

Ricardo Palma, Jorge Luis Borges and the relato

Robert Ford

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The dictionary of the Real Academia Espanola defines relato as "narración" or "cuento". But over the years a more specific use of the term has evolved. A unique literary form arose in the nineteenth century and flourished in the twentieth, and to this form critics¹ have assigned the word relato.

The relato is usually classified as short fiction.² However, a relato contains disturbing expository elements that one associates with an essay. A relato contains several of the elements of the short story, such as literary characters and creative material, but few of their usual accouterments, such as character development or plot. It may contain historical subjects but it is certainly not a historical novel.

The definition of relato that we will advance in this paper hinges on what we consider its key aspects: it elaborates a thesis within the exterior trappings of narrative fiction. For this reason we term the relato a narrative essay.

As we will see, the relato has been primarily a tool used in costumbrismo and in the literature of the fantastic. As will be shown, these two are often part of the same expression. This thesis will examine the first expressions

of the fantastic genre, in order to expose some of the roots of the relato. We will then look at the work in the relato of two of its masters, Ricardo Palma in the nineteenth century and Jorge Luis Borges in the twentieth.

II

The relato has historically been a key form of literary expression within the literature of the fantastic. This section of this thesis will investigate the historical growth of fantastic literature, which represents the foundation for the relato.

The literary genre of the fantastic has two roots, which lie in the Indian and the Spanish traditions. The Indian experience in its totality provides fertile subsoil for the flowering of fantastic literature in Latin America. The Spanish traditions of the Conquest and the pre-Conquest eras provide the seeds for what would become the literary content and physical forms for the genre. Because of the strong support of the indigenous fantastic traditions of Spain and pre-Columbian America, the literature of the fantastic is a purely nativist expression in Latin America.

The world of the Indians was a fantastic world. Most of the indigenous cultures at the time of the Conquest were

living in a high ceremonial or post-ceremonial epoch. The Indians still lived in the time of myths and fables, a time in which creation legends and anthropomorphic tales were being created. A glance at the Popol Vuh or the Historia general de las cosas de Nueva Espana reveals a spiritual world of gods, demons, heroes, and importantly, incredible feats. It was literarily a cosmogony of the fantastic. When Garcilaso de la Vega, El Inca poured this spiritual world into Hispanic literary molds, he created one of the most important works of the fantastic in Latin America, the Comentarios Reales de los Incas.

The physical world of the Indian cultures was part of the fantastic tradition. The labyrinth of temples, sacrifices, ceremonies, even the landscape itself, gave themselves up completely to the ethos of the fantastic. Formal surrealism will arise in Mexico several decades before it will in Europe. The visual art of the fantastic was somehow indigenous to the Latin American soil. Surrealism in art has had a long popular history. Pulquería murals and retablo painting, both of popular creation, are well-known examples.³ Carlos Mérida in the forties and fifties made famous surrealist paintings using Mayan inscriptions and ruins for inspiration.⁴

In trying to create literature out of the experience of the ancient Indian world, several writers created important works in the fantastic genre. Bernal Díaz del Castillo wrote that the city of Tenochtitlán "resembled the enchanted houses the book of Amadis described...I know not how to relate it."⁵ Bernal's quote from the Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva-Espana prefaced part two of Alfonso Reyes's essays "Vision of Anahuac," which attempts to reconstruct the conquistador's first experiences in the Valley of Mexico. Reyes used powerful emotional evocations and unusual metaphor in describing the market at Tenochtitlán: "the emotion of a strange, vibrating chaos; the outlines melt into one another...the wide-bottomed pots seem to be seated, like the Indian woman, knees together and upturned feet parallel. The water, oozing through the pores of the fragrant vases, sings to itself."⁶ Reyes's technique as well as Bernal Diaz's important analogy demonstrated the usefulness, perhaps even the necessity, of the literature of the fantastic in dealing with the physical world of the pre-Conquest civilizations.

Therefore, the Indian experience in its spiritual and its physical contexts provided the foundation of what would become the fantastic tradition.

The other foundation of the fantastic tradition lay, of course, in Spain. The Spanish tradition of the Conquest represented a manifestation of the fantastic. When in later years the two cultures were blended together, the process was actually nothing more than an act of grafting fantastic foliage into fantastic roots.

The Catholic Church monopolized the spiritualized life of the Conquest era. The people of Spain were taught to believe as a matter of faith the accepted miracles of the Christian tradition. In fact, Catholics of a later century were told to accept the ecstasies of St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa of Avila. The acceptance of the illogical in matters of the spirit led to a belief in the fantastic in matters of the intellect.⁷

Intellectually, the Spanish tradition lay firmly rooted in the fantastic. The event of key importance in the fantastic-intellectual tradition was the production and popularity of the romances of chivalry. Before their advent at the end of the fifteenth century, an indigenous fantastic tradition dominated the Spanish mind. This was exemplified in literature by the chronicles. The chronicles were the literary forerunners of the romances of chivalry.⁸

The chronicles commenced as an ornamented records of the royal court. They soon evolved into a true literary

form. They became almost bizarre accounts full of obviously creative material. Despite that, they never lost their reputation as valid history among the general public.⁹

The earliest chronicles date from the reign of Alfonso el Sabio. Of the literary product of even that age Ticknor has said that the chronicles of Alfonso el Sabio have "the charm of that poetical credulity which loves to deal in doubtful traditions of glory, rather than in those ascertained facts which are often little honorable either to the national fame or to the spirit of humanity."¹⁰

The medieval chronicle represents an attempt to prove a thesis, whether it be the essential greatness of a monarch or the essential spirituality--or lack of it--of a man, or of Man. How well it proved its thesis, and not its factual accuracy, determined the works judgement as "good" or "bad."¹¹

There was a different view of truth in the Middle Ages than that held in the twentieth century. There were several kinds of truth. Facts represented one kind of truth; metaphysics another. The chronicles were usually used to prove such grandiose concepts as greatness or spirituality. History, embodied in the physical form of the chronicles, therefore, represented a didactic form of metaphysical truth.¹²

There were several kinds of chronicles. There was the chronicle of king and court (Crónica sarracina o Crónica

del rey don Rodrigo con la destrucción de Espana); of great men (Claros varones de Castilla); of amazing travels (Vida del Gran Timurlan); and of particularly astounding events, almost always feats of arms (Expedicion de los catalanes y aragoneses contra turcos y griegos).¹³

In terms of literary structure, the chronicles were formless and fluid. For example, the travel chronicle merely followed the traveler in his wanderings. If more than one person figured in the story, the narrative would skip back and forth between them at the whim of the writer. The narrative of the great man chronicle followed the hero in his exploits, wherever they may have led him, in order to prove his greatness.¹⁴

One of the last important chronicles was one entitled Crónica sarracina o Cronica del rey don Rodrigo con la destrucción de Espana, written toward the end of the fifteenth century. Although superficially the story of the last gothic king, in essence it was a mixed bag of facts, fantasy, myth, and creative history. However, because it dealt with well-known historical incidents and people, the ordinary reader did not question its historical validity.¹⁵

The don Rodrigo marked the period of transition into the romances of chivalry. The romances adopted the forms and aesthetics of the late chronicles, which were exemplified

by don Rodrigo. Because the romance is an outgrowth of the chronicle, it is the product of an attempt to create a better history, one in which the free play of the Renaissance spirit and the newly found humanistic belief in man would be unsullied by needless factual and scientific restraints. One can see that the romance is the medieval chronicle with a Renaissance thesis.

As we have previously mentioned, the dividing line in the Conquest era between fact and fiction, and between chronicle and romance, was quite hazy. Viewed in this manner, the romance of chivalry was the product of literary machinations within a fact-and-fiction continuum in which fiction finally dominated fact.

During the Renaissance the reading public essentially had two alternatives. One might have chosen the chronicle, which had a vague historical basis and was mostly fiction, or one might have chosen the romance of chivalry, which had little historical basis and was mostly fiction. Both chronicle and romance, however, were accepted as history by the reading public.

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The transition from chronicle into romance also occurred in Latin America. Gonzalez Fernando de Oviedo individually personified this transition. He wrote the chronicle known as the Historia general y natural de las Indias, and

Claribalte, a romance of chivalry.¹⁷ Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca also personified the transition. He authored the Comentarios reales de los Incas, a chronicle of the Inca culture that blended history and legend, and the Florida del Inca, a "historical novel and book of chivalry combined."¹⁸

I. A. Leonard in his Books of the Brave advances the thesis that the Spanish people's identification with the world and the heroes in the romances of chivalry caused a certain feverish excitement in the Spanish mind which in turn imparted a spirit of heroic romance into conquistado and Conquest. In the interest of brevity, let us cite Leonard's conclusion, that the conquistador's "matchless courage and driving force did not spring from brawn and endurance alone; his febrile fancy had much to do in spurring him relentlessly on to unprecedented exploits. Some of the visionary passion that animated him had its inspiration in the imagined utopias, adventures, and riches alluringly depicted in the song and story of his time. The texture of dreams became corporeal in the new medium of leaden type, and these men of the Spanish Renaissance were moved to work miracles greater than those performed in the pages of their books."¹⁹

The Spanish people apparently identified strongly

with the heroes and the world of their romances. This is not to say that the reading public believed in them in the manner of a Don Quixote, but rather read them as they had their predecessors, the chronicles, as didactic works representing metaphysical truth. That was the way in which people believed the romances of chivalry, and in doing so were able to legitimize the flights of fancy the romances caused.²⁰

The popularity of the travel chronicle was due to the occurrence that when a Spaniard of the Conquest era heard or read one, he would react to the bleak circumstances of Spanish reality and escape into the fantastic world of the traveler and his chronicle. With the advent of the true romance of chivalry this literature of escape will become what we term a literature of identification.²¹

Several reasons have been advanced for the popularity of the literature of identification. Leonard believes that by reading the romances, as they had done with the earlier chronicles, the reading public escaped into the fantastic world in response to the negative circumstances of their reality. People identified with this fantastic world because of the events of the Spanish Renaissance, especially the fantastic accounts of the discovery and conquest of America. To this one should add Humanism, the belief in

Man, and the new free will the Renaissance unleashed. The romance of chivalry became the new cycle of the new Man, and people loved to feel a part of it; that was the core of the literature of identification.

What exactly did the sixteenth-century Spaniard escape into and identify with? Most importantly, he identified with the ethos, the world of the romance of chivalry. As has been commonly asserted, it was a world in which anything could happen. Adventure, prowess, and places were bound only by the dimensions of the writer's imagination. The authors of the romances always located the action in the dim past, where presumably men were better able to adventure successfully, and the places where they could still exist~~ed~~. This presented a sharp contrast to the dull, drab, ordinary present.

The myth of the Beatus Ille pervaded the ethos of the romance of chivalry. The origin of the myth probably derives from Horace, Epodes, 2, where he wrote:

"Now happy in his low degree,
Now rich in humble poverty is he
Who leads a quiet country life,
Discharged of business, void of strife,
And from the groping scrivener free!
Thus, ere the seeds of vice were sown,
lived men in better ages born..."²²

The term Beatus Ille is generally used in the context

of Arcadian myths that form part of the pastoral novel, such as the Diana. The man in Horace's poem was the simple Roman farmer of old, and not the hero of the romance of chivalry. But in the hands of the writers of the romances, certain important aspects of this myth were transplanted to a non-pastoral utopia. The essential meaning of the poem is twofold. In the first place, Horace states that the man who lives far removed from the day-to-day grind of life leads a far happier existence than the man weighted down by the demands of modern society. Secondly, he says that at one time, presumably before the advent of what he would have called the present society, all men led this more contented life style. In the pastoral novel, the life of the Beatus Ille was a pastoral paradise. In the romances of chivalry the life of the Beatus Ille acquired different dimensions. The way of life depicted in the romances was characterized by action, adventure, and passion. But the authors of the romances maintained the two key aspects of the Beatus Ille: one, it was in its own way a much happier existence than the ordinary life of the author or of the reader of the romances of chivalry, and two, as we shall see, it was located somewhere far off in time, presumably before the "seeds of vice were sown," before the demands of the society that the

readers called the present reality prevented everyone from living in the manner of the romantic knights and ladies. The adventures, the heroes, and the fantastic locations together defined the tenets of the Beatus Ille in the romances, and together they occupied center stage in the romances of chivalry.

The concept of the romantic hero was linked to that of the Beatus Ille. The hero in a romance of chivalry represented an ideal type, as ideal as the shepherd of the pastoral novel, but again of a different dimension. He represented a highly unrealistic way of life. The romantic hero experienced impossible feats of bravery and prowess. He lived a life in which strength, virtue, and passion were all-important. Amadís was the ideal man and the ideal knight, the most faithful in love and the most gallant in war. As such, he represented the personal ideal for the Conquest-era Spaniard to emulate.²³

The romances of chivalry were absolutely full of fights. In Book VIII of Amadís de Gaula, for example, there are more than forty, plus many more if one includes those with lions, bears, and more fanciful opponents. In the chivalric romances battle was the true measure of a man. The best fighters were the best knights, the most loyal lovers, the most devoted friends, and the best rulers. The personal

ideal embodied in the romances of chivalry therefore glorified the warrior, and made the various nobler concepts dependent upon fighting skill.²⁴

A common trick of the writers of the romances was to pose as the mere translator or corrector of an ancient manuscript rather than as the author of a work of pure fiction. By the date given for the origin of the ancient manuscript and by the place given for its discovery, this desire gave the concept of the Beatus Ille a place in space and time. At its beginnings this was a device to link the romance with the chronicle and thereby achieve an aura of truth; in this it was successful. Later, it became institutionalized, and although it retained its original purpose, it became a primary element in the overall aesthetic framework.²⁵

The structure, or lack of it, in the romance of chivalry represented another aesthetic point. As one critic has pointed out, "that a book should have a unifying idea and that the various episodes should be relevant to it in the same way are considerations that, while not totally alien, are scarcely native to Amadis or its genre."²⁶ That the narrative was divided into books and subdivided into chapters held no real significance for the romance: the narrative merely followed the hero through the numerous episodes.²⁷

The episodic nature of the structure enabled an author to append additional episodes and volumes into a popular romance. Therefore, the number of volumes the work finally achieved is a good gauge of its popularity.²⁸

One can easily see the inheritance of the chronicle in the romance. The romance owed much of its structure to the chronicle, whose narrative would follow the great man or the traveler through their numerous wanderings.

The narratives of the romances of chivalry never followed just one protagonist. No matter how diverting or imaginative one knight's adventures might have been, the authors always introduced dozens of additional adventurers, and their ladies, to vie for the reader's attention.²⁹ Although it would seem in view of the proliferation of characters that variety was the cornerstone, a certain note of repetition and monotony characterized the romances. The recurrence of episodes and motifs was quite common. More often than not, readers were likely to experience a modicum of déjà vu.³⁰

One last item merits mention. The romances of chivalry dealt with time in a manner not seen again for centuries. For example, Amadis de Gaula often mentioned time. Knights would sail for seven days and land on a Friday, night fell and day broke, yet time was insignificant. It had no effect

on the hero, who in turn treated it casually; Amadis himself almost never aged.³¹ This effectually manifested a denial of what the twentieth century will consider the rational-orderly day-by-day progression of time. Since the Beatus Ille existed only in the mind, it was timeless. In order to embody this image into literature, time in its rational form had to be denied.

In conclusion, one sees that the romances of chivalry belonged wholly to the literature of the fantastic. Their view of history maintained it did not have to be factual to be worthwhile. They represented a view of time that denied the idea of a rational, orderly progression. The romance of chivalry projected its readers into an ideal age, a world of the fantastic, where superhuman people lived in amazing places and performed unbelievable deeds.

The fantastic elements of the romances entwined themselves with other elements of the same tradition in Spain: the chronicle, for example, and catholic mysticism, which served to reinforce the fantastic elements in all of them. This was blended into the fantastic tradition of the Indian cultures: legends, places, and events all played a part. Therefore, when Garcilaso, Sahagún, or much later Miguel Angel Asturias investigated the Indian experience and drew

it into the Hispanic world, they merely brought a fantastic culture into a fantastic culture.

III

Ricardo Palma in the later nineteenth century did more than any of his Latin American predecessors to realize the literary potential of the relato. His work in this genre was embodied in the six large volumes of the Tradiciones Peruanas, first published between 1893 and 1906. These works achieved amazing popularity, and in doing so demonstrated the appeal of the literature of the fantastic and the usefulness of the relato as its vehicle. Palma's work marked the point in which the relato gained a certain pre-eminence among literary forms in the literature of the fantastic. Because of its versatility, its capabilities, and its potential for large dimensions of content, Palma made the relato one of the best literary forms for fantastic literature.

Ricardo Palma, a costumbrista, modeled his work³² on the great costumbrista writings that had preceded him, notably the "hazardous genre"³³ of the famous Spanish costumbrista, Mariano Jose de Larra. Larra created the artículo de costumbres for an important reason. He needed a vehicle that would augment his reader's personal involvement

while still proving his own critical thesis. Larra introduced a narrative element into his critical essays, and that, especially the human note of characters, created in the reader the involvement and interest he had wanted. The artículo de costumbres therefore was simply a better essay.

The essay lay at the base of the artículo de costumbres. Therefore, even though the artículo de costumbres had fictional elements, it had no plot per se. The development within the artículo de costumbres was understandable only in terms of the exposition of Larra's thesis. "Vuelva Vd. mañana" is muddled when viewed in terms of the psychology of M. Sans-delai, but crystal clear as Larra's critique of the Spanish character. Pieces such as "Vuelva Vd. mañana" proved that characters made more effective expository tools than simple rhetoric. Larra's theses came to be argued only from the mouths of his characters.

Ricardo Palma's relato grew out of his earlier work in criticism, journalism, and historical studies. His essays were characterized by both soundness of scholarship and a pleasingly Voltairean wit in his presentation.³⁴

The largest and best-known of his historical investigations was the Anales de la Inquisicion de Lima, published in 1863. Palma's anticlericalism and his extreme anti-Jesuit

prejudices marred the Anales. The Chilean Jose Toribio Medina's work soon dwarfed it. However, his research paid off in knowledge which would resurface in the Tradiciones.³⁵

Although insignificant historically, the Anales merit attention literarily. In the narration of an episode, in the description a man of action out of the Peruvian past, one sees a tradición in embryo.³⁶

Palma stated that he wrote the Anales in a time of personal crisis. This prevented his using the research for what had been his original intent: a large and important piece of historical fiction. This, he wrote, he left to someone else.³⁷

The material for historical studies became material for relatos; Anales developed into Tradiciones. The development of Anales into Tradiciones was analogous to the development of the chronicle into the romance of chivalry. The chronicle, which had been at one time a bare-bones history, became fictionalized, by increasing human content and narrative form, into a work of embellished fiction with a historical basis. Palma's historical research enabled him to write the fictionalized Tradiciones ten years after he wrote the Anales, as an extension of the same motivating desire to reproduce Peru's past in literature. Bare fact, unable

to encompass the spirit of man of the Renaissance, also proved inadequate to encompass the spirit of the history of Peruvian culture.

Twice in the Latin America of the sixteenth century, a single writer had accomplished the transition from chronicle to romance. Oviedo had written both the Historia general y natural de las Indias and Claribalte. Garcilaso as a youth had been a fervent reader of the romances of chivalry.³⁸ As a young adult, he wrote the Comentarios reales de los Incas, and the Florida del Inca. The Comentarios reales were primarily a chronicle in the late Middle Ages tradition. They therefore bore considerable resemblance to the romances of chivalry, as one notes especially in its descriptions of warriors and its fight episodes.³⁹

It is one thing to draw parallels; it is another to prove influences. Did Ricardo Palma know the romances of chivalry? The answer is yes. First, the popularity of the romances in Latin America died out very slowly. They remained popular even after picaresque fiction had captured Spain. Lizardi noted their popularity in the Periquillo Sarniento, and its date of publication, 1816, was just short of Palma's era.⁴⁰ Secondly, Palma drew his material

almost entirely from colonial era chronicles, especially the Comentarios reales.⁴¹ One could therefore say that he drew his knowledge of the romances second-hand from Garcilaso. Thirdly, both Garcilaso and Oviedo had made the transformation from chronicle to romance in their works, and Palma, in taking the chronicles for his basis of information, can be viewed as having accomplished the same transformation.

The Anales were descriptions of incidents in the history of the Inquisition; they need no further definition. The Tradiciones do. The second part of this thesis defined the literary tenets of the romance of chivalry. Palma's tradición had aesthetic contents and literary forms identical to those of the romance of chivalry, while still retaining its essence as a narrative essay. The only major difference between the romance of chivalry and the relato of Palma was the nature of the thesis that each produced. All the other individual characteristics followed naturally.

Palma's thesis involved locating the Beatus Ille in space and time. For him, the glorious sweep of Peru's past had been man's true ideal age. Men, women, places, and even souls of the prosaic modern age could never match the larger-than-life-size examples out of the past. The past,

as he once wrote, was his temple, the tradiccion his altar.⁴²

All of Palma's realtos illustrated his placement of the Beatus Ille. An investigation a typical tradiccion, "La procesión de ánimas de San Agustín," will demonstrate Palma's central aesthetic theme.

This tradiccion like most others started with a paragraph in which Palma "proved" its veracity by attributing it to a source above reproach, in this instance, "an old woman very wise in the ways of hobgoblins and ghosts."⁴³

Part I established the temporal and spatial setting as Lima in 1697. It introduced the protagonist, Don Alfonso Arias de Segura, an archetypal hanging judge. His infamous cruelty was the principal source of his equally infamous pride. Arias de Segura arrested, tortured, and hanged an innocent Augustinian friar despite his fellow friar's machinations to free him. Palma characterized the friar as a man of "so gentle a spirit that he would have been incapable of killing a mouse."⁴⁴ But above all, he was most known for his charity.

The judge was unnaturally cruel and charitable, the friar unnaturally humble and charitable. It is clear that Palma delineated them in a pattern of good versus bad. Each represented a metaphysical quality that a real person

could not. If the reader took the tradición at face value, he would have to assume that all flesh-and-blood people in Palma's personal Beatus Ille had achieved that same grand, god-like plane of existence.

Part II revealed the real culprit, a nobleman who had killed a brawling scoundrel on a point of honor. Appalled at his own actions, Arias de Segura went outside, where he was startled by a procession of friars carrying lighted candles and chanting the funeral march. The judge "could see that their faces were fleshless skulls, and that the tapers were shin-bones of the dead. Suddenly the voices ceased, and one of those strange beings, addressing himself to the judge, said: 'woe unto you, wicked judge! Your pride led you to commit an injustice, and as a result of your pride our brother lies groaning in purgatory because you made him doubt the justice of God.'"⁴⁵

Palma thus completed his super-human stage. The judge, whose cruelty and pride were given in obviously larger-than-real terms, has unjustly killed a humble and charitable friar. The judge's crime has reached incredible proportions in that his cruelty has victimized the good friar not only in this world but in the next as well. Arias de Segura's nemesis was also super-human, or rather supernatural:

the fantastic procession.

Part III showed the judge's sudden conversion to a novitiate in the Company of Jesus, "where it is said he died a pious death."⁴⁶ The tradición continued, chronicling the statements of other witnesses to the procession. This part ended with the story of a "sinner," who tried to sell the candles, only to have them turn back into shins at dawn.⁴⁷

Because a relato is a mixture of creative art and exposition, the establishment and proving of thesis is done more subtly than with the blatant statements of an essay. The mechanics of the thesis are twofold: one, locating the Beatus Ille firmly in time and space, and two, defining the Beatus Ille in concrete terms.

The essay format is clear. The introductory paragraph stated that something fantastic would happen, in general terms, something that could not occur in the ordinary nineteenth century. Part I placed the Beatus Ille temporally and spatially. It defined the first important aspect of the Beatus Ille: the people were larger than life size. Part II defined another facet: the deeds of the supermen of the Golden Age were unnaturally grandiose. Part III showed that not only did Right always triumph, but that in

dealing with supermen, nemesis also had to be of a large dimension. By this point Palma had defined and justified his view of the Beatus Ille with respect to people, to deeds, and to metaphysics. The final paragraph therefore represents his summation: that "this nineteenth century could not be more prosaic...it makes one want to run away from Lima." That is, the Golden Age of Peru's heroic past has left forever.

"La procesión de ánimas de San Agustín" is typical of the Tradiciones Peruanas in that it exemplifies the two most important aspects about the relatos of Ricardo Palma: it develops and is understood only in terms of an essay format; the essay in question attempts to prove Palma's placement of the Golden Age in Peru's past.

People were expository tools in a relato. This was certainly true in Palma's situation. "Un general de antaño" will have an entirely different cast of characters but will develop along exactly the same lines as "La procesión." By showing the essential greatness of General Jerónimo Valdés, Palma will throw off the "prosaic" nineteenth century and escape into the eighteenth.

Escape in the relatos of Palma was a primary aesthetic point, as it was in the romances of chivalry. Palma's personal

past played a large part in the formation of the aesthetics of escape. He had been raised in an old picturesque section of Lima. Old women, such as the "woman very wise in the ways of hobgoblins and ghosts" of "La procesión" frequently had re-told old folk tales to the children.

Palma had grown up amid the turbulence and gunfire of one of Peru's most revolution-fought eras. Angélica Palma's biography mentioned that the tales of returning revolutionaries had played a key role in the foundation of Palma's childhood images. These episodes represented a rough equivalent of the chronicles and tales that abounded in the Spain of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The amazing accounts of the old woman and the returning veterans had understandably fired the young Palma's mind.⁴⁸

Palma, as a young man, became a fervent democrat and a notorious liberal. He continually fought the dictatorship of Castilla by journalism and by conspiracy. He spent several years in exile in Chile for his efforts. His disillusionment with the political and social order of his day was a precipitating influence on his desire to escape into a presumably happier past. By identifying with the ideal and idealized warrior-hero Jeronimo Valdes he was able to achieve a sort of vicarious victory of right over

wrong, a victory in which the nobler, true General Valdés would have to triumph over the prosaic, shabby, self-promoted "Mariscal" Castilla.

In locating the Beatus Ille in Peru's past, Palma altered the facts of Peruvian history. The fictionalizing of events and people was an important facet of Palma's aesthetic framework, as it was in the romance of chivalry. Critics⁴⁹ tended to say that Palma fictionalized history. That was only partly true. Palma added creative elements to history in the manner of the literature of the Renaissance. Amadis was not history fictionalized, neither was the Augustinian friar of "La procesión." They were literary characters made into super-human beings by enabling them to represent grandiose metaphysical concepts. This was achieved by first starting with a man, then adding and subtracting from his essential nature somewhat in the manner of the caricature artist who takes a politician's face and makes it a cartoon.

The caricature motif also holds true in a large scale. Palma took the core of an idea, whether it was a man or an event, and caricatured it until it fit his thesis, as the chronicles and romances had done before him. The fact that factual history also supported his thesis was purely

coincidental.

The historian investigates principal trends in a nation's past and the development of national institutions. He concerns himself primarily with the people and events that relate to the historical currents or institutional growth that he studies. Palma never intended to make the Tradiciones Peruanas the complete and connected account of the history of Peru or of his city. Although almost every event of note in Peruvian history figured in the Tradiciones, once again, they only figured co-incidentally, forming the backdrop to the important action. It was significant that the legend, custom, saying, or incident that formed the core of the tradición was factual in itself or related to a factual occurrence, which gave Palma factual support for his thesis.⁵⁰ But it was even more important that the core of the tradición was a valid and accepted piece of Peruvian culture, so that when Palma located the Beatus Ille in Peru's cultural past, he received support from the momentum of Peru's culture.

In the Tradiciones, Palma was interested in two themes, one, the ideal warrior-hero such as General Valdés, and two, the frailties of the human species. Remembering his journalistic background, it is not difficult to make a parallel

to the "human interest story" that has always been popular to the human frailty--oriented relato. The two themes guided Palma's historical essays in terms of support and proof, but both maintained identical formats, thesis, and conclusions.

"Fray Juan, sin-miedo" was a classic tradición concerning human frailties. To qualify for admission into this thematic vein, a tradición had to have support from both culture and oral tradition and from history. By basing a relato in folklore, Palma enabled himself to use his now-famous wit and charm of style that did not fit in with his concept of the hero. Therefore, when he alluded to this thesis in the first paragraph, he in effect stated that something grandiose and glorious would happen, and that it will establish its grandness on an ironic and humorous plane: "I was tempted to call this an old wives' tale, for the woman who told it to me when I was a child was as shriveled as a raisin."⁵¹ He continued to establish its "authenticity" by citing an absolutely trustworthy historical source that supported the oral tradition. Incidentally, the source was an unpublished manuscript that he said existed in the National Library in Lima, entitled the History of the Augustine Order in the Province

of Peru from 1657 to 1721.

Palma introduced Fray Juan in caricatured terms. That is, Palma took a man as the core concept and distorted it to fit his thesis. Tradiciones in this thematic genre tended towards the ironic-picaresque, so the reader first met Fray Juan as "a youth known in Lima as Juan the Unafraid." He tried his hand at business with negligible results, for Juan was not much account and he was thicker in the head than pea soup. But he was as vain as a peacock over his bravery. In his opinion, Spain had not brought forth so bold a man since the days of the Cid, and hardly a day went by that he did not pick a fight over some insignificant trifle..."⁵²

As in the hero-oriented relatos, his particular hubris caused unnaturally large amounts of trouble, but in this instance of a more ironic quality: while staying all night with a deceased nobleman, his bravery caused him to interrupt his vigil, push the dead man aside, and sleep in the coffin.⁵³

Nemesis figured on an equally fantastic scale: the nobleman arose and hurled a candelabra at Fray Juan, knocking him senseless. As had been the case with Judge Arias de Segura, Fray Juan suddenly reformed, and died in the

odor of sanctity, which as Palma adds, "must be something like that of roses mixed with English verbena."⁵⁴

The relato ended with a restatement of the proof of veracity, which not unpredictably made the tradición all the more fantastic: "the illustrious chronicler Father Vazquez, member of the board of governors of the convent, lecturer of the Pontifical University of San Marcos, regent, censor of books and book-stores, a friar, in a word, out of the very top drawer, does not lie--indeed, how could he?"⁵⁵ This last sentence together with similar ones from the final two paragraphs of the tradición serve only to recapitulate the thesis, the placement of the Beatus Ille in Peru's past, and defining it, in this instance in an ironic and humorous manner.

The essay structure in the human frailty-oriented relato was the same as in the hero-oriented relato. The introductory paragraph contained the thesis in general terms. The first part gave the Beatus Ille a firm location in time and space. It introduced the protagonist as a superman, in order to define the mixture of the Beatus Ille in terms of people. The second part defined the Beatus Ille regarding the incredible deeds of the Peruvian superman. The third part showed the essential

justice of the Beatus Ille, and the dimensions of the nemesis that could overcome such hubris. The closing paragraphs recapitulated the thesis, in this case only indirectly.

Palma sometimes did not openly state his thesis. Usually, he did. The super-human nature of the players and the extreme nature of the foibles, conflicts, and problems supported the thesis that with the coming of the prosaic age such heroes and rogues could no longer exist, and with their passing went the Beatus Ille as well.

Palma's wit seemed to vanish entirely when confronted with a true hero. Palma, a man of action in his youth, maintained his fascination for that type of man throughout his adult life. The main character in a hero-oriented relato will be a true hero, such as General José de Sucre, a true hero who fought for the wrong side, such as General Jerónimo Valdés, or a man who happened to be completely bad, such as Captain Calleja. All, however, were classic men of action; each was made a literary hero by distorting the historical character enough to allow him to represent an absolute metaphysical quality. Jerónimo Valdés was the ideal grandee and the ideal general. José de Sucre was the ideal patriot and the ideal general. When the

armies of these two men clashed at Ayacucho,⁵⁶ it was the mortal combat of two ideals, the Spanish and the American, and the victor on the battlefield was the one whose ideals were favored by God.

It is not hard to draw parallels to the heroes of the romances of chivalry. The romantic heroes represented a life in which strength, virtue, passion, and fighting skill were all-important. Other values were eclipsed. It is clear that the romantic hero and the hero of Palma's relatos were cut from the same cloth, as an examination of a classic hero-oriented tradicición will show.

"La bofetada póstuma" contained two episodes from the life of Captain Luis Perdomo de Palma. The second episode, the most interesting, concerned his fight with a man named Betanzos, who had earlier betrayed Perdomo to Francisco Carbajal, the infamous and cruel "Demon of the Andes." Perdomo at this point was in hiding, but ever true to his ideals, he had never stopped fighting his enemy Carbajal. Betanzos and a party of four men located Perdomo, who managed to deal successfully with most of them, but Betanzos succeeded in almost cutting off his right hand as Perdomo was crossing a creek. At this point Perdomo, "that brave man, whom even physical suffering could

not daunt, bent over, put his foot on the severed wrist, and with the strength and courage of despair pulled his right hand off, and exclaimed as he threw it to the opposite bank: 'Damnation to you, hand that was unable to defend yourself' And the lifeless hand struck the traitor Betanzos a resounding blow on the cheek."

The romances of chivalry were full of fights; so were the Tradiciones Peruanas. Just as fighting skill had been the prerequisite for more noble virtues in the romances, now it was in the relatos of Ricardo Palma. Not only was Luis Perdomo a fighter, but his skill as a fighter enabled him to repay the effrontery of the low treason of Betanzos with the nobler humiliation of the aristocratic slap.

The authors of the romances of chivalry often would refer to their works as translations or corrections of unimpeachable historical chronicles in order to achieve the semblance of verifiable truth. Palma made this a permanent part of his aesthetic mechanisms. The first and last paragraphs of almost every tradición referred to a document or a person who "could not lie", as he said of the "source" of "Fray Juan, sin-miedo." Often the source quoted had no reference to the tradición accredited to it.⁵⁷ For those

that he chose to root principally in folk tradition, one need only assume that the "old woman very wise in the ways of hobgoblins" was Ricardo Palma.

The multiplicity and repetition of events and characters characterized the romance of chivalry. Taking the Tradiciones Peruanas as a unified aesthetic whole, the usage again became evident. The expository structure and thesis-contingent settings did not allow for much diversity in the Tradiciones. After all, a fight episode is a fight episode, a hero is a hero, and both abounded in Palma's work.

The use of digressions was an aesthetic concept related to the multiplicity of characters. In the romance of chivalry, the author would frequently sidetrack the narrative either to follow a knight that had not been the principal protagonist or to describe in detail numerous political, social, or historical facts, often in a series that has been called the "romantic list."⁵⁸ Cervantes satirized this in the scene in Don Quixote, part one, in which Don Quixote enumerated for Sancho the numerous coats of arms that he identified in a battle that he "saw". Palma often paused his relato's forward motion for an interlude with a romantic list or a historical lecture.

In "Fray Juan, sin-miedo," for example, he stopped to explain in detail the office of the despenador in Old Peru. In "Un litigio original" the romantic list reached epic proportions. In a twelve-page relato, ten were occupied with a listing of the coats of arms of the nobility of Lima. But where this was done in the romances for flavor, and in the Quijote for satire, Palma included this list in his relato to help support his thesis's exposition. The discussion, in Palma's witty style, of the meanings of the coats of arms added a nice atmosphere of aristocratic dalliance to the work. The relato itself concerned a point of aristocratic privilege, and the comparisons of arms and titles complemented the subject perfectly.

Time in the Tradiciones Peruanas was like time in Amadís de Gaula: it was totally unimportant to exposition, characters, and events. Amadis aged, but never slowed down, just as Captain Luis Perdomo was a gray-haired old man when he defeated four ruffians with only a dagger and gave Betanzos the posthumous slap.

In summary, Palma used literary forms and aesthetics identical to those of the romance of chivalry in his relatos. His relatos taken as a whole represent the binding of all of the individual roots of fantastic literature into one

creative literary opus. Garcilaso de la Vega had been the first to achieve a blending of many historical-fantastic traditions, but the Comentarios reales were more chronicle than romance. When viewed on the fact-fiction continuum from which romance and relato evolved, it is plain that Garcilaso's work lay too far on the side of fact. To be sure, it belonged to the genre of the fantastic, but the fantastic elements were principally recorded legends and not creative art. The Tradiciones Peruanas were one of the first creative works that sounded the cultural traditions of Latin America, as we shall see, into a work of fantastic literature.

The Indian world provided one basis for the fantastic genre. Palma dealt with the indigenous Americans in several tradiciones. The "Sistema decimal entre los antiguos peruanos" centered on the quipu knots and Incan methods of accounting "La achirana del Inca" concerned the relationship between the Inca Pachacutec and a captive woman. Palma demonstrated his desire and ability to mix Hispanic and native by forming the conversation between the two people on the stilted model of the romances of chivalry.⁵⁹ "La gruta de las maravillas" and "Palla-Huarcuna" had as their nuclei two native legends, both about the magical creation

of natural phenomena. In the former, several charitable gods turned a tribe of ill-starred warriors into a cave of marvelous crystal stalactites. In the latter, a captive woman became a famous mountain. All of these relatos bore Palma's creative handiwork. Taking a legend for a core, as he had with a man to create his heroes, he fictionalized the legend into a piece of creative art that would fit into his thesis of the Beatus Ille.

He continued to deal with the Indians after the Conquest period. The age of cultural intermingling occupied several tradiciones. In "Carta Canta" Palma re-worked an episode from Garcilaso into a humorous tradición about superstition among the native populations.⁶⁰ "Los Incas Ajedrecistas" represented another strong example of Palma's personal mestizaje. In this relato he advanced the novel idea that Atahualpa would not have been executed had he not beaten several conquistadors in chess.

Most of Palma's relatos dealt with the Spanish in America. It was mentioned in the second part of this thesis that the accepted tradition of Christian miracles in the Catholic church formed a considerable part of the foundation of the fantastic genre. Palma wrote dozens of his tradiciones about Peruvian saints and their miracles.

Most of these relatos fell into the category that concerned man's foibles. In "El alacran de fray Gomez" the saint of the title helped a poor man by turning a scorpion into a precious jewel. "El porque fray Martin de Porres, santo limeño, no hace ya milagros" showed the saint getting into trouble with his abbot because his miracle-making drew too much attention to the monastery. All were fictional; the latter was patently absurd; yet all fit nicely into the pattern of the thesis. Palma, realizing the potential of his genre, treated a fantastic subject in a fictionalized, fantastic manner.

The Spanish chronicle and the romance of chivalry formed the literary basis for the literature of the fantastic. Most of this section of this thesis has dealt with the influence of these two older forms in the relatos of Ricardo Palma. The last item warrants discussion, the matter of intent. The chronicle represented an attempt to document the entire history of a kingdom. The chroniclers had to use myth, legend, and pure creativity to create a physical recording of the kingdom's spiritual and metaphysical goals and achievements. The Tradiciones Peruanas possessed an opposite intent. Palma endeavored to ignore wholly the entire history of his nation, and

use myth, legend, and pure creativity to create an evocation of what Peruvian history was like, on a metaphysical as well as on a physical plane. Just as the romance of chivalry used the chronicle's literary forms to devise a non-factual evocation of the essence of the then newly-found human spirit, so Palma used these same forms, and the aesthetics of the romance, to create his personal evocation of the essence of mankind's ideal age, where in Palma's view the true flowering of the human spirit was realized.

Palma transformed the relato from the embryonic artículo de costumbres into a literary form that required a metaphysical quality, a spirituality of content that it found by developing the notion that the Beatus Ille had existed in Peru's past. Palma used his corpus of relatos to unite all of the basis of fantastic literature in both content and literary form. His work represents one of the earliest expressions in which all of these roots had been tied together by a true creative artist. Therefore, the relato is an ideal literary form for the literature of the fantastic in Latin America.

IV

The work of Jorge Luis Borges represents the pinnacle of the modern development of the relato. His work marks the relato's transition from a vehicle of nineteenth century costumbrismo to the means of conveyance for the avant-garde of the twentieth century metaphysical literature of the fantastic. Borges's work has placed the relato at the forefront of Latin American letters.

As had been the case with Ricardo Palma's product, the individual tenets of Borges's relatos depended upon the special nature of his personal view of the Beatus Ille. Borges was as much a costumbrista as Palma,⁶¹ but the essence of Buenos Aires in the twentieth century was far removed from that of Lima in the nineteenth. Modern urban industrial cosmopolitanism was given physical form in Borges's relatos. The extreme metaphysical flavor of so much of Borges's work was a reflection of the avant-garde soul of contemporary Buenos Aires.

This section will examine two things: one, the particular nature of Borgesian costumbrismo and how it developed in response to the demands of his city, and two, how the aesthetic core that his costumbrismo represented shaped the relato.

When viewed from a chronological perspective, Borges's costumbrismo can be seen to have changed radically over the years. The changes were all responses to significant developments in Buenos Aires that confronted the writer. Borgesian costumbrismo at its onset was an intellectual affair that concerned itself with defining in realistic metaphysical terms the essence of Buenos Aires.⁶² Borges, a reserved man, rarely let his emotions into his writing, although his quest for definition understandably was motivated emotionally as well as intellectually.

Borges's costumbrismo in its early stages was seen in his first literary production, somewhat in poetry, but for our purposes most importantly in the field of essays. The relato is an improved essay. Borges's relatos were the products of a desire to state more effectively the ideas that had populated his essays.

Borges outlines the dimensions of his quest in the title essay to El tamaño de mi esperanza, his second collection of essays. He wrote that now "Buenos Aires, more than a city, is a country, and we must find the poetry and the music and the painting and the religion and the metaphysics that correspond to its greatness. That is the

magnitude of my hope, which invites us all to be gods and work toward its incarnation."⁶³

Borges's first work in finding the metaphysics of his city occurred in his poetry. His first collection of poems, Fervor de Buenos Aires, was an expression more or less along the classic lines of traditional costumbrismo.

Fervor de Buenos Aires was the product of a certain cognitive dissonance that Borges experienced upon returning after a seven-year absence from his city. Borges had spent the early part of his life in the Buenos Aires suburb of Palermo. It typified the older suburbs in that it fiercely guarded its essentially nineteenth century lifestyle in the face of the encroachments of the twentieth. During Borges's boyhood Palermo had retained its traditional two-story houses with quiet patios, its tree-lined streets, its local gossip, and its identity as a community. Palermo at this time was also infamous for its brawling compadritos, ruffians famed for their knife fights.⁶⁴ Just before the outbreak of World War I Borges and his family had traveled to Europe. Buenos Aires grew astoundingly both in size and in maturity and in doing so clashed violently with Borges's memories of old Palermo when he

returned.⁶⁵

Borges in the Fervor used remansar, a word not often seen in Hispanic poetry in any usage, in unusual configurations. If time is an on-flowing stream, Borges sought out the quiet corners where its flow could be dammed up, remansado. This idea was understandable in view of the circumstances of Borges's return to his city. For this reason he spoke of an afternoon remansado in a plaza; an old-fashioned mirror became a remansada serenity; solitude could become remansada around the city.⁶⁶

Borges's first definition of Buenos Aires occurred in Fervor. The poem "Patio" described a quiet backwater within the city where time had stood still for years. More than just a physical setting, that constituted his own idealized definition, which gains meaning on a metaphysical level when one takes into account the fact that it coincided with the idea of time remansado.

The next significant development of the aesthetics of Borges's personal costumbrismo occurred within his essays. When viewed chronologically, in general terms they moved from discourses into the Argentine characters to purely metaphysical investigations. For example, Inquisiciones, his first collection of essays, largely

concerned itself with defining Argentina in literature and contained only two essays on purely philosophical matters. Discusión, his fourth collection, mainly dealt with problems of gnosticism, the cabala, time, space, and causality. Only two essays concerned purely Argentina subjects.⁶⁷ Keeping in mind that his expressed goal was discovering the art and the metaphysics that could accompany his perceived greatness of Buenos Aires, the progression into philosophical concerns can be seen as a clear aesthetic choice dictated by his quest.

The Borges of the era characterized by Fervor de Buenos Aires was still troubled by memories of old Palermo. Buenos Aires has been characterized as the prototype of the modern urban cosmopolitan center.⁶⁸ When a more mature Borges directed his investigations toward a view of the modern city as a whole, his work understandably reflected its avant-garde essence. Therefore, when viewed geographically as well as chronologically we see reasons for Borges's costumbrismo to acquire a strangely metaphysical savor.

The relationship between Borges's costumbrismo and his relatos was totally distinct from their relationship in Palma's work. The relato was Palma's tool to investigate

the greatness of his country's cultural past. The relato was Borges's tool to elaborate the metaphysics that paid tribute to his country's past. The Beatus Ille of Borges was therefore a bipartite utopia. On the one hand was Buenos Aires itself, with whose definition he had struggled principally in his earlier works, and on the other hand was the metaphysical superstructure that he erected by way of homage.

"Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" has been classified as a description of Borges's metaphysical utopia.⁶⁹ Using this famous relato as an example we will demonstrate the relationship between Borges's quest and Borges's tribute. He had written in "Palabreria para versos," an essay in El tamaño de mi esperanza, that the "world of appearances is a rush of jumbled perceptions. ...Language is an effective arrangement of the world's enigmatic abundance. In other words, with our nouns we invent realities. We touch a round form, we see a glob of down-colored light, a tickle delights our mouth, and we falsely say that these three heterogeneous things are one, known as an orange. The moon itself is a fiction. ...All nouns are abbreviations. ...The world of appearances is most complex and our languages has realized only a very small number of the

combinations which it allows. Why not create a word, one single word, for our simultaneous perception of cattle bells ringing in the afternoon and the sunset in the distance? ...I know how utopian my ideas are and how far it is from an intellectual possibility to a real one, but I trust in the magnitude of the future and that it will be no less ample than my hope."⁷⁰ This, of course, is analogous to a first draft of the section on language in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius." The fact that Borges calls the ideas in "Palabrería para versos" utopian is important, as is the mention of his quest at the end of the quoted paragraph. We see here that his quest to discover the metaphysics that would correspond to one utopia, Buenos Aires, will cause him to create another, Tlon. Buenos Aires and Tlon, to use one example of making similar metaphysical constructs, together represent two sides of the same conceptualized Beatus Ille.

Ricardo Palma at one stage of his life had fought dictatorship by conspiracy. He had always been Mariscal Castilla's fiercest critic. His discontent with the political and social order of his day had precipitated his desire to escape into a happier past. Borges revealed the same discontent with his present. In "Nuestras Imposibilidades," an essay in the 1932 edition of Discusión,

he attacked the political and social life of Argentina directly. His discontent grew into outrage with the developments of the thirties and forties: Nazism, World War II, military dictatorship in Argentina, and the rise of Juan Domingo Peron. The tenor of his work would grow increasingly fantastic as conditions in Argentina grew more intolerable to him.⁷¹

Such celebrated fantasies as "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" and "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" date from the difficult period around 1940. But Borges also expressed a desire to escape into the other dimension of his Beatus Ille, into his idealized idea of Buenos Aires and the Argentina past. "El sur" and "La muerte y la brujula" blend metaphysics and Buenos Aires into both an ideal tribute and an ideal vehicle for escape.

The previous century in Argentina had been a time of warfare, conquest, and men of action. Borges's work revealed a fascination for the man of action, whether it be Martin Fierro or a compadrito from Palermo. Significantly, many of the great historical figures of the Argentine past were Borges's ancestors. Colonel Francisco Borges and Isidoro Suarez are two examples about whom he wrote much. His desire to escape into the past therefore

also had some very personal roots.

Borges's metaphysics largely constituted elaborations on the standard art of the relato. One of his major philosophical undertakings was a denial of time.⁷² If, as Borges endeavored to contest, past, present, and future did not exist, then the literature of escape would gain a certain potential for reality. If all time is one, then Borges could just as easily ride with Martin Fierro instead of being poultry inspector for Peron. This dimension to his metaphysics added another link between his costumbrismo and his philosophical motivations.

We mentioned earlier that Borges brought the potentialities of the relato into the twentieth century. An example is found in his treatment of the literature of escape. The "La doctrina de los ciclos," a piece in Historia de la eternidad, Borges used the laws of thermodynamics and entropy to refute chronological time.⁷³ The scientific advancements in physics in the twentieth century were making the literature of escape a potential reality, and Borges incorporated these new dimensions into the relato.

Borges also added a new magnitude to the literature of identification. His metaphysical investigations once again added the possibility for reality. For example, in

"Las tres versiones de Judas" and "La forma de la espada" he toyed with Schopenhauer's concept⁷⁴ that all people are parts of the same personality. A person somehow could become another part of the single personality. John Vincent now would become the narrator of the relato, or Shakespeare. Borges could be Isidoro Suarez, or perhaps Tadeo Isidoro Cruz and ride with Martin Fierro. Borges's work represented the ultimate flowering of the literature of identification: by making it possible at least on an aesthetic plane, he carried it as far as it could go.

Borges's relatos elaborated their theses in the accepted vein of the narrative essay. Borges's relatos differed from Palma's in that they incorporated a wide range of theses. Palma's relatos supported his placement of the Beatus Ille in Peru's past. Borges's relato paid tribute to his perception of his city. Therefore they need not and did not follow the same thesis time after time; that would not have been a just honor to Buenos Aires.

Borges had two veins of relatos, which corresponded to the two parts of his Beatus Ille. One vein concerned Buenos Aires and Argentina directly. A good example of this type of relato was "Biografia de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz." This relato endeavored to fill in the life of a character

in Martín Fierro, and in doing so it did homage to the culture of Argentina.

The other thematic vein of relatos dealt directly with metaphysics, as mentioned earlier in order to deal indirectly with Buenos Aires. "El Zahir" is typical: Borges started with a propósito and around it built a specific metaphysical thesis. In this case, the propósito is that if the term "inolvidable"⁷⁵ were used literally instead of figuratively, the unforgettable object would achieve chaotic proportions and obscure everything that was not unforgettable. The development within the relato concerned only the increasingly serious manifestations of something that a person could not forget.

Borges was another author who used the technique of the digression within his relatos. For Borges, this trick was primarily a method of achieving the appearance of a work of non-fiction. In "El Zahir" he cited dozens of references to the Zahir from books. Whether or not the books actually existed was beyond the range of knowledge of most readers. In "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote", through digressions into literary references, footnotes, and the like, to both real and fictional works, he gave this relato the semblance of a legitimate work of scholarship.

Just as Borges couched such relato tenets as escape in advanced metaphysics, so he embellished the aesthetic trick of masquerading as fact in the trappings of sophisticated scholarship.

The relatos of Borges used literary characters as the expository implements of the thesis. However, he added new dimensions to the technique. A professor writing a scholarly book review narrated "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" The thesis of "El Zahir" was developed entirely in the interior of the character that possessed the unforgettable coin. Borges demonstrated that the expository character could have an interior, not quite a self but at least the appearance of a personality, and still perform his function in a narrative essay. The characters of Borges were as one-dimensional as those of Palma in their essence, but not necessarily in their forms.

Typically, Borges buttressed his theory of literary characters with sophisticated philosophy. He had earlier stated in his essays that the human mind was far too complex for a writer to presume to analyze it.⁷⁶ Not only that, but one of his favorite metaphysical constructs involved Schopenhauer's denial of the validity of the ego,

making psychological investigation and character development impossible.

The concept of the hero of romance populated the relatos of Borges. He always maintained a fascination for the man of action. Due to the nature of Argentina's past, the heroes in Borges's literary works tended to be of the rough-cut gancho type rather than the nobleman of old Lima. The literary hero figured in the vein of relatos that dealt directly with Argentina themes. Tadeo Isidoro Cruz was typical: as Martín Fierro had been to Hernandez, Cruz was Borges's ideal gancho and a sort of personification of the pampas. The tenets of the warrior-hero remained unchanged: the gancho culture glorified the warrior ethos, and made fighting skill the prerequisite to any other sort of honor or possession, one of the principal themes in the relato "El muerto," where prowess as a fighter gave the gancho the right to lead and the right to own rich possessions.

Much of Borges's philosophical investigations concerned history. Borges shared the view of history embodied in the chronicles and the romances of chivalry. The chronicles taught spiritual lessons by distorting history to fit a thesis. Borges taught metaphysical lessons

by demonstrating how history could be distorted through interpretation. "Las tres versiones de Judas" was an excellent example of his belief. An event out of history, although not altered factually, could be entirely changed in meaning simply by using a different filter on the lens that viewed it. Therefore Borges, like the chronicler, denied the usefulness of a dry progression of facts. History to Borges was useful only when he could use it to search metaphysics.

Borges devised his own variations on the "yellowing manuscript" theme. Borges was truly the master of the art of vicissitude. He used his new variations for the same reasons as did his predecessors: to pose as the reteller of an older story, and to gain the appearance of truth by basing a relato on an unimpeachable source. In his Historia Universal de la infamia Borges carefully credited other writers, presumably more believable ones, with the original stories. His masterful use of the literary digression in such works as "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" and "El Zahir", and many other, buttressed his relatos with "proof" many readers could not refute.

Time in the romances of chivalry was a thing ignored. It had no effect on the warrior-hero of the Renaissance.

Time for Borges was in essence identical, but Borges typically supported his contention with modern science and sophisticated intellectualization. Time in the relato of Borges was either totally ignored in the manner of the romances of chivalry, or time occupied center stage as Borges advanced ways to ignore it. In "El inmortal" time appeared in its classic non-usage: a Roman soldier lived for centuries. More typical was "La doctrina de los ciclos" or "Sentirse en muerte". In the latter he labeled time a "delusion," but instead of ignoring his delusion, he debated heatedly, on an advanced philosophical level, reasons on how and why it should be ignored.

The relationship between the Borgesian refutation of time and the literature of escape has been mentioned. Borges also applied his metaphysical construct of time to the hero idea. The literary hero in Borges constituted a denial of time. A literary hero is an archetype, timeless because the ideals of the hero and the tenets of the concept have never changed. By ending with something outside of time's flow, Borges could achieve another refutation of the chronological order.

One can see that the relato of Borges, although at

times radically different in surface content from the relato of Palma, did not change the literary form nor the aesthetics of the genre. The advanced philosophical or scientific theses and arguments that Borges employed were made possible and necessary by many things, of which two are of primary importance, the avant-garde nature of Buenos Aires and the scientific advances of the twentieth century. Borgesian metaphysics did not alter any essential part of the relato; they served only to bring the genre into the forefront of the twentieth century.

V

We are now ready to define the relato in the context of this paper.

Ricardo Palma took a literary form that Larra had used to attack the political oratory of the moderates in Spain and turned it into something with spiritual qualities, something more intellectually and emotionally satisfying than political criticism. The Latin American tradition is fantastic. A costumbrismo of Latin America must therefore be a costumbrismo of the fantastic. As a costumbrista Palma endeavored to discover the cultural foundations of his Peru. When embodied into literature the product

of his quest revealed all the foundations of the literature of the fantastic.

The romance of chivalry was the primary literary manifestation of the Spanish fantastic tradition in the sixteenth century. The relato is an ideal literary form to use in the modern expression of the literature of the fantastic. The literary aesthetics of the romance of chivalry are identical to those of the relato. The relato is analogous to a romance of chivalry in miniature.

The concept of the Beatus Ille represents a major theme of the relato. The writers of both the romance and the relato alluded to a happier era that in reality existed only in their minds. Just as Amadis was supposed to have lived centuries before his 1508 appearance, so Palma and Borges located their relatos in the glorious past of their nations, or in the case of some of Borges's relatos, in a metaphysical paradise created in tribute to his nation. For these two writers, the heroic past was the ideal; as Palma wrote, never again would we see such men, women or even souls.

The world of the romance, in general, formed a part of the relato. It was a two-faceted phenomenon: a world of ideal heroes and deeds, and a world in which anything

could happen. That the first is also the world of Palma is manifest; that the second is also the world of Borges is obvious.

The literatures of escape and identification naturally follow the world of the romance and the Beatus Ille. The Beatus Ille appeared in Horace as a wistful reverie of a man troubled by life's demands who dreamed of escaping into a happier past. Therefore by definition the Beatus Ille implies a certain discontent with a troubled present and a desire to escape into a more joyous past, motivated by the societal or political restriction of one's present. Also, by identifying with the heroic past of one's ancestors one could better ignore an ordinary or unpleasant present.

The personification of the ideal hero played a central role in the romances of chivalry. He was an invincible fighter, a devoted friend, a loyal lover, and a great leader. Palma and Borges wrote dozens of important relatos in which a historical figure fictionalized into an ideal type played the most important role. Admiration for the man of action led them to caricature such men out of the past into literary heroes in the classic sense.

Characterization in the romances of chivalry was almost nil. The authors revealed all personality ably

through exterior deeds; characterization was therefore shallow. Also, the absence of psychological investigation prevented any development of personality within the character. Amadis was just as heroic throughout all twelve volumes. Shallow characters that never develop also provided the aesthetic of psychology in the relato. Because characters were narrative tools, they never needed to change. The direction of any investigation was never within the realms of what would be termed psychology.

The view of history in the romances of chivalry figured importantly in their narratives. Their view stated that history was useful as a tool of didactic metaphysics. Facts were irrelevant. Palma and Borges, as we have seen, furthered that Hispanic literary conception of history.

Not only did the relato share the view of history of the romance, it used similar literary tricks to relieve the appearance of history, and of non-fiction in general.

The view of time in the relato was also analogous to that of the romances of chivalry. Time in the romances was totally unimportant to the characters. Time in the fantastic tradition exemplified in literature by the romances of chivalry does not follow a rational, orderly pattern. Therefore the romances enabled future writers in the fantastic

genre to investigate and elaborate a non-rational progression of time.

In its fluidity and formlessness the romance of chivalry possessed a literary structure identical to that of the chronicle. The narrative simply followed the dozens of important characters, switching among them at the whim of the author. If the author felt the need to digress from the main story, he would rarely hesitate. In microcosm, the structure of the relato was that of the romance of chivalry. The narrative followed the characters, mere expository tools, as they established and proved the historical thesis of Palma or the metaphysical thesis of Borges.

On a larger scale, the similarities are just as pronounced. "Episodic" described the romance of chivalry it also describes the corpus of, for example, the Tradiciones Peruanas. In this particular light Palma's opus, as well as that of Borges, strongly resembles the romance of chivalry: the idea of episodes, the multiple characters, digressions, and the wandering narrative are all important points of mutual contact.

In the final analysis, the relato is an ideal literary form for the literature of the fantastic. Due to the relato's

unique essence as a narrative essay, it can prove a thesis, even a modern metaphysical one, within the trappings of fantastic fiction. The relato bears a special relationship to the first creative expression of fantastic literature in Hispanic letters: it is analogous to a romance of chivalry in miniature.

FOOTNOTES

¹Kessel Schwartz is one of many critics that distinguish between novel, short story and relato.

²Martin S. Stabb, Jorge Luis Borges, Twayne World Authors Series, No. 103 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), p. 90, etc.

³Pulquería murals and retablo paintings are purely nativist expressions of surrealist art. The former decorates the walls of bars where pulque is sold; the latter is a personal tribute painted by someone who has received a miracle, and depicts the circumstances of the miracle. Both have been used extensively as bases for formal surreal paintings.

⁴MacKinley Helm, Modern Mexican Painters (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1968), pp. 161-163.

⁵Alfonso Reyes, The Position of America, Trans. Harriet de Onis (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), p. 8.

⁶Ibid., pp. 8-18.

⁷Irving A. Leonard, Books of the Brave (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 21-22.

⁸Ibid., p. 31; George Ticknor, History of Spanish Literature, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1849), 1: 218, etc.

⁹Leonard, Books of the Brave, p. 31.

¹⁰Ticknor, History of Spanish Literature, 1:187.

¹¹Eugene F. Rice, Jr., The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460-1559 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), p. 72.

¹²Dr. Barritt.

¹³Ticknor, History of Spanish Literature, 1:201-205; D. Cayetano Rosell, ed., Historiadores de Sucesos Particulares, 2 vols. (Madrid: Bibliotel a de los Sucesores de Hernando, 1974), 1:19.

¹⁴Enrique Anderson-Imbert, Spanish-American Literature, A History, 2nd Ed., 2 vols. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), 1:23; Ticknor, History of Spanish Literature, 1:201-205; Cayetano Rosell, Ed., Historiadores, 1:19, etc.

¹⁵Richard E. Chandler and Kessel Schwartz, A New History of Spanish Literature (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), p. 430; Leonard, Books of The Brave, p. 31.

¹⁶Leonard, Books of the Brave, p. 31.

¹⁷Anderson-Imbert, Spanish-American Literature, 1:36-39.

¹⁸Kessel Schwartz, A New History of Spanish-American Fiction, 2 vols. (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1972), 1:10-11.

¹⁹Leonard, Books of the Brave, p. viii.

²⁰That is, I disagree with Leonard's thesis in large part.

²¹Ticknor, History of Spanish Literature.

²²Horace, Epodes, 2.

²³Leonard, Books of the Brave, p. 20; John J. O'Connor, Amadis de Gaule and its Influence on Elizabethan Literature (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 8.

²⁴O'Connor, Amadis, p. 25.

²⁵Leonard, Books of the Brave, p. 19.

²⁶O'Connor, Amadis, p. 89.

²⁷Ibid., p.85.

²⁸Therefore, the most popular were: Amadis de Gaula, 12 vols.; the Palmerín Cycle, 5 vols.; Espeso de Principes y de Cavalleros, 9 vols.; Ibid., pp. 4-5.

²⁹Grace S. Williams has noted that in the first five books of Amadis de Gaula alone there are 248 characters. Ibid., p. 87.

³⁰Ibid., p. 107.

³¹Ibid., p. 127.

³²Angélica Palma y Román, Ricardo Palma (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Argentinas Condor, 1933) p. 19.

³³Pierre L. Ullman, Mariano de Larra and Spanish Political Rhetoric (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1971), p. 38.

³⁴G. W. Umphrey, "Ricardo Palma, Tradicionista," Hispania 7 (1924): 149.

³⁵Umphrey, "Ricardo Palma," pp.149-150.

³⁶Carlos Garcia Prada, Letras Hispanoamericanas, 2 vols. (Madrid: Ediciones Iberoamericanas, 1963), 2:50.

³⁷Ricardo Palma, "Cuatro Palabritas," Tradiciones Peruanas, 6 vols. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1933), 6: 199.

³⁸Leonard, Books of the Brave, pp. 23-24.

³⁹Ibid., p.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 329-330.

⁴¹Ruth Sievers Thomas, "Las Fuentes de las 'Tradiciones Peruanas' de Ricardo Palma," Revisia Iberoamericana 2 (1940): 463-5.

⁴²Garcia Prada, Letras, 2:50.

⁴³Ricardo Palma, Knights of the Cape, Trans. Harriet de Onís (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), p. 148.

- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 149.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 152-153.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 153.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 154.
- ⁴⁸ Palma y Román, Ricardo Palma, pp. 7-12; Garcia Prada, Letras, 2:37-38.
- ⁴⁹ Such as Garcia Prada.
- ⁵⁰ Umphrey, "Ricardo Palma," p. 151.
- ⁵¹ Palma, Knights, p. 116.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid., pp. 117-118.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 119.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ "Pan, Queso, y Raspadura."
- ⁵⁷ Thomas, "Fuentes," pp. 461-469.
- ⁵⁸ Dr. Barritt.
- ⁵⁹ "Discreta eres, doncella de la negra crencha, y así me cautivas con tu palabra como en el fuego de tu mirada. ¡Adios, Ilusorio ensueño de mi vida!" Palma Tradiciones Peruanas, 2:23.
- ⁶⁰ Thomas, "Fuentes," pp. 462-463.
- ⁶¹ Although a somewhat unorthodox usage of costumbrismo, Borges can be considered part of the general thrust of this movement in view of the goals he established for his literature, seen below in this thesis.
- ⁶² El tamaño de mi esperanza (1926) is perhaps the best example.

- ⁶³ Jorge Luis Borges, El tamaño de mi esperanza, p. 5, quoted in James E. Irby, "Borges and the Idea of Utopia," The Cardinal Points of Borges (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p. 39.
- ⁶⁴ Stabb, Jorge Luis Borges, p. 16; Norman Thomas di Giovanni, Daniel Halporn, and Frank MacShane, eds., Borges on Writing (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1973), pp. 5-6.
- ⁶⁵ Stabb, Jorge Luis Borges, p. 16.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 35-36.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 58-61; p. 71.
- ⁶⁸ D. Giovanni, et. al., Borges on Writing, p. 7.
- ⁶⁹ Irby, "Borges and Utopia," p. 35.
- ⁷⁰ Borges, Esperanza, pp. 45-46; pp. 48-49, Quoted in Irby, "Borges and Utopia," p. 39.
- ⁷¹ Stabb, Jorge Luis Borges, pp. 18-25; p. 93.
- ⁷² "Nueva Refutación del tiempo" "Historia de la Eternidad" "Sentirse en muerte," etc.
- ⁷³ Stabb, Jorge Luis Borges, p. 77.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 121.
- ⁷⁵ Richard Burgin, Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969), pp. 43-44.
- ⁷⁶ Stabb, Jorge Luis Borges, p. 75.

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