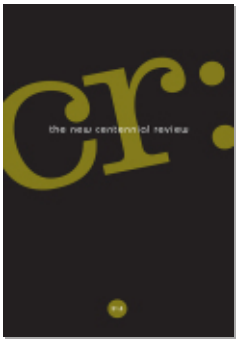
From Ratiocination to Globalization: Poe, Borges, Bolaño, and the *Complot* of the *Novela Negra Neoliberal*



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From Ratiocination to Globalization

Poe, Borges, Bolaño, and the *Complot* of the *Novela Negra Neoliberal*

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DETECTIVE FICTION BECAME A POPULAR GENRE THROUGHOUT THE Anglophone world in the nineteenth century, yet it was slow to emerge in the Latin American context. When it did, the traditional triad of crime-criminal-detective was adopted by authors across the region, not as mere genre fiction but more often as a critical literary intervention deployed to critique the Latin American nation-state. The present study traces the development of detective fiction in the region, from Borges's ratiocinative "narrativa de enigma" to the more critical modalities—*novela policial*, *neopoliciaco*, and *novela negra*—which have been wielded by authors like Ricardo Piglia and Paco Ignacio Taibo II in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as a means of contesting the excesses of the Latin American nation-state.

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I then turn to Roberto Bolaño's posthumous *2666* (2004a) in light of this genealogy, and my reading attends to the productive malfunctioning of the detective mode in the neoliberal milieu of the narrative. I posit that the novel—which I call here a *novela negra neoliberal*—diverges from genre norms of detective fiction in important ways. It indexes the enervated role of the nation-state and shifts its critical focus to the transnational economic forces that provoke violence and precarity in the region. My reading takes into account the spatial ordering of crime in *2666* and the ways in which the "complot" (*conspiracy*) of the novel points to waning state sovereignty and indexes the emergence of a sociopolitical logic that supplants the ideological and geometric foundations of national modernity.

Detective Fiction and the State

Modern detective fiction emerged in 1841, when Edgar Allan Poe created protagonist Chevalier Auguste Dupin, whose deductive reasoning and observational skills foiled miscreants and outwitted the French police force.[1] Commonly called ratiocinative detective fiction, Poe's short stories arose and gained popularity around the same time as the establishment of state police forces in Paris (1800), London (1829), and New York (1845). In the twentieth century, Poe's writings, and Anglophone detective fiction in general, became widely available to the Latin American reading public, which is attributable to Jorge Luis Borges's advocacy. Borges undertook translations of Poe's texts, lectured on his literary endeavors, and wrote significant criticism on his oeuvre, with special attention given to his detective fiction. Emron Esplin charts how Borges's engagements with Poe reframed the U.S. author for a Latin American readership—from what *modernista* poets saw as the most important U.S. poet (alongside Walt Whitman), who influenced Baudelaire and Mallarmé, to, in Borges's view, a virtuoso in short fiction and the creator of the detective genre (Esplin 2016, 23). Borges maintained that, by creating a new genre, Poe also engendered a new type of reader that is "full of doubt, for the reader of detective novels reads with incredulity and suspicion" (1999, 492) ("lleno de sospechas, porque el lector de novelas policiales es un lector que lee con incredulidad, con suspicacias"

[1979, 67]). Finally, Borges lauds Poe for creating a methodical, analytical genre that privileges the intellect as much as the imagination (1979, 77).

Beyond his affection for Poe, Borges also wrote detective fiction and penned various essays on the methodology behind the genre. For instance, "Leyes de la narración policial" outlines six rules for writing good detective fiction,[2] and "Sobre Chesterton" (1974) meditates on the supplemental twist that the British author added to the modality, namely, that G. K. Chesterton combined the supernatural of fantastic fiction with the enigma of detective fiction before resolving the tale with a rational, mundane explanation. Alongside Adolfo Bioy Casares, Borges created a collection of detective parodies featuring don Isidro Parodi and founded *El Séptimo Círculo*, a series of works in translation primary composed of detective novels, which included texts by Ross Macdonald and Raymond Chandler, among others.

Despite the popularity of Anglophone detective fiction in translation through the mid-twentieth century, original engagements with the genre were slow to materialize throughout Latin America. This is because this early model of detective fiction simply did not make sense in the region. Detective literature—particularly in Anglophone cultures—has maintained a sustained engagement with the modern state apparatus and the national subjectivities and ideologies that arise alongside it. Given its emergence parallel to the state-sponsored systematization of the detective profession, as well as the frequent ideological bent of later iterations of the genre, which often reinforced social norms and contained favorable treatments of national dogma and state legitimacy, early detective fiction in the English-language tradition has been deemed "a literary reflection of, if not propaganda for, a new form of social administration and control based on state surveillance" (Kayman 2003, 44). Later subgenres of detective fiction include the hardboiled mode, police procedural, spy/crime thrillers, and historical crime fiction, among others. What these modalities have in common are the ways in which the literary detective operates in relation to a capitalist bourgeois social order (Close 2006, 147) and to the norms of the nation-state, "call[ing] attention to the boundaries that distinguish the proper and improper behaviors and subjectivities in the reproduction of social and political discourses" (Mosier 2013, 4).

This paradigm has not been easily translatable to the Latin American context due to systemic issues, such as political corruption, state violence against the populace, and an inchoate national consciousness on the part of the citizens—largely on account of a healthy distrust of the state. In "Ustedes que jamás han sido asesinados," Carlos Monsiváis mocks the very idea of detective fiction as a popular genre in Latin America, explaining the dearth of detective novels in relation to state violence: "a police force unanimously judged as corrupt is not to be trusted. . .what would be exceptional, unusual, is not that a Latin American turns out to be the victim, but that he ceases to be one" ("una policía juzgada corrupta de modo unánime no es susceptible de crédito alguno . . . lo excepcional, lo desusado, no es que un latinoamericano resulte víctima, sino que pueda dejar de serlo") (1973, 2–3). Observing that detective fiction is on the decline even in the "developed world" from which it emerged, Monsiváis poses a scathing rhetorical question: "Who cares who killed Roger Ackroyd if the criminals behind Vietnam govern the United States with an iron fist, if Czechoslovakia is invaded in the name of Socialism, if no one (officially) knows who was responsible for the Tlatelolco massacre or who ordered the June tenth Hawk strike?" ("¿A quién le importa quién mató a Roger Akroyd [sic] si los criminales de Vietnam gobiernan férreamente a los Estados Unidos, si en el nombre del socialismo se invade a Checoslovaquia o si nadie sabe (oficialmente) quién fue el responsable de la matanza de Tlatelolco o quién ordenó el asalto de los Halcones el 10 de junio?" (1973, 10). Monsiváis's question underscores how traditional detective fiction lacks critical vitality and loses its ability to draw in readers, given that, in the modern nation, the real-world state apparatuses that determine legality and legitimacy often commit war crimes and state violence with impunity.

When Latin American authors finally took up the detective mode, it was not imported tout court. Considering the Cuban context, Persephone Braham (2004) observes that late-twentieth and early twenty-first-century detective fiction by authors like Leonardo Padura and José Latour takes on a social function more typically held by the news media in other national contexts. This was because the Cuban press often would not or could not accurately report on politics, economics, and social issues, given that the

media was controlled by political forces who were more concerned with disseminating socialist propaganda than promoting a free press. This also proves true in Mexico due to the bias of controlling interests but further given the potential for violent retaliation against journalists by exposed parties. Mexico consistently ranks among the most dangerous countries for members of the press, and the perpetrators of these informationally motivated assassinations are rarely caught (Committee to Protect Journalists 2019). For this reason, and combined with detective literature's organic connection to justice, legality, and state norms, the Latin American *novela policial* often takes on the mantle of a sort of literary "fourth estate," which seeks to catalog injustices in a way that the news media cannot.

Argentine author Ricardo Piglia's short story "La loca y el relato del crimen" (2013) meditates on how literature might compensate for a muzzled press, and the story constitutes itself as a literary indictment, indeed, the only indictment possible, of modern political corruption and the failure of the police and justice system. In the narrative, recurring Piglia protagonist Emilio Renzi, a wannabe linguist who earns his living as a journalist for the Buenos Aires newspaper *El Mundo*, is assigned to cover a murder whose only witness is Angélica Echevarne, a "crazy" beggar found repeating an incomprehensible rant beside a dead body (2013, 463). Her testimony is deemed worthless by the police and the news media, and Renzi is the only person to take the woman's apparent incoherence seriously. Among the seemingly senseless ramblings, he listens for repeated fragments and detects in them a coherent narrative:

> In a state of delirium, the lunatic repeats, or more accurately, is forced to repeat certain verbal structures that are fixed, like a mold. You see? A mold that he goes along filling with words. In order to analyze this structure, there are thirty-six verbal categories that we call logical operators. They are like a map; you place them on top of what is said and you see that the delirium is ordered, that these formulas are repeated. What doesn't fit in that order, what can't be classified, what is left over, is what is new: that is what the lunatic is trying to say despite the compulsion to repeat. I analyzed the woman's delirium with that method.

> [En un delirio el loco repite, o mejor, está obligado a repetir ciertas estructuras verbales que son fijas, como un molde, ¿se da cuenta?, un molde que va llenando con palabras. Para analizar esa estructura hay treinta y seis categorías verbales que se llaman operadores lógicos. Son como un mapa, usted los pone sobre lo que dicen y se da cuenta que el delirio está ordenado, que repite esas fórmulas. Lo que no entra en ese orden, lo que no se puede clasificar, lo que sobra, el desperdicio, es lo nuevo: es lo que el loco trata de decir a pesar de la compulsión repetitiva. Yo analicé con ese método el delirio de esa mujer.] (2013, 465–66)

Renzi's quasi-psychoanalytic "método lógico" reveals that the suspect in police custody, Juan Antúnez, is innocent and that "el gordo Almada," a man of whom Antúnez claims "he's protected from on high" (*lo protegen de arriba*) (2013, 463), is the actual killer. Renzi takes this evidence—the linguistic map—to his newspaper editor, el viejo Luna, in hopes of publishing "the truth" (*la verdad*) (2013, 463). Luna refuses, insisting that, regardless of the evidence and of what may be true, "I've been in this business for thirty years and I know one thing: *you don't go looking for trouble with the police*. If they tell you that the Virgin Mary killed her, you write that the Virgin Mary killed her" ("yo hace treinta años que estoy metido en este negocio y sé una cosa: *no hay que buscarse problemas con la policía*. Si ellos te dicen que lo mató la Virgen María, vos escribís que lo mató la Virgen María") (2013, 464; emphasis added). In frustrated resignation, Renzi sits down to write the article as his editor has decreed, but what he ends up composing, as we are given to understand by the final sentence—which is also the first sentence of the narrative—is the very story that the reader has at hand.

Piglia's short story illustrates how literature occupies a role similar to that of the fourth estate, particularly when journalism is controlled by an authoritarian government. The shift from the detective to the journalist in "La loca y el relato del crimen" prefigures what is to come at the turn of the century. As Glen S. Close observes, detective fiction since the Lost Decade of the 1980s has shifted away from detective-centered narratives—which were modeled on hardboiled sleuths, such as Chandler's Philip Marlowe or Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade, that promoted a "redemptive, chivalric

vision of the detective hero as cynic and outsider, but also as man of honor and populist avenger" (2006, 156). In its place emerged a type of fiction that showcases violence as an instrument of power, a means of survival, and a form of entertainment. Close shows how this new mode of Latin American detective fiction often does away with the narrative mediation of the detective to focalize "new, abject postmodern subjects" (2006, 155) who reside in a corrupt state permeated by urban violence.

Such works belong to a relatively recent subgenre in the Latin American detective tradition, the *novela negra*, which Mempo Giardinelli clarifies in relation to journalism's tendency to deploy a metaphorics of color (*prensa amarilla, nota roja, prensa rosa*). He notes that the "blackness" of the *novela negra* refers to "a literature that takes up the dirtiest part, generally the most sordid, hidden, and prohibited aspects of society. . . . in literature we speak of the noir novel when crime, suspense, and mystery are central to the narrative" ("una literatura que se ocupa de la parte más sucia, generalmente la más sórdida, oculta y negada de toda sociedad. . . . en literatura hablamos de novela negra cuando la narración contiene crimen, suspenso y misterio de modo protagónico") (2013, 17). In Mexico, this mode has been dubbed *neopoliciaco* by author Paco Ignacio Taibo II, who notes that these works often take place in urban spaces and depict the state as the source of crime and corruption (Balibrea-Enríquez 1996, 50 n. 5). Just as early Latin American detective fiction sought to expose and denounce the violence of the authoritarian state, these recent iterations of the genre (*novela negra* or *neopoliciaco*) problematize continued corruption and cronyism of the liberal democratic state of advanced capitalism.

My analysis of Bolaño's *2666* adds to these critical interpretations of the state of detective fiction (a purposeful double genitive) in Latin America, and I situate *2666* in this genealogy of detective fiction—from Poe to Borges to Piglia—to evaluate the novel's relationship to the Latin American state. I argue that *2666*, and "La parte de los crímenes" in particular, marks the exhaustion of detective fiction as a critical and cultural counterpart to the modern nation-state. My reading first outlines how "La parte de los crímenes" indexes its own failure as *modern* detective fiction and participates in the genre's undoing. I discuss the ways in which the novel makes

visible a breakdown in the concept of the political in a neoliberalizing milieu. My reading of the genre critique undertaken in "La parte de los crímenes" turns back to the origins of detective fiction, and I outline how Bolaño's text dialogues with Poe's "The Murders in Rue Morgue" ([1841] 1944), while at the same time marking its distinctions from that foundational story of modern detective fiction. I then turn to a comparative analysis alongside Borges's "La muerte y la brújula" (1944b) to consider the role of geometry in Bolaño's novel. This reading allows me to show how the malfunctioning of detective fiction is linked to a collapse of the geopolitical spatial organization of national modernity.

The National Imperative

"La parte de los crímenes" commences with the detached description of the discovery of the first of 109 female corpses, each of which is woven into a narrative that shifts among a host of characters living in Santa Teresa, Mexico—a fictionalized version of Ciudad Juárez. Found in an abandoned lot in January 1993, the "woman" turns out to be 13-year-old Esperanza Gómez Saldaña. As the narrative states, from this corpse on, "the killings of women began to be counted. But it's likely there had been other deaths before" (2008, 353) ("comenzaron a contarse los asesinatos de mujeres. Pero es probable que antes hubiera otras" [2004a, 444]). The choice of dates is suggestive, as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed by the heads of Canada, Mexico, and the United States in December 1992, and the following month the countries' legislatures began ratifying the treaty. Under NAFTA, northern Mexico experienced a contradictory economic situation due to a boom in the maquila industry. Increased employment opportunities in export processing zones attracted both Mexican and Central American migrants to the border, and, indeed, border towns boasted some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. However, a key component of NAFTA included lavish tax breaks for the factories, which meant that border cities lacked necessary public funds to adapt to the rising population. Writing on Ciudad Juárez, Laura Barberán Reinares notes that, while the poorest zones of the city swelled, important

services such as public transit and electricity were slow to arrive, "creating a breeding ground for the atrocious crimes for which Ciudad Juárez became notorious: the femicides" (2010, 53). The first fictional victim of the *feminicidio*—or the gendered murder of women—in "La parte de los crímenes" belies the early misplaced optimism invested in NAFTA's potential for positive economic and social effects. Esperanza, after all, translates to "hope."

The police investigations and suppositions laid out in "La parte de los crímenes," particularly in its early pages, adhere to a typically "national" interpretation of criminal activity. Following the assassination of radio host Isabel Urrea, theories begin to circulate about the intentions and identity of her killer. Three types are put forth as likely suspects: a madman, a drug addict, or a Central American migrant en route to the United States (2004a, 447). These deviant types reveal the ideological mechanisms of the nation-state at work in how the fictional community of Santa Teresa seeks to rationalize the *feminicidio*. As Michel Foucault has argued, *madness* is a social category that, in the modern era, renders he who is deemed mad a "non-being" in the community. Modern institutions such as the asylum and the sanatorium, Foucault affirms, ultimately seek "to suppress madness, to eliminate from the social order a figure which did not find its place within it" (Foucault 1988, 115). The drug addict designation reveals a similar exclusionary impulse. The sixteenth-century etymological root of *addicted* signifies "delivered over" by judicial sentence (as a debtor to his creditors, a sense from Roman law), and, in the twentieth century, this meaning shifts to "to give over or award (oneself) to narcotics dependency" (Online Etymology Dictionary, "addicted"). In this way, the drug addict disavows social norms in favor of devotion to his or her drug of choice, withdrawing from the Hobbesian pact. Finally, and analogously, the *illegal* migrant is a category that national modernity has conceived of as a priori criminal. The deviant nature of these three types is further compounded in the narrative by the assumption that the assassin was attempting to rob Isabel Urrea and steal her car, "por cualquier medio" (2004a, 447), and thus he is judged to be both desperately poor and criminal.

These presumptions of externality—whether internal externality, as in the case of the madman or drug addict, or constitutively external, in the

case of the Central American migrant—underscore a political differentiation that is fundamental to national modernity. The communal desire to pin the murders on an external other is further confirmed when Klaus Haas, a German expat by way of Miami, Florida, is accused of being the mastermind behind what the police claim to be serial murders. Likewise, when the murders continue even after Haas's arrest, the authorities determine that a violent gang, los Bisontes, has been hired by Haas from prison to commit serial murders with his signature. This impulse resonates with German jurist Carl Schmitt's understanding of modern politics, in which "the intensification of internal antagonisms [which may lead to civil war] has the effect of weakening the common identity vis-à-vis another state" (1976, 32). Thus, it benefits the local and national governments, as well as the Santa Teresa police force, to promote the theory that the murderers are deviant outsiders (foreign masterminds, gang members, illegal immigrants, drug addicts, etc.) even before perpetrating the *feminicidio*.

In this way, "La parte de los crímenes" indexes how the vestigial logic of the nation-state is operative in the epistemology of journalists, law enforcement, and residents as they try to comprehend the murders occurring in Santa Teresa. However, "La parte de los crímenes," and by extension *2666* in general, incorporates these tenets of modern political thought to undo them, to make visible their fundamental inapplicability to the phenomenon of the *feminicidio* and to the broader matrix of the maquila industry that stands as a synecdoche of global capital. The "us versus them" mentality struggles against the disintegration of national boundaries and borders that Carlo Galli (2010) argues is a symptom of the age of global war. The type of violence that permeates Santa Teresa is emblematic of this incongruity, as well as the spatial relations that govern the fictional city, and my analysis of the breakdown of detective fiction in *2666* serves to expose the failing state system, whose norms and processes have traditionally governed the genre. I suggest that a comparative reading of the Part alongside the father of modern detective fiction, Edgar Allan Poe, demonstrates how Bolaño's *novela negra* revisits the birth of modern detective fiction to signal the demise of its potential as a critical literary genre.

A Detective without a State

One of the principal recurring storylines in "La parte de los crímenes" deals with Olegario Cura Expósito, familiarly known as Lalo Cura (a homophone of "la locura," or madness), who is hired to serve as a confidante and bodyguard for Pedro Rengifo, one of the most powerful drug lords in Santa Teresa. After he is almost killed protecting Rengifo's wife, Lalo is hired by the police force. One day, on patrol with Santiago Ordóñez, Lalo insists that they visit the Podestá ravine, a location outside of their patrol area where a *feminicidio* victim—Luisa Cardona—was found three days before (2004a, 656). Ordóñez reports that Lalo is behaving out of character, doing "strange things, like measuring the ground and the height of the walls, looking up toward the top of the ravine and calculating the arc that [Luisa] Cardona's body must have traced as it fell" (2008, 525) ("haciendo cosas raras, como si midiera el terreno y la altura de las paredes, mirando hacia la parte alta del barranco y calculando el arco que tuvo que hacer el cuerpo de Luisa Cardona mientras caía" [2004a, 657]). After examining the scene, Lalo concludes that the killer(s) threw the body so that it would be found as quickly as possible. He then takes the initiative to check another side of the Podestá cliff in search of a hypothetical victim. His instincts prove well founded, and he finds another dead woman, the 80th of the text. Lalo is subsequently reprimanded by his superior and mentor, Epifanio Galindo, for searching out additional corpses that haven't been reported to the police. The exchange is revealing:

> When Epifanio asked why he'd gone to the Podestá ravine, Lalo Cura answered that it was *because he was a cop*. You little shit, Epifanio said, don't go where you're not called, do you hear me? Then Epifanio took him by the arm and looked him in the face and said he wanted to know the truth. I thought it was strange, said Lalo Cura, that in all this time a dead woman had never turned up in the Podestá ravine. And how did you know that, ass wipe? asked Epifanio. *Because I read the papers*, said Lalo Cura. Do you really, you little cocksucking son of a bitch? Yes, said Lalo Cura. *And you read books, too, I suppose. That's right, said Lalo Cura*. The faggot books for faggots that I gave

> you? *Modern Criminal Investigation* [emphasis in original] by the late chief director of Sweden's National Institute of Technical Police, Mr. Harry Soderman, and the former president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, ex-Inspector John J. O'Connell, said Lalo Cura. And if those supercops were so fucking great how come they're ex-fuckers now? asked Epifanio. Answer me that, you little punk. *Don't you know, you snot-nose bastard, that there is no such thing as modern criminal investigation?* (2008, 526–27; emphasis added except where indicated)

> [Cuando Epifanio le preguntó por qué razón había ido al barranco de Podestá, Lalo Cura le contestó que *porque era policía*. Usted es un escuincle de mierda, le dijo Epifanio, no se meta donde no le llaman, buey. Después Epifanio lo cogió de un brazo y lo miró a la cara y le dijo que quería saber la verdad. Me pareció raro, dijo Lalo Cura, en todo este tiempo nunca había aparecido una muerta en el barranco de Podestá. ¿Y eso usted cómo lo sabe, buey?, dijo Epifanio. *Porque leo los periódicos*, dijo Lalo Cura. Pinche escuincle mamón, ¿así que lee los periódicos? Sí, dijo Lalo Cura. *¿Y también lee libros, supongo?* Pues sí, dijo Lalo Cura. ¿Los putos libros que yo le regalé? Los *Métodos modernos de investigación policiaca* [emphasis in original], del ex director en jefe del Instituto Nacional de Policía Técnica de Suecia, el señor Harry Söderman y del ex presidente de la Asociación Internacional de Jefes de Policía, el ex inspector John J. O'Connell, dijo Lalo Cura. ¿Y si esos mentados superpolicías eran tan buenos por qué ahora son unos putos ex?, dijo Epifanio. ¿A ver, contésteme ésa, buey? ¿No sabe usted, pendejete, que *en la investigación policiaca no existen los métodos modernos?*] (2004a, 658; emphasis added except where indicated)

This episode resonates with Poe's ratiocinative detective mode, as Lalo's strategies echo those of C. Auguste Dupin in "The Murders in Rue Morgue."[3] Both Lalo and Dupin read voraciously and scour local newspapers to logically and scientifically deduce as-yet-unsolved aspects of their respective crimes. However, Poe's Dupin is able to use his ratiocination skills to solve crimes and identify murderers, whereas, true to Epifanio's warning, Lalo's skills do not work in the same way. He is only able to

multiply the crimes, to pile on more dead bodies. Epifanio's warning that "en la investigación policiaca, no existen los métodos modernos" (2004a, 658) rings true in this fictionalized space of global capitalism, as Santa Teresa is not a place or time in which the norms of national modernity hold sway. With heavy-handed metaphorical resonance, Bolaño's Epifanio (epiphany) brings to light the ways in which the norms that govern(ed) national modernity, which Lalo studies in his how-to methodological detective guides, are no longer—or never have been—operational in NAFTA-era Santa Teresa.

Moreover, this revelation constitutes an aesthetic epiphany. The text signals a geopolitical shift from national modernity to neoliberal globalization and performs an aesthetic rupture. *2666*, as *novela negra neoliberal*, manifests how the modern detective modality proves ineffectual and antiquated in a shifting geopolitical sphere. In "Sobre el relato policial," Ezequiel de Rosso meditates on the relationship between violence, storytelling, the modern state, and twentieth-century detective fiction. De Rosso describes the nation-state as having a monopoly on both violence and intelligibility:

> The modern State may be defined on the basis of two orders: storytelling and violence. In effect, it can be said that the State is that institution that enjoys a monopoly on the legitimacy of violence. At the same time, it can be said that the State is that institution that fights for the monopoly on meaning. That is, that attempts to tell the most plausible story, and whenever possible, the only story.
>
> [El Estado moderno puede ser definido en base a dos series: relato y violencia. En efecto, puede decirse que el Estado es aquella institución [que] detenta el monopolio de la legitimidad de la violencia. A la vez, puede decirse que es Estado aquella institución que lucha por el monopolio del sentido. Es decir, que intenta contar el relato más verosímil y en lo posible, el único relato.] (2000, 287)

Since Hobbes's *Leviathan*, the state has been granted the right to use "legitimate" violence to protect its citizenry, and de Rosso outlines how

this legitimacy is established by the official narrative of the state. He further explains that in the Latin American context, detective fiction proffers a subject—the detective or the private eye and, in some cases, the criminal—who seeks to undermine the official story of the state to bring to light ways in which state violence may be illegitimate. These alternative subjects interrupt the sense making that proliferates national ideology and order.

Unlike the modern detective fiction discussed by de Rosso, the detective mode of Bolaño's *2666* makes visible a breakdown of the state's monopoly on both violence and the storytelling that would make sense of that violence. The state, in "La parte de los crímenes," is undoubtedly depicted as guilty of violence, but it is the second-degree negligence of not assuring the security of its citizens, of failing to locate or stop the murderers, and, implicitly, of facilitating an international trade deal that inaugurates the anomie that permeates Santa Teresa—what Cristina Rivera Garza calls "the Visceraless State" (2020, 21–22) (*el estado sin entrañas*) (2011, 72–73), or a state that has abdicated its responsibility to care for its citizens' bodies. However, the state of *2666* most certainly does not enjoy a monopoly on violence and fails entirely to "make sense" of the *feminicidio*. Likewise, the detective in "La parte de los crímenes" is incapable of conceiving of a consistent narrative—counter or complementary—to the state's account. How could he (and, in *2666*, the detective is always a "he"), given that the state has provided no viable explanation or solution for the *feminicidio*? In fact, the plethora of detective figures render an intelligible narrative impossible. Some are clearly corrupt actors in service to cartels (Police Chief Pedro Rengifo, Epifanio Galindo), others earnestly try to solve the *feminicidio* (Lalo Cura, journalist Sergio González), and some are ambiguous figures that may or may not be corrupt or sincere (Juan de Dios Martínez). Instead, Bolaño, like Borges before him, deploys mathematical logic to begin the work of reconciling and rendering intelligible the emerging spatial and political relations of the epoch.

From Geometric Space to an Economy of Seriality

In "Teoría del complot," Piglia posits that great prose fiction functions by means of a conspiracy (*el complot*) or, translated more literally, a coplot, that works alongside and often against, but always in a subterranean manner, the ostensibly central plot of the narrative. Piglia points to "La lotería en Babilonia," which he calls Borges's most political text (Piglia 2001, 6), as exemplary of this strategy. In this short story, the state has organized a drawing that determines the lot of each citizen. Initially, the lottery doles out economic prizes, but soon it expands its reach, deciding each individual's life experiences and social relations, including both good luck and misfortunes, as well as their professions. In this way, citizens are eventually at the whim of a (supposedly arbitrary) system. They embrace this system as a result of their own choice: "they [the people] got the Company to accept full control of all organs of the state" ("en primer término, logró que la Compañía aceptara la suma del poder público" [1944a, 85]), but the system (La Compañía) is of course revealed to control the citizens. The *complot* of "La lotería" performs and problematizes the ideological workings of modern democracy, in which "organized chance universally negates any possibility of freedom and agency" ("el azar organizado universalmente niega toda posibilidad de libertad y autodeterminación") (Sager 2013, 94).

Piglia shows how the literary device of the *complot* is similarly at work in the functioning of the nation-state. The modern state has an outward rhetoric and order that cover over its true mechanisms and intentions, which are centrally concerned with control of citizens and flows of capital: "there is a state conspiracy, a clandestine politics that is tied to what we would call state intelligence—the secret services and forms of control and detention—whose central objective is to surveil the public's movement and to conceal and manage the destructive effect of major economic transactions and flows of money" ("hay un complot del estado, una política clandestina ligada a lo que llamamos la inteligencia del estado, los servicios secretos, las formas de control y de captura, cuyo objeto central es registrar los movimientos de la población y disimular y supervisar el efecto destructivo de los grandes desplazamientos económicos y los flujos de dinero")

(2001, 4). Piglia spells out the pedagogical benefit of narrative works that deploy a *complot*: "by telling us how a conspiracy is constructed, they tell us how fiction is constructed" ("al decirnos cómo se construye un complot nos cuentan cómo se construye una ficción") (2001, 4). This corresponds to Borges's esteem for Poe's detective fiction, which creates a suspicious, distrustful reader. Given the ways in which aesthetics has served to educate and form the national subject,[4] this new iteration of literature would work to unveil and potentially undermine the subterranean *complot* of the state that furtively molds and controls citizens.

For this reason, Piglia (1968) and Giardinelli (2013) judge the U.S. crime thrillers of Hammett and Chandler to be powerful counterhegemonic narratives. These early twentieth-century U.S. authors shift the enigma from the *whodunit* to the *whydunit*, and, as Piglia points out, the *why* foregrounds social relations to comment directly on the functioning of the state and the centrality of violence and economic inequality to that functioning:

> The stories that make up the noir series (*thrillers* [emphasis in original], as they are called in the United States) wind up narrating precisely what is censored and excluded in the classic detective novel. There is no longer any mystery in causation: murders, robberies, scams, extortions, *the chain is always economic*. The money that regulates morality and upholds the law is the only reason for these stories where everything has a price. The myth of the enigma comes to an end here, or rather, it is displaced. In these stories the detective (when he exists) not only deciphers the mysteries of the plot, but also discovers and uncovers the cause of social relations at every step. Crime is the mirror of society, that is, society is seen through crime.

> [Los relatos de la serie negra (*los thrillers* [emphasis in original], como los llaman en Estados Unidos) vienen justamente a narrar lo que excluye y censura la novela policial clásica. Ya no hay misterio alguno en la causalidad: asesinatos, robos, estafas, extorsiones, *la cadena siempre es económica*. El dinero que legisla la moral y sostiene la ley es la única razón de estos relatos donde todo se paga. Allí se termina con el mito del enigma, o mejor, se lo desplaza. En

> estos relatos el detective (cuando existe) no descifra solamente los misterios de la trama, sino que encuentra y descubre a cada paso la determinación de las relaciones sociales. El crimen es el espejo de la sociedad, esto es, la sociedad es vista desde el crimen.] (1968, 63; emphasis added except where indicated)

Although this does not align with what Borges defines as quality detective fiction, which should be more intellectual than Hammett's and Chandler's, it makes visible a correlation between the U.S. experience of capitalism in the early twentieth century and the "Argentine experience" as described by Borges in "Nuestro pobre individualismo": "The Argentine, unlike the Americans of the North and almost all Europeans, does not identify with the State. This is attributable to the circumstance that, in this country, the governments tend to be awful . . . One thing is certain: the Argentine is an individual, not a citizen" (1999, 309) ("El argentino, a diferencia de los americanos del Norte y de casi todos los europeos, no se identifica con el Estado. Ello puede atribuirse a la circunstancia de que, en este país, los gobiernos suelen ser pésimos . . . lo cierto es que el argentino es un individuo, no un ciudadano" [1946, 82]). Hammett's and Chandler's novels reveal how the concept of the citizen has begun to erode, at the same time placing the economic motivations of the state at the center of their *complots*.

Bolaño's *2666* likewise deploys detective fiction to render visible the workings of an economic *complot*, marking the shift from national subjectivity to neoliberal individualism by subverting the mathematical underpinnings that coincide with social norms. However, the role of the state in the novel is markedly distinct from what Borges, Piglia, and Giardinelli theorize, which I demonstrate through a comparative examination of the mathematical logic that undergirds Borges's "La muerte y la brújula" and Bolaño's "La parte de los crímenes." In each case, this logic serves as a sort of *complot* to the main storyline, and, given that the central narrative is related to policing as a function of the state, the *complot* subtly discloses information related to ideology and politics. Each of these works sutures the underlying mechanism guiding social relations to a mathematical logic,

which indexes the hegemonic system behind this functioning. As I show below, the primacy of geometry in Borges's short story is displaced in Bolaño's later detective narrative. In *2666*, anomic seriality, reminiscent of the logic of the neoliberal market, becomes dominant.

Shifting Coordinates: From the Compass to the Maquiladora

"La muerte y la brújula" revolves around a series of ritualistic murders that take place in Buenos Aires and follows police detective Erik Lönnrot, who "fancied himself a pure reasoner, an Auguste Dupin" ("se creía un puro razonador, un Auguste Dupin" [1944b, 195]), as he searches for the serial killer. Lönnrot is juxtaposed to his colleague Treviranus, a police inspector whose more straightforward policework is a foil to Lönnrot's hyperrational sleuthing. The first victim is Rabbi Marcelo Yarmolinsky, and the crime is full of apparently meaningful clues—the murder occurs on the third of December; Yarmolinsky wrote a treatise on the Tetragrammaton (the secret name of God composed of four letters); and a sheet of paper is found at Yarmolinsky's typewriter that states "The first letter of the Name has been articulated" ("La primera letra del Nombre ha sido articulada" [1944b, 198]). These clues push Lönnrot to search out "a purely rabbinical explanation" ("una explicación puramente rabínica" [1944b, 197]), which leads him, a la Poe's Dupin, to read Kabbalistic texts and determine that Yarmolinsky's death is the first of what will be a series of murders. The obvious clues, those that Treviranus detects, signal that there will be three murders. In contrast, thanks to his reading, Lönnrot deduces that the series is related to the Tetragrammaton, and that there will actually be four murders: one in the north of the city, one in the west, one in the east, and one in the south. As it turns out, Lönnrot's sleuthing is correct; there will be a final murder exactly where he concluded it would take place. But the murderer outsmarts him as to *why*. Rather than seeking the name of God, as Lönnrot had surmised, the murderer, Red Scharlach, is Lönnrot's nemesis, and Scharlach devised the elaborate system (he calls it a labyrinth) of clues to attract Lönnrot to his own death.

I am particularly interested in two elements of Scharlach's labyrinth. First, in its geometric logic and how that relates to the space of the capital. Second, in the constructed nature of the system that leads Lönnrot to his death. As regards the former, Lönnrot is able to devise the exact location of the fourth and final death when, after the third murder, Treviranus receives a letter assuring him that there would not be a fourth victim, because the "perfect vertices of a mystical equilateral triangle" ("vértices perfectos de un triángulo equilátero y místico" [1944b, 205]) had completed the ritual. The letter is accompanied by a map of the city with an equilateral triangle drawn over three points—in the north, west, and east—that match up with the locations of the first three murders. Treviranus sends this letter with its "*more geometric* premise" ("argumento *more geométrico*" [1944b, 205; emphasis in original]) to Lönnrot, who deduces that the letter is a red herring.[5] This is because, in Judaism, each day begins at sunset rather than at midnight, so the murders had actually taken place on the fourth of December, January, and February, leaving one final murder still to be completed.[6] Lönnrot then uses a "compás" (the geometric drafting tool), to add a point in the south and complete the four-sided rhombus, which becomes an NSWE compass, or the "brújula" of the title (1944b, 205).

This fourth point sutures the map of the city, denoting a geopolitical sense of space, to the geometric system represented by the drafting compass. In fact, by turning to an English translation of the title as "Death and the Compass," the geometric import of the *complot* becomes even clearer, as "compass" is a homophone for both the NSWE compass on a map (or magnetic compass) and the drafting compass that guides Lönnrot to his own death. This misreading via translation is also fruitful in considering the geopolitical resonance of the word "compass," which signifies a "boundary, circumference [or] a circumscribed space," with the example phrase, "within the compass of the city walls" (Merriam-Webster). As will become clear below, Bolaño's *2666* registers the collapse of the compass qua bounded geopolitical space as a suitable metaphor for the political system at the Mexico–U.S. border.

The constructed nature of Scharlach's labyrinth likewise underscores the complementary rationality between ideology and political geometry.

The entire scheme rests upon Lönnrot's hyperrationalization of the clues and his (mis)reading of the import of the Kabbalah beginning with the first murder. As Lönnrot learns just before his death, which is presumably the fourth and final murder, Scharlach had determined years before to seek revenge on Lönnrot for imprisoning his brother and getting Scharlach shot, and the murder of Yarmolinsky provides an unexpected avenue for doing so. When a Jewish newspaper reports on the first murder, it notes that Lönnrot "searched through Yarmolinsky's writings for the key to Yarmolinsky's death" ("buscaba en los escritos de Yarmolinsky la clave de la muerte de Yarmolinsky" [1944b, 211]), and from there Scharlach is able to manufacture false leads that will bring Lönnrot to his own demise.

Of particular interest here is the metaphorical resonance of the Kabbalistic tradition that Lönnrot determines to follow. The etymological roots of Kabbalah are "received tradition" (Online Etymology Dictionary, "cabbala"); Lönnrot accepts Scharlach's *received, constructed system*, largely based on geometry ("*more geométrico*"), which results in his death. Geometry is further revealed to be arbitrary and constructed in the story, as the third of the four murders is only a simulacrum—Scharlach has faked a third death to entice Lönnrot to the fourth murder.[7] Thus, the four points of the compass in Borges's "La muerte y la brújula," arrived at by implementation of a drafting compass and a city map, point to the intricate role of geometry and geopolitical space in Red Scharlach's trickery and Erik Lönnrot's sleuthing, as well as to the related primacy of these coordinates in the ideology that guides social relations. Similar to "La lotería en Babilonia," whose subterranean *complot* points to a critique of the myth of modern democracy, "La muerte y la brújula" underscores the ideological impetuousness that structures the *received tradition* of modern political geometry.

Bolaño's *2666*, and particularly "La parte de los crímenes," signals how geometry no longer serves this structuring purpose during neoliberal globalization. As Patrick Dove observes, the forms of violence that are dominant in Santa Teresa of *2666*—which stand as a literary reflection of the anomie that characterizes local, state, and parapolitical (e.g., drug cartel) conflicts in Mexico—"give form to a situation that exceeds the explanatory capacity

and ordering authority of the political geometry of modernity" (2016, 234). In "La parte de los crímenes," instead of the geometric ordering of national modernity, the location of each dead body is often sited in a sort of liminal space: a desert highway outside of town (2004a, 717), a trash dump (2004a, 681), an abandoned house (2004a, 659), an empty field (2004a, 704), a vacant lot (2004a, 721), between a highway and train tracks (2004, 728). Whereas Borges's Lönnrot draws geometric figures on a map of the capital to discern the site of the next murder, the Santa Teresa police are only ever able to stumble upon the remains of *feminicidio* victims and are wholly unsuccessful at identifying the perpetrators. This anomic spatiality coincides with what Galli identifies as one of the central difficulties of present epoch, as "the task of outlining a phenomenology of globalization amounts to an attempt to compose a map without using the geometrico-political coordinates provided to us by modernity" (2010, 103). In other words, the figurative map of national modernity is useless for understanding the violence and anomie of the present. Unlike "La muerte y la brújula," there is no map to write on and no drafting compass with which to draw.

The lack of coordinates also marks an important distinction between Bolaño's *2666* and Piglia's previously discussed "La loca y el relato del crimen." In many ways, "La parte de los crímenes" echoes tropes set forth in "La loca y el relato del crimen." Like Piglia, Bolaño's novel thematizes a failure to achieve or often even to pursue justice on the part of the local police force, and it highlights the impunity with which political and judicial corruption and cronyism thrive in the Latin American nation-state. However, where Piglia's text frames itself as a literary intervention that still has the potential to reveal "la verdad," Bolaño's novel has no pretensions of identifying the fictional (or real-life) murderer(s), nor of discovering any sort of "truth." Piglia's Renzi uncovers a "linguistic map" that allows him to decipher the killer, but such a map is nonexistent in Bolaño's "La parte de los crímenes." Brett Levinson pinpoints this dysfunctionality, observing that "the invented investigations within *2666* not only fail to locate the perpetrators, they do not even manage to limit—on the contrary, they multiply—the number of possible killers" (2009, 77). Moreover, unlike "La loca y el relato del crimen," in which the target of the narrative's criticism is a dictatorial

state, *2666* aims its literary indictment not at the overzealous wielder of authoritarian violence of twentieth-century dictator narratives to which Piglia's text belongs but at the economic logic of neoliberal capitalism.

The very resting place of the bodies in *2666* is indicative of the postnational turn at the Mexico–U.S. border. The victims are found *a la intemperie*—or exposed, out in the open—on the desert border.[8] The location of the bodies is often described in relation to the transnational maquiladoras that bring migrants to the region, as the victims' remains are frequently discovered on the grounds of the factories or in the surrounding desert. The bodies strewn about the desert borderlands are indices that the sovereign decisionism of the nation-state—on full display in earlier detective fiction—has failed in Santa Teresa. Whereas Borges's Lönnrot is able to meticulously calculate the place of the final murder in the south of the city, not even the killers of *2666* are able to discern the resting place of the *feminicidio* victims, "who were buried in unmarked graves in the desert or whose ashes were scattered in the middle of the night, when not even the person scattering them knew where he was, what place he had come to" (Bolaño 2008, 353–54) ("que quedaron fuera de la lista o que jamás nadie las encontró, enterradas en fosas comunes en el desierto o esparcidas sus cenizas en medio de la noche, cuando ni el que siembra sabe en dónde, en qué lugar se encuentra" [2004a, 444]). Just as violence and meaning are no longer decidable by the state in *2666*, the crime scenes of the novel are discovered in liminal spaces, indicative of the waning primacy of national borders in the neoliberal era.

This logic is further evidenced when suspected serial killer Haas conducts a press conference in prison. There, he implicates a transnational network of possible culprits that is indexical of the exceedingly international milieu that gives rise to the *feminicidio*. Haas accuses cousins Antonio and Daniel Uribe, as well as a set of accomplices and complicit bystanders. He first clarifies that the Uribes are both Mexican and American—"They have joint citizenship" (2008, 585) ("Tienen doble nacionalidad" [2004a, 731])—and then he points to a vast transnational web related to the Uribe patriarchs, Pedro and Joaquín:

> [Pedro is] Antonio Uribe's father, said Haas. And then he said: Pedro Uribe has more than one hundred cargo trucks. He transports merchandise from various maquiladoras in Hermosillo, and Santa Teresa too. His trucks cross the border every hour or half hour. He also owns property in Phoenix and Tucson. His brother, Joaquin Uribe, has several hotels in Sonora and Sinaloa and a chain of coffee shops in Santa Teresa. He's Daniel's father. The two Uribes are married to Americans. . . . [Daniel and Antonio] are protégés of Fabio Izquierdo, a *narco* who himself works for Estanislao Campuzano. It's said that Estanislao Campuzano was Antonio's godfather. Their friends are other children of millionaires, but also Santa Teresa cops and *narcos*. Wherever they go they spend money like water. They are the Santa Teresa serial killers. (2008, 586)

> [Pedro] Es el padre de Antonio Uribe, dijo Haas. Y luego dijo: Pedro Uribe tiene más de cien camiones de transporte. Traslada mercancías de varias maquiladoras, tanto de Santa Teresa como de Hermosillo. Sus camiones cruzan la frontera cada hora o cada media hora. También tiene propiedades en Phoenix y Tucson. Su hermano, Joaquín Uribe, posee varios hoteles en Sonora y Sinaloa y una cadena de cafeterías en Santa Teresa. Es el padre de Daniel. Los dos Uribe están casados con norteamericanas. . . . [Daniel y Antonio] son protegidos del narcotraficante Fabio Izquierdo, que a su vez trabaja para Estanislao Campuzano. Se dice que Estanislao Campuzano fue el padrino de bautizo de Antonio. Sus amigos son hijos de millonarios, como ellos, pero también policías y narcos de Santa Teresa. Allá por donde van gastan el dinero a manos llenas. Ellos son los asesinos en serie de Santa Teresa.] (2004a, 731–32)

Haas's accusation not only implicates entities on both sides of the Mexico–U.S. border, it also underscores how this transnational matrix of entities is *proper* to both sides of the border. His concluding statement, "Ellos son los asesinos en serie de Santa Teresa" (2004a, 732), leaves ambiguous to whom the "ellos" refers and indicts a host of individuals—transportation and hotel enterprises, police, cartels, politicians, consumers, elites—on both sides of the border as guilty parties to the *feminicidio*.

In this way, the *complot* of Bolaño's *2666* calls attention to the enervation of the geometric primacy of the nation-state that previously undergirded modern social relations. Unlike the *complot* exposed in "La lotería en Babilonia," the state of *2666* is no longer the empowered conspirator controlling the economic flows of neoliberal capitalism. *2666* reveals a shift from the logic of capitalism of national modernity to that of neoliberal-administered globalization. While earlier detective fiction decried state violence and the hand-in-glove relationship between the nation-state and the economic market, *2666* reveals that the state is no longer an empowered participant in this logic but rather a disempowered bystander. In the place of the geometric order of modernity is the unfettered economic excess of neoliberal globalization.

Bolaño's "La parte de los crímenes" facilitates a literary imagining of globalized space. Santa Teresa, the fictionalized Ciudad Juárez of the Part, is doubly divorced from the national framework. First, the space has been fundamentally altered by an international treaty; the neoliberal space of Santa Teresa/Ciudad Juárez is produced by an economy that does not adhere to national logic. It is a city of internal and international migrants. It is a city unmoored economically due to tax breaks and trade agreements, and thus there is little urban planning or subsidized infrastructure. Second, unlike the nation-state, which, regardless of actual fact, projects an image of itself as the guarantor of its people's safety and political rights, the maquiladoras that "govern" the space of Santa Teresa are indifferent to the *feminicidio*. The recurring presence of the maquiladoras in the police-report descriptions of the dead women engenders a sense that the maquila industry—for which many of the women and girls of Santa Teresa work—not only produces televisions, computers, Coca-Cola bottles, and tires but also generates dead bodies as a byproduct of its neoliberal activity.

It is revealing that Bolaño (1953–2003)—a Chilean who spent formative years (1968–73) in Mexico and died in Catalunya, a peripatetic author who disavowed national belonging in interviews (Fernández Santos 1998, 88; Bolaño and Maristain 2004, 331) and essays (Bolaño 2004b, 20)—pens a *novela negra* set in the export processing zones of the Mexico–U.S. borderlands that reveals that crumbling façade of the modern nation-state.

Shifting away from the political logic and geometric spatial order that characterize earlier works of detective fiction, Bolaño's *novela negra neoliberal* meditates on the anomic violence of a state unmoored from national modernity. While earlier iterations of the genre in Latin America took critical aim at the twentieth-century authoritarian state, *2666* makes visible how this state no longer holds a monopoly on violence and sense making. Instead, the novel focalizes the supranational structures of the neoliberal era—consumerism, tourism, trade agreements, the supply and demand of the international drug trade, austerity measures—that affect and effect local and national (dis)order. In the figure of Lalo Cura (*la locura*, madness), Bolaño harks back to the literary foundations of both Anglophone and Latin American detective tradition, recalling Poe's Dupin and Borges's Lönnrot, and "La parte de los crímenes" becomes a *noir* narrative that participates in the undoing of its own genre. In this ruin, "La parte de los crímenes" lays bare the workings of unchecked capital as the *complot* of the neoliberal epoch, pushing us to look beyond the enervated nation-state for security, rights, and (even or especially) a credible narrative for how to move forward in neoliberal-administered globalization, an epoch that, like Bolaño's *novela negra neoliberal*, has little need for the state of national modernity.

NOTES

1. Scholars have identified a host of influences on detective fiction, from Oedipus to picaresque novels to the biographies of real-life criminals. The present study considers the lifespan of *modern* detective fiction, so I focus on the genre's birth with Poe's Dupin.
2. Borges's six rules of detective fiction are "*A) A discretionary limit of six characters; B) Declaration of all the variables of the problem; C) A sparing economy of means; D) Supremacy of how over who; E) Restraint concerning death; F) A solution that contains both necessity and wonder . . . without resorting to the supernatural*" ("*A) Un límite discrecional de sus personajes;*" "*B) Declaración de todos los términos del problema;*" "*C) Avara economía de los medios;*" "*D) Primacía del cómo sobre el quién;*" "*E) El pudor de la muerte;*" and "*F) Necesidad y maravilla en la solución . . . sin apelar a lo sobrenatural*" [2001, 37–38; emphasis in original]). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

3. The fictional Dupin is notorious for his ability to solve crimes solely by reading newspaper descriptions of the crime scene and witness testimony. In the last story featuring Dupin, he solves Marie Roget's murder from across the ocean simply by reading newspaper accounts of the girl's disappearance and the later discovery of her corpse.
4. The role of aesthetics, and literature in particular, as an ideological tool of the modern state has been discussed since the publication of Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* in 1795.
5. This "red" herring is ironic, as Red Scharlach is doubly red: Scharlach meaning "scarlet" and the "rot" of Lönnrot signifying "red" in German. Thus, the red herring turns out not to be a red herring but rather a final clue that pushes Lönnrot closer to his death. As this confluence of *red* indicates, like Poe's Auguste Dupin and Minister D—, Borges encourages doubt as to whether Lönnrot and Scharlach are, in fact, doubles or even the same person.
6. There are a host of other clues pointing to the number four in the text, including the Tetragrammaton and the prominent presence of "losanges" (rhombuses) at each of the first three murders. There are many fascinating studies related to the role of mathematics and geometry in "La muerte y la brújula" and Borges's oeuvre in general, with a standout analysis by John T. Irwin (1986), which undertakes a comparative reading of Poe's "The Purloined Letter" and Borges's "La muerte y la brújula" to revealing ends.
7. This prompts the question of whether the popular interpretation of Lönnrot and Scharlach as twins (or "doubles"; see note 5) should be compounded with Treviranus as a triplet to their pair, as Treviranus insists that there will be three murders; has the word "three" embedded in his name; and passes Lönnrot the letter and map that seal the detective's fate.
8. For more on the significance of "la intemperie" in Bolaño's oeuvre, see Long (2010) and Mitchell (2021).

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