishes it] with a final signified, [closes] the writing” (Barthes 877). He believes that writing is destructive “of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing” (Barthes 875).

This approach to the link between authorship and text is particularly relevant when considering the themes just outlined. On the one hand, Barthes of course rejects the role of biography in interpreting a text’s meaning — and we have seen that Borges intentionally made use of biography in his texts. The fact that he uses the authority of his name to conceive of his fiction seems to reject exactly what Barthes proposes. On the other hand, this quote by Barthes *does* align itself with Borges’s interpretation of writing. In his 1952 collection of essays, *Otras inquisiciones*, Borges writes that “A book is [...] the dialogue it establishes with its reader and the intonation it imposes upon his voice and the changing and durable images it leaves in his memory. A book is not an isolated being: it is a relationship, an axis of innumerable relationships” (Yates 214). So while Borges makes frequent use of his personal biography in his writing, he simultaneously notes that a book’s meaning is part of a much, much larger context than a purely biographical one.

The context in which a book was written is of utmost importance to another story in *Ficciones*: “Pierre Menard, autor de Quijote.” Like many of the *cuentos* in *Ficciones*, the story is told by a narrator who appears to be Borges (though he is not specifically identified) and who is ruminating on the literary contributions of a recently deceased author — in this case the (fictional) Pierre Menard. The narrator identifies some of Menard’s works, and proceeds to discuss the project Menard had been working on at the time of his death: “His admirable

ambition was to produce a number of pages which coincided — word for word and line for line — with those of Miguel de Cervantes” (Hurley 91). What this meant was that Menard wished, as an author, to write a text that was an exact replica of Don Quixote, but which he had written entirely on *his* own. Thus, the replica would not — could not — be the Quixote, because it had been produced at his hand and under his circumstances. It would be the same, yes, but not a tautology. Biographer Edwin Williamson interprets thusly: “the same text, according to Borges, could mean different things to different readers in different periods” (Williamson 236). This short story indicates the profound extent to which Borges considered the effect of one writing on another, as well as the idea that a book’s significance is dependant on its context. Barthes’s understanding of a text, then, is almost uncannily similar to Borges’s. When Barthes suggests that a text is a “tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture,” one can see just how closely his essay mirrors Borges’ writing (Barthes 876).

The final way in which I wish to draw out the complexities of authorship and authority in Borges is through his conception of the process of writing. Many of the stories in *Ficciones* take up the idea of writing and rewriting, of revision as a means of coming closer to the author’s intent. Borges frequently demonstrates his knowledge of the publishing world when he describes the varying editions of a given work, and he suggests that each one offers a new and different reading. Take, for example, the story of “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” in which a narrator (presumed to be Borges) narrates. He describes the discovery of two varying printings of Volume XLVI of the *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia*. Borges’s friend Bioy Casares (who was, in fact, a real-life friend of the author) has come over for dinner and begins to tell him about an entry in the book for a country called “Uqbar.” But when they examine the house’s copy, no such entry exists. Bioy checks his own copy and sees the article on “Uqbar” is present: “On both

the false cover and spine, the alphabetical key to the volume's contents (Tor-Upps) was the same as ours, but instead of 917 pages, Bioy's volume had 921. Those four additional pages held the article on Uqbar [...]" (Hurley 69). They compare the two encyclopedias and find no further differences. Essentially, the story rests on the premise that there can be two variants of a seemingly-identical book, each leading to drastically different readings.

Borges again returns to this idea in "Un acercamiento a Almotásim," wherein the narrator criticizes the changes which occurred between the first and second editions of the book, published in 1932 and 1934, respectively. The narrator feels that the figure of Al-Motásim appears too allegorically in the second edition, and he laments Ali's decision to make the man appear less "real" (Hurley 86). Borges is commenting on the significance of an author's revision, on the idea that some versions of a text can be more legitimate than others. Several other stories make use of this theme in varying ways: for example "Tres versiones de Judas," in which Borges tells the story of the (fictional) writer Nils Runeburg, who is compelled to rewrite his book after it is met with much criticism. He makes significant revision to *Kristus och Judas* before it is republished as a new edition, and the narrator of the story considers the difference of each.

These commentaries on the importance of revision create the foundation on which I propose to examine Borges's writing. As *Ficciones* demonstrates time and again, the author was clearly captivated by varying interpretations that arise from different editions of a work. The fact that so many of his characters show a preoccupation with editing and revision suggests the profound extent to which Borges considered the intent behind an author's writing. Yet Borges's own revision process — the varying states and editions of *Ficciones* — has not been thoroughly examined. Examining his own revisions is of clear significance, as it represents the chance to contribute to the field in a new way. This is my goal, and in doing so, I take up some of the

central preoccupations of a Textual Critic — as well as engage directly with the content of Borges's stories.

V. Textual Criticism: An Application to Borges:

In Textual Criticism, the belief prevails that certain versions of a text *can* be more authoritative than others — more in line with the author's true intent. This discourse dates back to the work of biblical critics (SB 003 p.19). Noted textual critics and bibliographers Fredson Bowers, W.W. Greg and G. Thomas Tanselle were proponents/members of this discipline, to name a few. To them, the concept of authorial intent is of utmost importance as they seek to create critical editions — editions of texts that authoritatively represent the ideal intentions of the author's creation. This effort, says Tanselle, arose out of the need for compiling and publishing reliable and definitive editions of well-known texts (SB 028 p.167). And, as a result of this effort, the textual critics saw the need for a framework of definitive approaches towards the compilation of such editions.

W.W. Greg became a leading figure in the field of textual critical theory, particularly with his seminal essay "The Rationale of Copy-Text" which implies that an editor can determine, through genealogical analysis, the "most authoritative text" and therefore the one to which his own edition should adhere. Tanselle explicates Greg's essay in his own response: "Greg's Theory of Copy-Text and the Editing of American Literature" The kinds of questions that arise in the mind of a textual critic include: how many variants of this work exist? Were these variants produced with consent of the author and at his wishes, or do they exist as a result of extenuating circumstances? For example, if a text was repeatedly printed from the same plate, and the plate therefore was changed to repair wear-and-tear damage, then the text printed from the plate becomes a variant though not at the intentional request of the author (SB 017 p. 225).

As has already been mentioned, this is exactly the idea underlying many of the stories in *Ficciones*. So given Borges's own understanding of revision — and the idea of multiplicity within publication (of manuscripts, printings, editions) — how can we approach his writing?

I posit that examining Borges variants, essentially attempting to determine his true intent, is of utmost value to the field of Borges scholarship. The author was clearly ruminating on these issues, and the fact that his characters frequently looked to new editions shows the importance of our examination of his. I reject Barthes and Brooks to an extent, in that I take up the preoccupation of textual critics. To be able to trace the way in which this author tinkered with his work can provide Borges scholars with a much deeper understanding of his own thoughts about writing and his relationship with publication. While it *is* true that a work is rendered finite when only looked at in a certain context, I do not believe that the context behind the publication of *Ficciones* can or should be ignored. Thus, this project seeks to create a *variorum*⁴ of the publication changes and revision of the contents of *Ficciones*. I am interested in what Greg would term the “substantive” changes in Borges' writing: changes in the words themselves, not accidental or incidental changes in spelling that merely affect its formal presentation (“Copy-Text” 376). What follows is an effort to outline the circumstances in which *Ficciones* was produced, and to therefore apply methods of bibliography in order to work like a textual critic. Entering into this discourse is not only a form of comparative literature, but also a way of coaxing deeper meaning from an author who worked so hard to complicate our understanding of authorship and authority. I hope to show that Borges's own revisions mirror those which occur in the very contents of the books he was revising.

⁴ A collation of the known variants of a text, the demonstrating the different versions of said text

VI. *Ficciones*, A Publishing History:

Ficciones is one of the earliest anthologies of Borges's short stories. It was first published in 1944 and has since seen an almost endless variation of editions, impressions, states and translations. The book itself is divided into two sections, *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (The Garden of Forking Paths) and *Artificios* (Artifices), each with its own distinct publication story. Its significance in the canon of Borges work is worth articulating, as the text has become one of his most essential and widely read. The stories included in *Ficciones* became some of the most famous stories of the author's and have engendered numerous interpretations and applications to fields ranging from philosophy to science (Kodama).

The first section, *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, was Borges's first anthology of fiction and was first published in 1941. The original work contained 8 short stories: "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius), "El acercamiento a Almotásim" (An Approach to Al-Mu'tasim), "Pierre Mernard, autor del Quijote" (Pierre Mernard, Author of Don Quixote), "Las ruinas circulares" (The Circular Ruins), "La lotería en babilonia" (The Lottery of Babylon), "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain" (An Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain), "La biblioteca de Babel" (The Library of Babel), "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" (The Garden of Forking Paths).

This collection was then added to in 1944, creating what would become known as *Ficciones*. *Ficciones* included the original *Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, but added new stories in a section titled *Artificios* (Artifices). The original section of *Artificios* contained six stories: "Funes el memorioso" (Funes the Memorious), "La forma de la espada" (The Shape of the Sword), "Tema del traidor y del héroe" (The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero), "La muerte y la brújula" (Death and the Compass), "El milagro secreto" (The Secret Miracle) and "Tres

versiones de Judas” (Three Versions of Judas). Additionally, the collection would come to include “El Fin” (The End), “La secta del Fénix” (The Sect of the Phoenix), and “El Sur” (The South). Together, then, *Ficciones* is an anthology of both *Artificios* and *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*.

A few of the stories that would end up published as *Ficciones* had also appeared in one Argentina’s leading newspapers, *La Nación*, to which Borges was a frequent contributor. The majority of the *cuentos* had already appeared in the *revista*⁵ known as *Sur*.

Revista *Sur*:

Sur began, as a literary review, in 1931 at the hands of Argentine author and high society member, Victoria Ocampo. Ocampo, a native of Buenos Aires, was a well-educated member of Argentine society with a close friendship to many of the authors that would become central to her literary review (Villa Ocampo). She had access to the funding needed to establish the review without outside help and with complete creative control. Ocampo wanted the magazine to be in many ways European, and from the start *Sur*’s strength was its ties to European thinkers and writers. According to Adolfo Bioy Casares, Argentine author and close friend of the both Ocampo and the publication, *Sur* was Ocampo’s personal challenge, “like a walk in the jungle.” In *Sur*, some of the most important writers of the era wrote: Andre Gide, Thomas Mann, T.S. Eliot, Henry Miller, Octavio Paz and Borges (Villa Ocampo). The magazine is perhaps best known for its enormous role in publishing the writing of Borges, whose later popularity would revive the attention paid to this exemplary literary powerhouse.

⁵ Spanish for “magazine”

The Publishers of *Ficciones*:

Notable early publishers of *Ficciones* included Editorial Sur⁶ and Emecé. I focus on these particular publishers as they each published a distinctly important edition of the original Spanish-language collection. The publisher Sur was responsible for publishing the first edition of *Ficciones* in 1944, where “Sur” refers both to a literary magazine and a publisher. That is to say, the same magazine in which Borges’s individual short stories were originally published also served as a publisher of books, one of which being *Ficciones*.

It wasn’t until the mid ‘30s that *Sur* began to focus on the publication of fiction and poetry; initially *Sur* was mostly essays and also reviews. But over time *Sur* began to include short fiction pieces by authors who would come to be some of the most prominent figures of the time: Eduardo Mallea, Onetti, Alfonso Reyes, Horacio Quiroga, Bioy Casares, Huxley, Jung, Virginia Woolf, Nabokov, Sartre, Kerouac, Camus (Villa Ocampo). According to the Villa Ocampo website, the publishing projects of Sur were undertaken as a way to both share the best literature of the era but also as a means of paying for the magazine (Villa Ocampo).

Emecé was another important publisher of early *Ficciones* editions. Specifically, it was responsible for 1956’s 2nd edition, an expanded version of what was printed in 1944. The company was a Spanish publisher that had been “up and running” in Buenos Aires since 1939 (Woodall 128). From 1951 onwards, they would publish all of Borges’s prose and poetry and become “his main house in the Spanish-speaking world, until his death” (Woodall 128). Borges himself had a relationship with Emecé that predated their 1956 edition of *Ficciones* (an edition which would add several stories to the *Artificios* section of *Ficciones*); the author had actually

⁶ Sur refers to the publishing house, whereas *Sur* refers to the magazine

worked at Emecé, providing editorial input and writing translations for short stories by authors such as Melville, Kafka and Faulkner.

Recognition:

When Borges decided to publish his new collection of short stories (the part called *Artificios*), in 1944, his friends at *Sur* as well as the Sociedad Argentina De Escritores (SADE) saw an opportunity to exploit the work for political ends (Williamson 270). They decided that the SADE should create its own literary prize and award it to Borges. In fact, biographer Edwin Williamson suggests that Borges not only went along with the plan, but that it may have influenced his decision to re-issue *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* along with *Artificios* to create the double-work that would be known as *Ficciones* (Williamson 270). Several months after publication, *Ficciones* was (as according to plan) awarded SADE's "Gran Premio de Honor." This award brought much attention to *Ficciones* as well as the rest of Borges's work.

In 1961, the International Publisher's Prize was established by six international publishing houses: Gallimard, Einaudi, Rowohlt, Seix Barral, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, and Grove. It was to be awarded to an author "of any nationality whose existing body of work will, in the view of the jury, have a lasting influence on the development of modern literature" (Williamson 345). The winner would receive a \$10,000 prize have his work translated and published in each of the countries represented by the sponsoring publishers. In May 1961, the first year the prize was to be awarded, Borges and Samuel Beckett jointly received the prize (Williamson 345). This prize carried significant impact on the dissemination of Borges's work. Although it was not given specifically to *Ficciones*, it allowed the short stories from the work to be translated internationally. Thus, translations of Borges's work have been published by all of

the aforementioned publishing houses, in countries including: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Great Britain and the United States.

Translation:

The first translation of a Borges story was in 1944 when two texts from *Ficciones*, “La lotería en Babilonia” and “La Biblioteca de Babel” were translated into French under the combined name “Assyriennes” (Woodall 125). Néstor Ibarra was responsible for the translation, and with it he introduced Borges to the French-speaking public. Later, in 1951, the entirety of *Ficciones* was translated into French by Paul Verdevoye and Néstor Ibarra (Williamson, 346). According to Woodall, it was this seminal translation which “formed the bedrock of Borges’ world renown” (Woodall 165).

During this time period, Borges’s work was also being translated into English. In 1948, the short story “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan” (of the eponymous 1941 collection — as well as *Ficciones*) was translated into English by Anthony Boucher. It was published in Vol. 12, no. 57 of *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* in 1948 (VIRGO). Later, in 1962, Boucher produced the first full English translation of *Ficciones*, published by Grove Press (one-sixth of the group which had awarded him the International Publisher’s Prize one year earlier). With this translation, Borges’s popularity in the United States would begin to increase enormously. Says Williamson: “It was only after the publication of several English translations in the 1960s — *Ficciones* and *Labyrinths* (1962) [...] that his reputation would take off in the English-speaking world, especially in the United States” (Williamson 350).

VII. Bibliographic Description:

To provide a precise frame of reference for the many variations of Ficciones, an attempt to describe a standard, or “ideal” copy of the work is necessary. What follows is a bibliographic description for the first edition of Ficciones published as such. The copy being described is held at the UVa Special Collections Library.

The bibliographic description is compiled using the approach outlined in Philip Gaskell’s “A New Introduction to Bibliography: The classic manual of bibliography” with help from David Vander Mullen’s “Books as Physical Objects,” a class provided Spring 2011 that sought to examine various approaches to bibliography.

Heading

p. 3 (recto): ‘FICCIONES | 1935-1944’ | [signature of author, illegible]

Title Page Transcription

p. 5 ‘JORGE LUIS BORGES | FICCIONES [blue ink] | (1935-1944) | [Imprint : [light blue arrow pointing downwards with the following line of text touching the tip] | SUR [in light blue, bolded ink, placed atop the arrow graphic] | BUENOS AIRES]’

Collation

8°: [π^8 plus frntspc 1-11⁸ 12⁶], 102 leaves, 204 pages.

Pagination

pp. 1-2 [1] 3-8 9-37 38 39-63 64 65-73 74 75-85 86 87-107 108 109-126 127-128 129 130 131-143 144 145-153 154 155-179 180 181-191 192 193-201 202 203 204

Contents

1 blank; 2 blank; 3 [half title] ‘FICCIONES’ | (1935-1944)’ | [signature of author]; 4 ‘DEL AUTOR | EN VERSO: (one entry) | EN PROSA.’ (nine entries); [3-4] inserted frontispiece: recto blank, verso contains portrait of Borges; 5 Title page; 6 ‘Copyright by | Ediciones SUR | Buenos Aires, 1944 | ‘Retrato del autor | por | Marie Elisabeth Wrede [*in italics*]; 7 ‘EL JARDÍN DE SENDEROS | QUE SE BIFURCAN | (1941)’; 8 blank; 9-10 Prólogo; 11-37 Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius; 38 blank; 39-48 El Acercamiento a Almotásim; 49-63 Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote; 64 blank; 65-73 Las ruinas circulares; 74 blank; 75-85 La lotería en babilonia; 86 blank; 87-94 Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain; 95-107 La biblioteca de Babel; 108 blank; 109-126 El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan; 127 ‘ARTIFICIOS | (1944)’; 128 blank; 129 Prólogo; 130 blank; 131-143 Funes el memorioso; 144 blank; 145-153 La forma de la espada; 154 blank; 155-160 Tema del traidor y del héroe; 161-179 La muerte y la brújula; 180 blank; 181-191 El milagro secreto; 192 blank; 193-201 Tres versiones de Judas; 202 blank; 203 Índice; 204 [colophon]

‘ESTE LIBRO SE TERMINO | DE IMPRIMIR EL DIA 4 | DE DICIEMBRE DEL AÑO | MIL NOVECIENTOS CUA- | RENTA Y CUATRO, EN LA | IMPRENTA LOPEZ, | PERU 660, BUENOS AIRES, | REPUBLICA ARGENTINA’

Paper Description

Leaf size 20.6 X 14 cm; machine made with chain lines (chain line spacing varies from 3.5-4.5 cm apart, typically around 4 cm); gatherings 4, 7-12 turned (horizontal chain lines pp. 65-80, 113-204); paper is consistently yellowed, poor quality, brittle

Illustrations

Unsigned frontispiece portrait of Borges (p. 6 notes that the portrait is by Mary Elizabeth Wrede)

Position: Verso side of inserted third leaf (attached to π2 at spine)

Image: line drawing portrait of Borges, from shoulders to top of head. Borges is depicted in as balding, looking downward, with head slightly facing left. The top of his dress shirt, tie, and sport coat are just visible then the lines trail away. Grayscale, minimum shading. Edges plain, corners square.

Text: no text on page

Dimensions:

Image: 8.7 X 5 cm

Plate: 11.5 X 8.4 cm

Paper: glossy, white, no discoloration

Body Type

Text: 25 ll. (p. 96), 1 col., printers measure 94.5mm; 142 (156) x 94.5 mm, 10 ll leaded = 58; face 3.3/3.0/2.0

Style: Neoclassical, little contrast, vertical stress

Binding

Paper binding, blue wrappers (actual ‘cover’ plain, blank paper which matches paper on inside of book; wrapped in light blue, removable wrappers)

Wrappers: paper, light blue, matte finish, removable

Text: text on front cover and spine only

Front Cover: ‘JORGE LUIS BORGES | FICCIONES | (Logo: [dark blue arrow pointing downwards with the following line of text touching the tip] | SUR [in light blue, bolded ink, placed atop the arrow graphic] | BUENOS AIRES’)

Text Dimensions: ‘JORGE LUIS BORGES | FICCIONES’ approximately same width; ‘JORGE LUIS BORGES’ .33 X 9.5 cm; ‘FICCIONES’ 1.3 X 9.6 cm;

Left gutter 2.4 cm; Right gutter 2.5 cm

Logo Dimensions: 3.0 X 3.5 cm

Spine: ‘JORGE LUIS BORGES | FICCIONES | (Logo: [dark blue arrow pointing downwards with the following line of text touching the tip] | SUR [in light blue, bolded ink, placed atop the arrow graphic] | BUENOS AIRES’)

Text Orientation: ‘JORGE LUIS BORGES’ vertical; ‘FICCIONES’ horizontal; logo vertical

Spine Width: 2.1 cm

Back Cover: Blank

Inside flaps: Blank

Type: white ink, all-caps, realist

Notes

Device/Imprint: The SUR publisher's imprint appears 3 places in this edition of *Ficciones*: the spine of the book, the front cover of the book, and title page (p. 5) of the book. The imprint depicts a dark blue arrow pointing downward. The center of the arrow is positioned behind the 'U' of the word SUR, the 'S' and the 'R' are on either side of the arrow's tip. Below the word 'SUR' are the words 'BUENOS AIRES'. All text is capitalized. The text is white in color. The 'SUR' is a serif font and appears to match type inside the text of the book: Bodoni. The 'BUENOS AIRES' is on 'realist' lettering. It appears that the imprint was created by hand, because although the style of lettering matches type found elsewhere in the book, the type itself shows inconsistencies in weight and stress suggesting that the text of the imprint was carved by hand rather than by using metal type. The dimensions of the imprint vary, but it is always positioned at center, towards the bottom of the page on which it appears.

Conjugate leaves: Based on the tearing pattern on the fore-edge of several pages, it is easy to confirm which leaves in the book were conjugate. All obviously conjugate leaves adhere to the standard octavo imposition guidelines outlined in Gaskell (Fig. 50, Gaskell 92).

Turned Chain Lines: Gatherings 4, 7-12 have chain lines which run in the horizontal, rather than vertical direction. While atypical for an octavo format book, the paper in *Ficciones* is machine-made, and therefore the sheet size/format were clearly subject to many more variations. Thus I still assume that the book adheres to a standard octavo format and that the turned chain lines are not significant for additional reasons, other than that they demonstrate the possibilities of machine made paper orientation.

VIII. Variorum:

The contents of *Ficciones* changed significantly in the years following its publication, as Borges was known for revising and altering the stories in his collections. What follows is an attempt to create what a textual critic/bibliographer would call a “variorum” of these changes. The purpose of this variorum is to demonstrate the impressive extent to which Borges revised his works, and to provide scholars with a tool for analyzing the extent changes within *Ficciones*. The variorum was created using the UVa Special Collections and Alderman libraries’ copies of Borges texts, exclusively.

While I have made every attempt to create a comprehensive and accurate variorum of the changes in Borges’s *cuentos*, it is worth acknowledging that no bibliographic pursuit is exempt from the possibility error. I take full blame for any errors present.

Directly following each short story title is a brief publication history for the story: where it first appeared, subsequent publications, etc. I have divided the variorum into two columns, in order to allow side-by-side comparison of the versions. Changes are highlighted in red so as to be more visible. The comparisons I make are always between the original publication of the story, and how it appeared in *Ficciones*. For example, if a story first appeared in *Sur*, then in the 1944 edition of *Ficciones*, the comparison will only examine the 1944 edition, and not the 1953 (or subsequent) editions. In the interest of brevity these are the changes that I have decided to prioritize; the possible comparison in Borges’s work are endless.

Part One: El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan
a. PROLOGO

b. TLÖN, UQBAR, ORBIS TERTIUS

-Originally published in *Sur* no. 68 (May 1940), p. 30

-Next published in book form in Borges's 1941 collection *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 11

***Sur* (no. 68):**

[...] “Comprobamos después que no hay otra diferencia entre los volúmenes. Los dos (según creo haber indicado) son reimpressiones de la décima *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Leímos con algún cuidado el artículo. El pasaje recordado por Bioy era tal vez el único sorprendente” (31).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

“No había indicación de fecha ni de lugar. En la primera página y en una hoja de papel de seda que **guarecía** una de las láminas en colores había estampado un óvalo azul con esta inscripción: *Orbis Tertius*” (34).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

“(Xul Solar traduce con brevedad upa tras perfluye lunó. *Upward behind onstreaming it mooned*)” (36).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

“En la literatura de este hemisferio (como en el mundo subsistente de Meinong) abundan los objetos ideales, convocados y disueltos en un momento, según las necesidades poéticas¹.

¹ El germanista recordará ciertas formaciones de Goethe: *morgenschön, Nebelglanz*. Éstas, aunque binarias, pueden ilustrar lo que afirmo” (36).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

[...] “Comprobamos después que no hay otra diferencia entre los volúmenes. Los dos (según creo haber indicado) son reimpressiones de la décima *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. **Bioy había adquirido su ejemplar en uno de tantos remantes.**

Leímos con algún cuidado el artículo. El pasaje recordado por Bioy era tal vez el único sorprendente” (13).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“No había indicación de fecha ni de lugar. En la primera página y en una hoja de papel de seda que **cubría** una de las láminas en colores había estampado un óvalo azul con esta inscripción: *Orbis Tertius*” (17).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“(Xul Solar traduce con brevedad upa tras perfluye lunó. *Upward, behind the onstreaming, it mooned*)” (20).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“En la literatura de este hemisferio (como en el mundo subsistente de Meinong) abundan los objetos ideales, convocados y disueltos en un momento, según las necesidades poéticas” (21).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

Foot note: “¹ En el día de hoy, una de las iglesias de Tlön sostiene platónicamente que tal dolor, que tal matiz verdoso del amarillo, que tal temperatura, que tal sonido, son la única realidad. Todos los hombres, en el **instante poderoso** de coito, son el mismo hombre. Todos los hombres que repiten una línea de William Shakespeare, *son* William Shakespeare” (39).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

“**Este** se mantuvo el secreto y se repitió después en cuatro colegios” (41).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

“Así se descubrió la impropiedad de testigos **concedores de la** naturaleza experimental de la busca...” (41).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

“Posdata de 1947. — Reproduzco el artículo anterior tal como apareció en **el número 68 de SUR —tapas verde jade, mayo de 1940—** sin otra excisión que algunas metáforas y que una especie de resumen burlón que ahora resulta frívolo. Han ocurrido tantas cosas desde esa fecha... Me limitaré a recordarlas” (42).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

“La Princesa de Faucigny-Lucigne había recibido de Poitiers su vajilla de plata” (43).

***Sur* (no. 68):**

“Una creciente del río Tacuarembó nos obligó a probar (y a sobrellevar) esa **hospitalidad temeraria...** El pulpero nos acomodó unos catres crujientes en una pieza grande, entorpecida de barriles y cueros” (44).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

Foot note: “¹ En el día de hoy, una de las iglesias de Tlön sostiene platónicamente que tal dolor, que tal matiz verdoso del amarillo, que tal temperatura, que tal sonido, son la única realidad. Todos los hombres, en el **vertiginoso instante** de coito, son el mismo hombre. Todos los hombres que repiten una línea de William Shakespeare, *son* William Shakespeare” (27).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“**Éste** se mantuvo el secreto y se repitió después en cuatro colegios” (29).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“Así se descubrió la impropiedad de testigos que **conocieron la** naturaleza experimental de la busca...” (41).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“Posdata de 1947. — Reproduzco el artículo anterior tal como apareció en **la *Antología de la literatura fantástica, 1940***, sin otra excisión que algunas metáforas y que una especie de resumen burlón que ahora resulta frívolo. Han ocurrido tantas cosas desde esa fecha... Me limitaré a recordarlas” (30).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“La Princesa de Faucigny Lucigne había recibido de Poitiers su vajilla de plata” (33).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“Una creciente del río Tacuarembó nos obligó a probar (y a sobrellevar) esa **rudimentaria hospitalidad.** El pulpero nos acomodó unos catres crujientes en una pieza grande, entorpecida de barriles y cueros” (33).

c. EL ACERCAMIENTO AL ALMOTASIM

-Originally published in *Historia de la eternidad* (1936) (Was not published in the original *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* in 1941).

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 39

Historia de la eternidad (1935):

“Eliot, con más justicia, recuerda los setenta cantos de la incompleta alegoría *The Faërie Queen*, en los que no aparece una sola vez le heroína, Gloriana — como lo hace notar una censura de Richard William Church. Yo, con toda humildad, señalo un precursor lejano y posible: **el propaló que el alma de un antepasado o maestro puede entrar en el alma de un** cabalista de Jerusalén, Isaac Luria, **que en el siglo XVI desdichado, para confortarlo o instruirlo. *Ibbûr* se llama esa variedad de la metempsícosis.**
1

Ficciones (1944):

“Eliot, con más justicia, recuerda los setenta cantos de la incompleta alegoría *The Faërie Queen*, en los que no aparece una sola vez le heroína, Gloriana — como lo hace notar una censura de Richard William Church (*Spencer*, 1879). Yo, con toda humildad, señalo un precursor lejano y posible: **el cabalista de Jerusalén, Isaac Luria, que predicó la doctrina de la *Ibbûr*, o sea del alma de un antepasado o maestro que se infunde en el alma de un desdichado, para confortarlo o instruirlo** (1).

d. PIERRE MERNARD, AUTOR DEL QUIJOTE

-First published in *Sur* no. 56 (May 1939)

-Next published in book form in Borges's 1941 collection *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 49

-Two English-language translations were published more or less simultaneously in 1962: one by James E. Irby in a diverse collection of Borges works entitled *Labyrinths*; the other by Anthony Bonner as part of a collaborative translation of the entirety of *Ficciones* (1962).

Sur (no. 56):

“[...] no le sobrevivieran. **Me dijo, inolvidablemente: *En vida nos toleran los amigos* —c’est leur métier— *pero que un muerto siga requiriendo atenciones.*** . . .
“Pensar, analizar, inventar[...].” (16).

Ficciones (1944):

“[...] no le sobrevivieran. **En vano he procurado reconstruirlas.**
He reflexionado que es lícito ver en el Quijote “final” una especie de palimpsesto, en el que deben traslucirse los rastros —tenues pero no indescifrables— de la “previa” escritura de nuestro amigo. Desgraciadamente, sólo un segundo Pierre Menard, invirtiendo el trabajo del anterior, podría exhumar y resucitar esas Troyas. . .
“Pensar, analizar, inventar[...].” (62).

e. LAS RUINAS CIRCULARES

-First published in *Sur* no. 75 (December 1940), p. 100

-Next published in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941)

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 65

-First translated into English in *New Directions 11* (1949)

***Sur* (no. 75):**

“Ese proyecto mágico **agotaba** el espacio entero de su alma” (101).

***Sur* (no. 75):**

“El hombre, en el sueño y en la **vigilancia**, consideraba [...]” (101).

***Sur* (no. 75):**

“El hombre **lentamente** emergió del sueño como de un desierto viscoso [...]” (102).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“Ese proyecto mágico **agotado** el espacio entero de su alma” (66).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“El hombre, en el sueño y en la **vigilia**, consideraba [...]” (67).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“El hombre, **un día**, emergió del sueño como de un desierto viscoso [...]” (68).

f. LA LOTERÍA EN BABILONIA

-First published in *Sur* no. 76 (January 1941), p. 70

-Next published in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941)

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 75

***Sur* (no. 76):**

“A veces un solo hecho —el tabernario asesinato de C, la apoteosis misteriosa de B— era **el resultado** genial de treinta o cuarenta **jugadas**” (73).

***Sur* (no. 76):**

“[...] había unas grietas en un polvoriento acueducto que, según opinión general, *daban a la Compañía*; las personas malignas o benévolas depositaban delaciones en esos sitios. **Esas noticias de variable veracidad eran consultadas para el archivo de cada uno**” (73).

***Sur* (no. 76):**

“Esos escrúpulos tan justos provocaron al fin una considerable reforma, cuyas complejidades (**enriquecidas** por un ejercicio de siglos) no entienden sino algunos especialistas, pero que intentaré resumir, siquiera de modo simbólico” (74).

***Sur* (no. 76):**

“[...] uno decreta que se arroje a las aguas del **Eufrates** un zafiro de Taprobana; [...]” (75).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“A veces un solo hecho —el tabernario asesinato de C, la apoteosis misteriosa de B— era **la solución** genial de treinta o cuarenta **sorteos**” (80).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“[...] había unas grietas en un polvoriento acueducto que, según opinión general, *daban a la Compañía*; las personas malignas o benévolas depositaban delaciones en esos sitios. **Un archivo alfabético recogía esas noticias de variable veracidad**” (80).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“Esos escrúpulos tan justos provocaron al fin una considerable reforma, cuyas complejidades (**agravadas** por un ejercicio de siglos) no entienden sino algunos especialistas, pero que intentaré resumir, siquiera de modo simbólico” (82).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“[...] uno decreta que se arroje a las aguas del **Éufrates** un zafiro de Taprobana; [...]” (83).

g. EXAMEN DE LA OBRA DE HERBERT QUAIN

-First published in *Sur* no. 79 (April 1941), p. 44

-Next published in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941)

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 87

***Sur* (no. 79):**

“El primer acto (el más extenso) ocurre en la casa de campo del general Wynd, C.I.E., cerca de Melton Mowbray. El invisible centro de la trama es Miss Ulrica Wynd, la hija mayor del general” (47).

***Sur* (no. 79):**

“El “autor dramático” Wilfred Quarles es un comisionista de Liverpool; su verdadero nombre, John William Quigley. Miss Wynd existe; Quigley nunca la ha visto [...]” (48).

***Sur* (no. 79):**

“Para esos “imperfectos escritores”, cuyo nombre es legión, Quain redactó los ocho relatos del libro *Statements*. Cada uno de ellos prefigura o promete un buen argumento, **finalmente** frustrado por el autor. Alguno —no el mejor— insinúa dos argumentos. El lector, distraído por la vanidad, cree haberlos inventado. Del tercero, **Dim swords**, yo cometí la ingenuidad de extraer Las ruinas circulares, que **vió la luz en el número 75 de SUR**” (48).

***Sur* (no. 79):**

“[...] en que la muerte precede al nacimiento y la cicatriz a la herida al golpe (*Appearance and reality*, 1897, página 215)” (46).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“El primer acto (el más extenso) ocurre en la casa de campo del general Thrale, C.I.E., cerca de Melton Mowbray. El invisible centro de la trama es Miss Ulrica Thrale, la hija mayor del general” (92).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“El “autor dramático” Wilfred Quarles es un comisionista de Liverpool; su verdadero nombre, John William Quigley. Miss Thrale existe; Quigley nunca la ha visto [...]” (93).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“Para esos “imperfectos escritores”, cuyo nombre es legión, Quain redactó los ocho relatos del libro *Statements*. Cada uno de ellos prefigura o promete un buen argumento, **voluntariamente** frustrado por el autor. Alguno —no el mejor— insinúa *dos* argumentos. El lector, distraído por la vanidad, cree haberlos inventado. Del tercero, ***The rose of yesterday***, yo cometí la ingenuidad de extraer *Las ruinas circulares*, que es una de las narraciones del libro *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*” (94).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“[...] en que la muerte precede al nacimiento y la cicatriz a la herida al golpe (*Appearance and reality*, 1897, página 215¹)” (90).

⁽¹⁾ Ay de la erudición de Herbert Quain, ay de la página 215 de un libro de 1897. Un interlocutor el *Político*, de Platón, ya había descrito una regresión parecida: la de los Hijos de la Tierra o Autóctonos que, sometidos al influjo de una rotación inversa del cosmos, pasaron de la vejez a la madurez, de la madurez a la niñez, de la niñez a la desaparición y la nada. También Teopompo, en su *Filipica* habla de ciertas frutas boreales que originan en quien las come, el mismo proceso retrógrado... Más interesante es imaginar una inversión del Tiempo: un estado en el que recordáramos el porvenir e ignoráramos, o apenas presintiéramos, el pasado. Cf. El canto décimo del

Infierno, versos 97-102, donde se comparan la visión profética y la presbicia.
(90).

h. LA BIBLIOTECA DE BABEL

-First published in *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941), p. 93

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 95

-Two English-language translations appeared approximately simultaneously in 1962, one by James E. Irby in a diverse collection of Borges's works entitled *Labyrinths* and the other by Anthony Kerrigan as part of a translation of the entirety of *Ficciones*.

El Jardín (1941):

“(1) El manuscrito original no contiene guarismos o mayúsculas. La puntuación ha sido limitada a la coma y al punto. Esos dos signos, el espacio y la veintidós letras del alfabeto son los veinticinco símbolos suficientes que enumera el desconocido. — (Nota del traductor)” (96).

El Jardín (1941):

“Algunos insinuaron que cada letra podía influir en la subsiguiente y que el valor de M C V en la tercera línea de la página 71 no era **la de esa** serie en otra posición de otra página, pero esa vaga tesis no prosperó” (97).

El Jardín (1941):

“Antes de un siglo pudo establecerse el idioma: un dialecto **lituano** de guaraní, con inflexiones de árabe clásico” (98).

El Jardín (1941):

“[...] Esta epístola inútil y palabrera ya existe en uno de los treinta volúmenes de los cinco anaqueles de uno de los incontable hexágonos —y también su refutación.

La escritura metódica me distrae de la presente condición de los hombres. La certidumbre de que todo está escrito nos anula o nos afantasma... Yo conozco distritos en que los jóvenes se prosternan ante los libros y besan. [...]” (104).

Ficciones (1944):

“(1) El manuscrito original no contiene guarismos o mayúsculas. La puntuación ha sido limitada a la coma y al punto. Esos dos signos, el espacio y la veintidós letras del alfabeto son los veinticinco símbolos suficientes que enumera el desconocido. — (Nota del editor)” (98).

Ficciones (1944):

2“Algunos insinuaron que cada letra podía influir en la subsiguiente y que el valor de M C V en la tercera línea de la página 71 no era **el que puede tener la misma** serie en otra posición de otra página, pero esa vaga tesis no prosperó” (99).

Ficciones (1944):

“Antes de un siglo pudo establecerse el idioma: un dialecto **samoyedo-lituano** de guaraní, con inflexiones de árabe clásico” (100).

Ficciones (1944):

“[...] Esta epístola inútil y palabrera ya existe en uno de los treinta volúmenes de los cinco anaqueles de uno de los incontable hexágonos —y también su refutación. (Un número *n* de lenguajes posibles usa el mismo vocabulario; en algunos, el símbolo *biblioteca* admite la correcta definición *ubicuo y perdurable sistema de galerías hexagonales*, pero *biblioteca* es *pan o pirámide* o cualquier otra cosa, y las siete palabras que la definen tienen otro valor. Tú,

que me lees, ¿estás seguro de entender mi lenguaje?)

La escritura metódica me distrae de la presente condición de los hombres. La certidumbre de que todo está escrito nos anula o nos afantasma. Yo conozco distritos en que los jóvenes se prosternan ante los libros y besan. [...]” (106).

El Jardín (1941):

“Mi soledad se alegra con esa elegante esperanza” (105).

Ficciones (1944):

“Mi soledad se alegra con esa elegante esperanza ⁽¹⁾” (107).

(1) Letizia Álvarez de Toledo ha observado que la vasta Biblioteca es inútil; en rigor, bastaría *un solo volumen*, de formato común, impreso en cuerpo nueve o en cuerpo diez, que constara de un número infinito de hojas infinitamente delgadas. (Cavalieri, a principios del siglo XVII, dijo que todo cuerpo sólido es la superposición de un número infinito de planos.) El manejo de ese *vademecum* sedoso no sería cómodo: cada hoja aparente se desdoblaría en otras análogas; la inconcebible hoja central no tendría revés.

i. EL JARDÍN DE SENDEROS QUE SE BIFURCAN

-First published in *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941), p. 107

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 109

-It was the first of Borges's works to be translated into English when it appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in August, 1948

NO CHANGES

Part Two: *Artificios*

j. PROLOGO

k. FUNES EL MEMORIOSO

-First published in *La Nación* (June 1942)

-*Ficciones* (1944)

-The English translation appeared in 1954 in *Avon Modern Writing No. 2*. Anthony Kerrigan was the publisher

NO CHANGES

I. LA FORMA DE LA ESPADA

-First published in *La Nación* (Sunday, July 26 1942) Section 2 (Artes-Letras), front page

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 145

-The first English translation was by Harriet de Onís and appeared in *New World Writing No. 4* (1953)

***La Nación* (July 1942):**

“De una de la panoplias del general arranqué un alfanje; con esa media luna de acero...” (final column).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“A E. H. M. (dedication)

De una de la panoplias del general arranqué un alfanje; con esa media luna de acero...” (152).

m. TEMA DEL TRAIADOR Y DEL HÉROE

-First published in *Sur* no. 112 (February 1944) p. 23

-*Ficciones* (1944) p. 155

***Sur* (no. 112):**

“a E. H. M.” (23).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

So the Platonic Year

Whirls out new right and wrong,

Whirls in the old instead;

All men are dancers and their tread

Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong.

W. B. YEATS: *The Tower*

(155).

***Sur* (no. 112):**

“divisó y no pudo pisar la tierra prometida, Kilpatrick **halló muerte** en la víspera de la rebelión victoriosa que había premeditado y soñado” (23).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“divisó y no pudo pisar la tierra prometida, Kilpatrick **pereció** en la víspera de la rebelión victoriosa que había premeditado y soñado” (156).

***Sur* (no. 112):**

“Piensa en la transmigración de las almas, doctrina **que figura diversamente en las literaturas** célticas y que el propio César atribuyó a los druidas británicos; piensa [...]” (24).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“Piensa en la transmigración de las almas, doctrina **que da horror a las letras** célticas y que el propio César atribuyó a los druidas británicos; piensa [...]” (157).

***Sur* (no. 112):**

“Ryan investiga el asunto (esa investigación es uno de los hiatos del argumento) y logra descifrar el **antiguo** enigma” (25).

***Ficciones* (1944):**

“Ryan investiga el asunto (esa investigación es uno de los hiatos del argumento) y logra descifrar el enigma” (158).

Sur (no. 112):

“Kilpatrick fué ultimado en un teatro, pero **ese teatro fué** también la entera ciudad, y los actores fueron legión, y el drama coronado por su muerte abarcó muchos días y muchas noches. He aquí lo acontecido.

El 2 de agosto de 1824, se reunieron los conspiradores. El país estaba maduro para la rebelión; algo, sin embargo, fallaba siempre: algún traidor había en el cónclave. Fergus Kilpatrick había encomendado a James Nolan el descubrimiento de ese traidor. Nolan ejecutó su tarea: anunció en pleno cónclave **el nombre del traidor: Kilpatrick**. Demostró con pruebas irrefutables la verdad de la acusación; los conjurados condenaron a muerte a su presidente. Éste **admitió su crimen**, pero imploró que su castigo **serviera de algún modo** a la patria” (25).

Ficciones (1944):

“Kilpatrick fué ultimado en un teatro, pero **de teatro hizo** también la entera ciudad, y los actores fueron legión, y el drama coronado por su muerte abarcó muchos días y muchas noches. He aquí lo acontecido:

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Sur (no. 112):

“Nolan, urgido por el tiempo, no supo íntegramente inventar las circunstancias de la múltiple ejecución; tuvo que plagiar a otro dramaturgo, el enemigo inglés William Shakespeare. Repitió escenas de *Macbeth*, de *Julio César*. La pública y secreta representación comprendió varios días. El condenado entró en Dublín, discutió, obró, rezó, reprobó, pronunció palabras patéticas, y cada una de esas palabras y de esos actos había sido prefijada por Nolan. Centenares de actores colaboraron con el protagonista; el rol de algunos fue complejo; el de otros, momentáneo. Las cosas que dijeron e hicieron perduran en los libros históricos, en la memoria apasionada de Irlanda. Kilpatrick, arrebatado por ese minucioso destino que lo redimía y que lo perdía, más de una vez enriqueció con actos y palabras improvisadas el texto de su juez. Así fue desplegándose en el tiempo el populoso drama, hasta que el 6 de agosto de 1824, en un palco de funerarias cortinas que prefiguraba el de Lincoln, un balazo anhelado traspasó el pecho del traidor y del héroe, que apenas pudo articular, entre dos efusiones de brusca sangre, algunas palabras previstas” (26).

Ficciones (1944):

“Nolan, urgido por el tiempo, no supo íntegramente inventar las circunstancias de la múltiple ejecución; tuvo que plagiar a otro dramaturgo, el enemigo inglés William Shakespeare. Repitió escenas de *Macbeth*, de *Julio César*. La pública y secreta representación comprendió varios días. El condenado entró en Dublín, discutió, obró, rezó, reprobó, pronunció palabras patéticas, y cada uno de esos actos que reflejaría la gloria, había sido prefijada por Nolan. Centenares de actores colaboraron con el protagonista; el rol de algunos fue complejo; el de otros, momentáneo. Las cosas que dijeron e hicieron perduran en los libros históricos, en la memoria apasionada de Irlanda. Kilpatrick, arrebatado por ese minucioso destino que lo redimía y que lo perdía, más de una vez enriqueció con actos y palabras improvisadas el texto de su juez. Así fue desplegándose en el tiempo el populoso drama, hasta que el 6 de agosto de 1824, en un palco de funerarias cortinas que prefiguraba el de Lincoln, un balazo anhelado entró el pecho del traidor y del héroe, que apenas pudo articular, entre dos efusiones de brusca sangre, algunas palabras previstas.

En la obra de Nolan, los pasajes imitados de Shakespeare son los *menos* dramáticos; Ryan sospecha que el autor los intercaló para que una persona, en el provenir, diera con la verdad. Comprende que él también forma parte de la trama de Nolan...Al cabo de tenaces cavilaciones, resuelve silenciar el descubrimiento. Publica un libro dedicado a la gloria del héroe; también eso, tal vez, estaba previsto” (159-160).

n. LA MUERTE Y LA BRUJALA

-First published in *Sur* no. 92 (May 1942), p. 27

-*Ficciones* (1944), p. 161

-It was first translated into English in the *New Mexico Quarterly* (1954).

Sur (no. 92):

“Un libro **en** octavo mayor le reveló las enseñanzas de Israel Baal Shem Tobh, fundador de la secta de los Piadosos;” (29).

Ficciones (1944):

“Un libro **un** octavo mayor le reveló las enseñanzas de Israel Baal Shem Tobh, fundador de la secta de los Piadosos;” (164).

o. MILAGRO SECRETO

-First published in *Sur* no. 101 (February 1943) p. 13

-*Ficciones* (1944) p. 181

NO CHANGES

p. TRES VERSIONES DE JUDAS

-First Published in *Sur* no. 118 (August 1944), p. 7

-*Ficciones* (1944) p. 193

Sur (no. 118):

“[...]son falsas (De Quincey, 1857).
Precedido por algún alemán De Quincey especuló que Judas **creyó en el reino terrenal de Jesús y que lo entregó para encender una rebelión contra** el yugo de Roma; Runeberg sugiere que[...]” (8).

Sur (no. 118):

“[...] a ser huésped del fuego no se apaga. De ahí[...]” (9).

Sur (no. 118):

“[...]Ertford, en el tercer apéndice de la *Christelige Dogmatik*, refuta **la prosodia y la teología** de ese pasaje” (11, foot note “¹”).

Sur (no. 118):

[...] a Aquel cuya gloria llena la tierra; **al rabino Simeón ben Anzaí**, que vió el Paraíso[...]” (12).

Ficciones (1944):

“[...]son falsas (De Quincey, 1857).
Precedido por algún alemán De Quincey especuló que Judas **entregó a Jesucristo para forzarlo a declarar su divinidad y a encender una vasta rebelión** contra el yugo de Roma; Runeberg sugiere que[...]” (195).

Ficciones (1944):

“[...] a ser huésped del fuego no se apaga. **El orden inferior es un espejo del orden superior; las formas de la tierra corresponden a las formas del cielo; las manchas de la piel son un mapa de las incorruptibles constelaciones; Judas refleja de algún modo a Jesús.** De ahí[...]” (195).

Ficciones (1944):

“[...]Ertford, en el tercer apéndice de la *Christelige Dogmatik*, refuta ese pasaje” (198, foot note “⁽¹⁾”).

Ficciones (1944):

[...] a Aquel cuya gloria llena la tierra; **a Saúl, cuyos ojos quedaron ciegos en el camino de Damasco;** al rabino Simeón ben Anzaí, que vió el Paraíso[...]” (200).

q. EL FIN

-La Nación, Sunday, Oct. 11 1953 section 2a (Artes – letras)

-*Ficciones* (1956, 2nd edition onwards)

NO CHANGES

r. LA SECTA DEL FENIX

-First published in *Sur* no. 215/216, September and October 1952, p. 13

-*Ficciones* 1956, 2nd edition, p. 181

***Sur* (no. 215/216):**

“[...] En las literaturas germánicas hay poemas escritos por sectarios, cuyo sujeto es el mar o el crepúsculo de la noche; son, de algún modo, símbolos de Secreto, oigo repetir. *Orbis terrarum est speculum Ludi* reza un adagio apócrifo que Du Cange registró en su Glosario.

He merecido en tres continentes la amistad de muchos devotos del Fénix; me consta que el secreto, al principio, les pareció baladí, penoso, vulgar y (lo que aun es más extraño) increíble. [...]” (15).

***Ficciones* (1956):**

“[...] En las literaturas germánicas hay poemas escritos por sectarios, cuyo sujeto es el mar o el crepúsculo de la noche; son, de algún modo, símbolos de Secreto, oigo repetir. *Orbis terrarum est speculum Ludi* reza un adagio apócrifo que Du Cange registró en su Glosario. **Una suerte de horror sagrado impide a algunos fieles la ejecución del simplísimo rito; los otros los desprecian, pero ellos se desprecian aun más. Gozan de mucho crédito, en cambio, quienes deliberadamente renuncian a la Costumbre y logran un comercio directo con la divinidad; éstos, para manifestar ese comercio, lo hacen con figuras de la liturgia y así John of the Rood escribió:**

*Sepan los Nueve Firmamentos que el Dios
Es deleitable como el corcho y el Cieno.*

He merecido en tres continentes la amistad de muchos devotos del Fénix; me consta que el secreto, al principio, les pareció baladí, penoso, vulgar y (lo que aun es más extraño) increíble. [...]” (184).

s. EL SUR

-First published in *La Nación* (Sunday, Feb. 8, 1953) Section 2a
 -*Ficciones* (1956, 2nd edition onwards)

NO CHANGES

IX. Analysis:

In order to understand the significance of the changes that exist within *Ficciones*, it is necessary to understand how those changes would have come to emerge. As mentioned in the biographical account of Borges, his relationship with both the publishers Sur and Emecé was a pleasant one at the time of publication. What's more, both of these publishing houses were very well-respected and would have had strong, agreeable relationships with their authors (Breitfeld). The changes noted above would have been made at the request of Borges himself, and thus we can assume that each change reflects a change in the intent of the author, rather than of the editor (Breitfeld).

It is also useful to consider what is known about Borges's writing process. In a personal interview with María Kodama, Borges's widow, she described the discerning manner with which Borges revised: "He was very sensitive to the music of the words, the sound of the words. Sometimes he told me, 'which would you prefer, this or that?' and three weeks later [he would change it]" (Kodama). Since Kodama worked as Borges's literary secretary towards the end of his life, she frequently wrote for him as he dictated. She states that when he would begin to dictate a text to her, he always had the beginning and the end very clearly sorted out. She would often be asked to re-read what he had dictated the day before, and he would say: "No, we are going to change this word and this word," meaning that he was constantly considering how he wanted to revise a story (Kodama). It is important to note, however, that towards the end of his life Borges was much less concerned revising his prose than his poetry. Kodama notes that there

are even more revisions in his later poetry than in the prose, as by the time she was working with him he felt his prose “belonged to his youth” and that “to correct the books [of prose] he’d have to rewrite [them]” (Kodama). Still, while Kodama can speak only in regards to Borges’s later revision process, it seems safe to say that his attitude towards rewriting and editing was one of constant vigilance. “I think that for him, writing was like sand in the desert; always changing,” she said.

It is also important to note that the Borges of real-life was just as aware of the importance of varying editions as was the Borges who presents himself in *Ficciones*. Kodama recalls that she would read to him and he would often suggest that she look for another edition of a given author’s work, to see if the author had ever caught on to what Borges perceived as a flaw within the text (Kodama). This fact speaks immensely to the significance of using textual criticism as a lens through which to analyze Borges, because it suggests that Borges himself thought certain versions of a text could be more authoritative than others, and that he was interested in locating such editions.

What, then, can we make of the variations within *Ficciones*? Some of the changes are small, for example in “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” a description of *el papel que guarecía* (the paper that protected/sheltered) in *Sur* becomes *el papel que cubría* (the paper that covered) in *Ficciones*. On the one hand, this kind of a change appears rather insignificant; the basic plot of the short story is not changed. On the other, each word can be said to carry a different connotation and thus a different implication — one gleans a different interpretation of the story depending on which text is read. A change of this variety also occurs in “Las ruinas circulares,” in which the word *vigilancia* becomes *vigilia*. Though the words look and sound quite similar, *vigilancia* carries the potential meanings “vigilance” and “watchfulness,” while *vigilia* refers

more so to “wakefulness” and can also take on the meaning of the noun “vigil.” One can see how drastically different one might interpret a text if one’s central argument rested on a diction that, in fact, we see as constantly changing. This is the kind of change that affirms how carefully Borges considered the significance and implication of his diction.

Other changes are interesting because they demonstrate the extent to which Borges wished to keep up the impression of reality in his false eruditions. In “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” he states that the article he refers to was reproduced in *Sur* 68 (the one the reader is looking at) while in *Ficciones* he states that this article actually appears in *Antología de la literatura fantástica*, thus trying to evoke that idea that this article really did exist. Similarly, the 1944 version of “Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain” adds a footnote expanding on an apparent work by Quain, *Appearance and reality*, in an attempt to further give the appearance that Quain’s writing is, in fact, real.

In this same story occurs a more radical way in which Borges revised his work: the change of two character’s names. General Wynd become General Thrale, his daughter’s name consequently changes from Ulrica Wynd to Ulrica Thrale. The reason for this change seems less obvious, though still undoubtedly significant; particularly as this is the only instance I have found of Borges altering a character’s name.

Many of the more substantial changes are additive in nature, and Borges seems to have added to his *cuentos* when he did not feel his point was as well-wrought as it should be. As the variorum records, he ended up adding to “La biblioteca de Babel” so that in *Ficciones* there is further information about the works contained within the library. He also adds a typical Borgesian chance to subvert the role of narrator and speak directly to the reader, challenging him with the sentence: “Tu, que me lees, ¿estás seguro de entender mi lenguaje?” (*Ficciones* 107).

Interestingly, in attempting to analyze the revisions chronologically, few patterns emerge. The period in which the story was published seems to have little effect on the amount which it was changed: “La secta del fenix” and “El Sur” were published within a year of each other, but while “La Secta” contains many revisions, “El Sur” remains untouched. “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan” and “El fin” also remain untouched. Are we to assume that Borges was most pleased with these stories? While this variorum cannot *concretely* say ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ to which versions Borges liked most, it can certainly strengthen an argument towards a particular reading.

X. Conclusion:

Textual critics Thomas G. Tanselle and W.W. Greg engaged in a debate about whether an earlier or later text is more authoritative. On the one hand, the further along a text is, the more revised and thus the more reflective of the author’s ever-evolving intentions. On the other, a heavily revised text may also include revisions outside the author’s intentions, and is further away from the original manuscript (SB 029 p. 177). While we know that Borges’s corrections were made of his own volition, the question of variation within his work is no less puzzling.

His writing poses a distinct opportunity in the study of authorship and intent, because he was clearly so cognizant of its importance. He not only played an active part in the production of literature throughout his life — working for newspapers, libraries, magazines — but he also returned time and again to the problems of authorship within his own stories. So many of his *cuentos* feature protagonists who are themselves authors, and so many of his stories try to assert the idea of an authoritative narrator; particularly by employing techniques that make his stories appear to respond to real-world texts. All of these techniques respond directly to the discourse of Literary Criticism, which I have outlined as a field that cares very much about the relationship

between a reader, an author, and a text (whether this means building or destroying those relationships).

What's more, Borges acknowledges the importance of draft and revision, of writing as a process. We see this throughout *Ficciones*, as Borges's narrators distinguish between nuanced, but different versions of a text. The fact that he cares about the subtleties between one edition of a book versus another would make him apt for analysis in any field related to the study of literature. But what is so fascinating about the author is that we can use his understanding of writing as a means through which to examine his own writing process.

Clearly there is no *truly* "authoritative" version of Borges's texts. In fact, I have shown through analysis of his writing that it would be preposterous to claim that any one text is *more* legitimate than another. Yet an attentive reader of Borges cannot ignore the importance of these variations, and conclusions will be drawn from them. Because he was constantly revising his own work, he suggests that he *did* believe one text might have supremacy over another. Not that the text would be more legitimate, but perhaps more in line with an author's intent. That improvement was possible. I have suggested that examining Borges variants — essentially attempting to determine how his authorial intent changed over years — is of great value to the field of Borges scholarship. To be able to trace the way in which this author tinkered with his work can now provide Borges scholars with a much deeper understanding of his own thoughts about writing and his relationship with publication. The variorum I have compiled seeks to do just that.

In the end, we are left with a veritable palimpsest of Borges's writing; one that strongly connects his *personal* approach to writing with the approach so often undertaken by his characters. The same author who so frequently wrote of mirrors in his stories actually mirrors

himself in his writing habits, and we see how difficult it is to unmarry Borges's personal biography from the autobiographical nature of his writings. Of Pierre Menard, he writes:

“He dedicated his scruples and his nights “lit by midnight oil” to repeating in a foreign tongue a book that already existed. His drafts were endless; he stubbornly corrected, and he ripped up thousands of handwritten pages. He would allow no one to see them, and took care that they not survive him. In vain I have attempted to reconstruct them [...].”

(Hurley 95)

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