

may prove illusory to the poet, it nevertheless is present and creates the pathos or metaphysical frustration evident in Reverdy's poetry.

17. In *Textual Spaces* Andrew Rothwell writes of the relationship between cubism and Reverdy's poetic theory. His discussion of the structural themes of "chambre" and "nature-morte" reveals a perspective essential to Reverdy's poetry.

18. This funnel effect is curiously inverse to the reader's projected reception of the original version of the painter's book. The large prints would have attracted attention first. The narrower view of this larger, dominating art form, would have funnelled down and *out* to the smaller, traditionally printed prose-poem under it. With the reading of the poem, the reader's experience would have expanded owing to the larger reverdy of the poem. The balance between the strict cubist print and the poem, mechanically printed in type and not handwritten, would have been more perfect; however, the tension between impersonal and personal elements would have been less, if not lost.

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HONORIO BUSTOS DOMECCQ, *SIX PROBLEMS* AND ALL THAT SKAZ

THE FIRST COLLECTION of short detective fiction in Argentina was published by a fictional author: Honorio Bustos Domeccq. In 1942, Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares began, under Bustos Domeccq's name, a collaboration that would last until 1977.¹ *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi* is a pioneer text for Latin American letters in many respects. It not only marked the beginning of a life-long literary venture for Bioy and Borges, and was a notable contribution to the detective genre, but more importantly, it was a text conceived and composed along unprecedented guidelines. The essence of the Parodi text is to be found in the frontier of dialogue between Bioy and Borges, the two collaborating subjects who developed the characters and events of the stories. The first character that "Biorges" invented was Bustos Domeccq. In terms of Bakhtin's dialogics, Bustos Domeccq could be described as a whole, that "while being one, accommodates in itself the accents of two voices" (PODP 224-5). Bustos is an author initially conceived as a counterpoint of voices whose dialogic boundaries are the general guidelines of the detective genre. But the dialogic counterpoint did not end with the creative consciousness of the "author"; this essay intends to show that "Biorges's" particular conception of the dialogic author originates a further interaction of voices in *Six Problems*. The result is textual polyphony.

The first Argentine collection of detective stories is based on the sustained collision and interruption of the various characters' accents and perspectives. The stories of *Six Problems* nevertheless cohere to produce the dialectics of sense required by the detective genre. The counterpoint of the characters' perspectives is one aspect of textual polyphony in *Six Problems*. The polyphonic counterpoint in the text also represents a polemic association of the author with himself (his/selves), of the narrator with the characters (and vice versa), and ultimately, of the intertextual realms of fiction represented by the author, with the reader's reality.

This ultimate engagement of the reader to the fiction was initially not successfully achieved by Bustos Domeccq's stories. Borges recalls the public's negative response to the Parodi stories:

When the readers discovered that Bustos Domeccq did not exist, they believed all the stories to be jokes and that it was not necessary to read

created from language ordered in a certain way and elaborated according to compositional rules designed to achieve a particular effect: "the moment of surprise." The revelation implied by Chesterton applies, in relation to Bustos, to the revelation of self as an internal collaboration and of the subsequent inscription of this self into the codified generic tradition of detective fiction.

In his writing, Bustos reveals his written nature. In a genre where "technique is nearly the whole of the trick" (Chesterton 2), Bustos in turn allows each character of the stories his or her own speech: "he resorts to the heavy strokes of the caricaturist, although when drawn by his jovial pen the inevitable exaggerations typical of the [puppet theatre] genre have little to do with the physical traits of his puppets; instead, he breathes life into them by dwelling on their habits of speech" (*Six* 10–11). This pertinent appraisal of Bustos's work is written by one of his creations, who critiques his master's work in a prologue. The other characters also have their critical say, and they write their commentaries on the margins of the stories, making known their views about the other characters' testimonies and of Bustos's handling of the elements of the story.

Revelment in relation to the detective story is the moment of the unraveling of the mystery plot: the little old lady is shown to be a vile poisoner, the composed butler is a fiendish gambler with a propensity for murder. The technique alluded to earlier pertains in part to the restraint with which these possibilities are suggested in the presentation of the characters, yet are side-stepped in the pursuit of the false clue that leads the reader astray until that fateful "moment of surprise." Bustos Domecq remains faithful to the convention of this brand of classical detective fiction. His innovation in this respect relies precisely on the polemical environment of the characters' versions and the represented idiosyncrasies of their speech. Bustos magnifies the speech of the characters as they tell of the events they know to the point that the reader loses perspective of the referential aspect of language. "That of which it is being spoken about" is omnipresent in the characters' speech. They speak about the crime, the circumstances of the victim, their own circumstances, their suspicions, they name the murderer, and yet the reader is caught in this profusion of words and unable to sort out concisely that which is said. Perspective has been flattened out in the linguistic exchange and the reader shares the communicative plane with the characters.

As important as the represented empowerment of the characters is (and in Bustos's stories everything is representation), the fact that Bustos writes "the only kind of story to which the strict laws of logic are in some sense applicable" (Chesterton 3) is significant. The reader is conscious that there is order in the world that is not readily apparent, but that the pattern of sense is available if only the reader were keyed into the proper facts of the case and would read an allusion in terms of the hidden revelation it promises in relation to the mystery, or interpret a metaphoric turn of phrase in the spirit of truth it contains.

The Parodi detective stories foreground both the function of narrators who are suspect (anyone could be the guilty party), or at least not reliable (each character speaks from a point of view that is exclusive and idiosyncratic), and the function of the reader who, like Parodi, must interpret and order chaos wholly in and from language.

The main device that Bustos utilizes to elaborate the context for detection in his stories is the mode of *skaz* narrative. *Skaz* is a form of "mimetic voice" as described by Ross, and was originally used by the Formalist Boris Eichenbaun in a discussion about Gogol's fiction.³ The term is a derivation of the Russian word *skazat'* or "to tell, relate," and Eichenbaun applied it to what he understood as an orientation toward orality, or an oral quality preserved by the first person narrative of Chichikov in Gogol's "The Overcoat." Later, Bakhtin would find the application of the term as an orientation toward the spoken word to be limited, and further specified it as an orientation toward another speaker's speech (PODP 192). Bakhtin's specification is valid. It is not difficult to conceive, in the light of the preceding discussion, that *skaz* is not only oriented toward the speech of others in the text but to the "speech" of the reader as well.

The elucidation of the term performed by Bakhtin can explain how the reader of the Parodi stories, though by all appearances silent, is an active receptor of another's speech, and how all conjectures that the reader formulates are in fact an effort to produce a rejoinder to another's mode of address that is ultimately directed at his or her anticipated presence. This implicit dialogue is an all important aspect of the use of *skaz* in Bustos's stories. The other aspect has already been mentioned. *Skaz* in the Parodi mysteries is often double-voiced, meaning that every utterance of the characters' testimonies anticipates the words of another insofar as the words of others can incriminate the speaker or contradict his version of the events. Hence, the character's speech is "mindful" of the rejoinder of others, the detective included, and represents a hidden polemic with other points of view. The elucidation of the mystery in the Parodi stories makes full use of these hidden polemics among the characters and their versions of things that have happened. In Bustos Domecq's scenarios, truth is a conflictive entity that is to be gleaned from the multifaceted dialogue taking place under the rubric of detective fiction.

The organization of the stories that comprise the collection is based on a progressive dwindling of authorial discourse toward *skaz* narrative. The effect is the gradual abolition of a narrative source from outside the fictional world toward nearly complete dependence on narrative agents from within the created space of the stories. From the bold intrusion of a clue in his exposition at the beginning of "The Twelve Figures of the World," the first story of the series, Bustos progressively confines himself to mere stage directions in the later stories and allows the characters to have their say in the presence of Parodi. On the way, Bustos finds ways to let the characters' language permeate the flow of

his narration. The following discussion of a Bustos story will provide ample grounds to examine some of the specific phenomena discussed thus far, along with some other effects resulting from the composition.

In Parodi's second case, "The Nights of Goliadkin," the narrator describes a character who is to visit the detective with an unresolved mystery: "Tall, distinguished, bland, his brush mustache tinted, Gervasio Montenegro stepped with blasé elegance into the police van and let himself be chauffeured to the penitentiary" ["Con una fatigada elegancia, Gervasio Montenegro—alto, distinguido, borroso, de perfil romántico y de bigote lacio y teñido—subió al coche celular y se dejó *voiturer* a la Penitenciaría" (*Six* 37; *Seis* 31)]. The series of adjectives carry the stylized description of the character. Montenegro's elegance is further qualified by the comic element present in Bustos's authorial discourse. The play of oppositions uncovers the character's demeanor as a fabricated pose. Given the historical and geographic context of the stories, the pose assumed by Montenegro is recognized in the incongruous manners of the late 1800's French dandy that are being enacted by the South American actor. Bustos reinforces the comic effect with the series of adjectives that counter "distinguished" to "bland." The adjective "borroso" (as in "not very clear") is an antithesis of "distinguido," which connotes "with precision," "distinct," or "clear." The result of the tension in the series is the comic effect addressed to the reader by Bustos Domecq. The play of oppositions is also apparent in the reported actions of the character. He allows himself to be chauffeured to the Penitentiary in the police van. The amount of choice involved in this casual action on the part of the character is nil. He has been detained by the police under suspicion of murder.

There is an overlap between the author's discourse, that the reader may assume to be an objective report, and the character's narrated perception. In fact, Bustos is rendering Montenegro's consciousness in his narrative passage.⁴ In this and other instances, Montenegro is particularly oblivious of the "reality" of his surroundings, and Bustos consistently exploits for comic effect the character's foibles. Bustos's description of the character presents two other instances of interest. The advert "fatigada" and the verb "voiturer," respectively rendered in English as "blasé" and "chauffeured" by the translator, are French linguistic peculiarities, or Gallicisms, that characterize Montenegro's speech. The verb and the adverb occur uncharacteristically in the author's exposition; both hail from the character's speech.⁵

The appropriation of another's words, or the placing of the words of others in new contexts, plays a key role in the composition of Bustos's mystery stories: "Mere puppets of curiosity—if not under direct pressure from the police—the characters gather in a colorful flock in the now legendary cell 273. On their first visit they put forward the mystery that troubles them; on their second they hear its solution, which astounds young and old alike" (9). *Skaz*

adds to the interest of these stories with their detective setting. The critic Ann Banfield explains: "There is only one form open to the writer intent on creating a lying storyteller. Because *skaz* is like direct speech, it can be read as false. And in the 'frame' often accorded the *skaz* tale, the disavowing sentence has its place—'All that he (or she) told me (or them) was a lie'" (264). Truth, as was suggested earlier, is produced precisely in this transcoding movement of the speech of one character into the speech of another. Parodi listens patiently to one and all, as the characters contradict each other and themselves. The transposing of the characters' speech into his own represents the final strategy that Don Isidro Parodi uses to arrive at a solution of the baffling mysteries reported by his visitors. The detective Parodi retells the stories that he has heard in his cell, "accentuating" different elements into a new discourse that attempts to demystify the telling of the events and produce a culprit or elucidate an explanation.

In a further development, the movement of appropriation is not limited to the unidirectional one that leads from the characters to the detective and the ultimate pronouncement of truth. The characters appropriate Parodi's insightful "discoveries" into subsequent versions, and thus it is that the newspaper reporter Achilles Molinari, and not Parodi, is popularly acclaimed as the person who resolved the mystery of "The Twelve Figures." The attribution by Molinari of his "success" to Parodi's talents is not believed by his public; rather, his honesty is perceived as undue generosity on Molinari's part (31). Perhaps the owner of less generous nature, Gervasio Montenegro will in turn brazenly appropriate Parodi's solution to his woes. After smoking several of Parodi's cigarettes (an uninvited action), and having listened to Parodi's version of the facts, the character exclaims: "It's the old, old story. . . . Straggling intellect once again confirms the artist's intuition. . . . Don't worry, my dear Parodi, I shan't be long in revealing my solution to the authorities" (55). Montenegro's pronouncement comes at the end of Parodi's disclosure, a long discursive re-elaboration of the character's preposterous testimony. Montenegro expresses agreement with Parodi's proposition by declaring it the product of "the artist's intuition." Montenegro's words of praise (for himself) are the confirmation that Parodi's exposition has hit the mark. Montenegro's agreement with Parodi's solution is intimately linked with an immediate and parallel act of appropriation of Parodi's words.

Agreement and appropriation are one in the reaction of the addressee. Parodi, the origin of the demystified pronouncement, is relegated by the exultant character to being "the straggling intellect" that verifies what Montenegro already knew: "I shan't be long in revealing *my solution*." In his agreement, Montenegro has become the "genial artist" and superseded Parodi's discourse with his own, which will become the official story of the case. In the introduction to the collection, a task with which he has been entrusted, Montenegro estab-

lishes a polemic with Bustos Domecq, suggesting that he has been slighted by the author: "The author, whose skill is as compact as it is artistic, reduces elementary reality and heaps all the laurels of the case on the brow of Parodi alone. The less perceptive reader will smile, suspecting the deliberate omission of some tedious inquiry and the unintentional omission of more than one inspired insight made by a gentleman on whose identity it would be inappropriate to dwell" (9-10).

Montenegro's speech represents the parodic stylization of the ornate language of Latin American Modernism, a literary movement from the turn of the century whose main representative was the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. The rhetorical excesses of Modernism reach their apotheosis in Montenegro's discourse: "I've sought light in the Balearics, color in Brindisi, and sophisticated sin in Paris. Also, like Renan, I've said a prayer on the Acropolis. I have squeezed the juice from life's bountiful bunch of grapes the world over" (35). The classical allusion, the Gallicisms, the metaphorical turn of phrase all work to create a level of difficulty in the understanding of Montenegro's case. The character's speech is bringing into play another aspect of Bustos's parodic project. He targets the literary rhetoric of Modernism within the narrative frame of a story geared at eliciting facts from discourse in order to arrive at the clarification of mysterious circumstances. The vices of Modernist literary practice, coupled with Montenegro's self-centered conceit, obfuscate rather than reveal the facts of the case to Parodi. There is a consistency in Montenegro's narrative mode that permits the reader to formulate a "margin of error" pertinent to all statements made by Montenegro: the actor is unable to consider the consequences of his actions and considers himself to be deserving of every deferential act on the part of others. As a result, Montenegro's transgressions are given comical, unilateral renderings in his story.

Characteristically, Montenegro assumes that Parodi's summation of "The Nights of Goliadkin" as "a story about a very brave, though star-crossed man—a man for whom I have enormous respect" (53)—is an indirect reference to his person. Actually, Parodi's reference is to Goliadkin, the victim of the story. Montenegro has been accused of Goliadkin's murder in a story that acknowledges one of Agatha Christie's inventive plots. Bustos deliberately incorporates the situation depicted by Christie in *Murder on the Orient Express* in his story, and adds a twist by naming the victim Goliadkin. The name recalls the protagonist of *The Double*, in parodic homage to the father of the "psycho-thriller" novel, Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Montenegro's account of the situation that he finds aboard the nonstop Pan-American Flyer from Bolivia to Buenos Aires is unique. Montenegro construes for Parodi a romantic farce of which he is the star. The intrigue, according to Montenegro, involves himself, and assorted male contenders for a baroness's favors: "The *baronne*, using as a pretext the midsummer heat, kept lowering

her neckline and pressing herself against Goliadkin—just to excite me (44). In this atmosphere of frivolous competition, Montenegro wins a diamond from his compartment companion, Mr. Goliadkin. After Goliadkin's disappearance, Montenegro is inexplicably charged with larceny and murder. It is evident that Montenegro has failed to understand the nature of the plot unleashed about him. Montenegro fails, among other things, to register the inconsistencies in character of his fellow passengers: a baroness who is a Communist sympathizer, an aged Texas colonel with the strength and agility of a much younger man, a regional poet born and raised in a region different from the one he writes about, and a blustery, ill-tempered Father Brown.

The bizarre aggregation of characters aboard the Pan-American Flyer, as in *Murder on the Orient Express*, are all involved in a plot against Goliadkin. Their purpose is to obtain the diamond. Montenegro, in his blind pursuit of amorous adventure, manages to foil their plans on more than one occasion. The note of duplicity struck by Goliadkin's name is thoroughly developed by Bustos Domecq. Montenegro buys his ticket and boards the express "soberly attired" as a Bolivian Indian in an attempt to elude some pursuers who are extraneous to the plot. The assortment of characters that Montenegro consequently meets is something other than what they appear to be, particularly the unbelievable Father Brown, who is a malevolent *Doppelgänger* of Chesterton's benevolent character. The double motif is further associated with the character of Goliadkin by the fact that he has two diamonds in his possession, a real and a fake one, in identical cases.

The allusion to Goliadkin is particularly interesting to the present discussion of mimetic voice because of the narrative complications it presents and the parallels it offers to *Six Problems*. The critic Roger B. Anderson provides the following summary of Dostoevsky's novel:

It chronicles the accelerating madness of a minor bureaucrat, Golyadkin [sic]. Starting with a persistent vacillation between two personality tendencies, he falls prey to hallucinations of a double, Golyadkin "Jr." We become progressively lost in his fantasies until it is hard to tell which characters in the story are real and whether any of them are distinct from the protagonist's exaggerated subjectivity. To add to the problem, there is no objective narrative voice on which to rely for information. Rather, Dostoevsky chose to use a first-person narrator who identifies himself with the values and person of his confused protagonist. (12)

The Double is precisely the book that Bakhtin uses in his discussion of "the orientation of one person to another person's discourse and consciousness" in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

In *The Double*, a parodic stylization of the "high style" from *Dead Souls* is refracted through the narrator's voice; in general, *The Double* is sprin-

kled with parodic and semiparodic allusions to various works of Gogol. It should be noted that these parodic tones in the narrative are directly interwoven with a mimicry of Golyadkin. (226)

As in *Six Problems* and the literary parody of Modernism evident in Montenegro's speech, Dostoevsky's early work presents a general parodic orientation realized through the narrator's voice. Further, in terms of narrative voice, the character-narrator Goliadkin presents some notable parallels with Montenegro, and may indeed function as a Slavic double of the vain itinerant Argentine actor, since "what [Goliadkin] wants to see becomes the sole criterion of what is real to him" (Anderson 20). Thus, as in the Parodi stories, the central problem in *The Double* is cognition:

As he filters out much of factual life, [Goliadkin's] personality becomes both more intriguing and misshapen. In the end, it is the order of "Sr."s special wants, so different from those of his alter-ego double, that determines his actions and constitutes the novel's essential organization. The competition between cognitive models in Golyadkin is not open to compromise or synthesis; each threatens the other in a most fundamental way. . . . Each important fact, deed, or motive simultaneously refers to an opposed order of value. As a result, events in *The Double* are at the same time coherent and incoherent. (16)

In light of this discussion, it is easier to understand the motivation behind Montenegro's appropriation of Parodi's rejoinder to his narrative. Parodi's solution to the mystery represents the "opposed order of value" that negates Montenegro's point of view, and hence devalues his worth as a narrating entity. In contrast to *The Double*, Bustos externalizes the structuring dialogue of Dostoevsky's novel by positing independent consciousness in the fictional world and allowing for the "finalizing artistic summation" customary to the detective genre. True to the form, Bustos posits the detective's speech as the "authoritative and stabilized medium of refraction" for all of the characters' discourses. In this, Parodi represents the author-monologist, whose "intentions and evaluations must dominate over all the others and must form a compact and unambiguous whole" (Bakhtin 203). However, by means of the characters' appropriation (be it willful or unintended) of the "authorial interpretations" that take place in the privacy of Cell 273, Bustos endeavors to diffuse the monological association of a single speech center and single consciousness as the source of truth in the stories.

Judgment of the relative coherence of the characters' accounts is not limited to the detective. Other characters "listen in" on the testimonies presented to Parodi. They evaluate the speech of others from their points of view and express their opinions on the margins of the stories. For example, in "Tai An's

Long Search," Montenegro returns after his success with the Golyadkin case to describe a crime scene for Parodi:

The ground floor is dedicated to the salesroom and the *atelier*.^{*} The upper floor—I mean, *cela va sans dire*, before the fire—served as the hearth and home, the inviolable *chez lui* of Fang She, that particle of the Far East transplanted to the Argentine capital complete with all his native character and failings. (143)

The footnote, "written in the hand of Carlos Anglada," addresses Montenegro's idiosyncrasies with the following words: "Not at all. We—the contemporaries of the machine gun and biceps—repudiate this delicate rhetoric. I should say, with the finality of a bullet, 'I put salesroom and *atelier* on the ground floor. I lock the Chinamen upstairs.'" Anglada's rebuff is itself a parodic stylization of the rhetoric and imagery of Italian Futurism, one of the early twentieth century *avant-garde* movements that superseded Modernism in younger poetic circles of Latin America. Bustos adapts and heightens the style of Futurism, but parodies it by using it for purposes that are incongruous with the intentions of the style.⁶ Both styles enter into open polemics on the margins of Bustos's stories as the characters react critically to the other's discourse. Discourse in the Parodi stories, "like the word in living conversation," is consistently aware of its listener; in the words of Bakhtin, "[discourse] provokes an answer, anticipates it, and structures itself in the answer's direction" (280).

The appropriation of another's way of speaking or idiosyncratic expressions play a role in the detection process of *Six Problems*. Parodi shares with Bustos an interest for "the sum total of devices associated with the other's speech precisely as an expression of a particular point of view" (PODP 189). The detective is able to infer an adulterous relation—and a shared criminal motive to murder the husband—between the socialite Mariana Ruiz Villalba and the poet José Formento by the expressions, peculiar to the poet, that she uses to render her version of the events in "The God of the Bulls." Later, the reader is allowed to assume the existence of a new amorous liaison in the life of Villalba, who has married Anglada, when she uses the expressions of yet another man, Mario Bonfanti, in "Free Will and the Commendatore." The inference of this new attachment in Villalba's life is inconsequential to the criminal plot of the story, but the reader has been keyed into the hidden polemic and is able to recognize the farcical truth that it reveals.

When suspicion becomes part of the reader's conscious intellectual project in relation to the text, "Biorges's" program is complete. As Borges reminded his interviewer in "Twenty-Four Conversations:" "We read a detective story suspecting everything beforehand, but the manner of reading has been created by the detective story" (46). The issue remains to be answered whether the Parodi stories are parodic as *detective* stories. Caution should be exercised in

answering this apparently obvious critical inquiry. Don Isidro Parodi solves crimes in jail, but that in itself does not make the detective stories parodical. The Argentine detective is one in a line of detectives who thrives on imposed restrictions to their investigations. As Montenegro reminds the reader in the prologue, Parodi is an heir to Max Carrados, who "carried with him everywhere the portable jail of his blindness" (12). The sedentary sleuths that came into prominence in the years after the First World War are themselves parodic reminders of Dupin and Holmes's performances. Parodi imitates, but his intention is evidently not very different from that of his forerunners. In this lineage, Don Isidro would be one more parodic expression of a parodic tradition. The creative parody in the Parodi stories should be sought in the way the characters let the familiar language ring out with new accents, allowing it to enter modern consciousness and transform both language and consciousness in the process.⁷

This study, finally, represents an attempt to elaborate on an aspect of the *Six Problems* that is central to the composition of the stories: the illusion of orality and its textual effects. Thus far, the critical community has predominantly focused on the parodic and satirical aspects of Bustos's text.⁸ The fact that the detective is in jail and has "the honor of being the first detective to be a jailbird," points to another intention, distinct from parody, found in the collection of *Six Problems*. Social and political satire is also in Bustos Domecq's agenda: "Parodi's appearance, his *trouvaile*, is an Argentine achievement, produced—it should be noted—during the presidency of Dr. Castillo" (12). The only place where truth is efficiently produced in 1942, according to the Parodi stories, is the state penitentiary. The reference to the brief conservative presidency of Ramón S. Castillo, who ended the Concordancia agreement that had united conservative, liberal, and socialist interests since 1931, suggests the deteriorating national circumstances that ended with the military coup of 1943. The Group of United Officers that commanded the coup were "strongly influenced by Italian fascism and profoundly nationalist in orientation," according to the historian Donald C. Hodges: "Because of the pronounced Axis sympathies of the new military regime, its indefinite prolongation of the state of siege decreed in 1941, its dissolution of congress, and its legal ban of all political parties, it evoked extensive civilian opposition" (7–8). Along with a sympathetic reference on the part of Parodi to the militarily deposed Radical president Hipólito Yrigoyen, who had represented "a broad coalition including the new industrial bourgeoisie and a petty bourgeois popular base" (8), the only other reference to the political reality of the times makes clear the Allied sympathies and individualist outlook of the detective:

"People nowadays expect the government to do everything for them. If you're poor the government has to find you a job. If you fall ill the government has to pay your hospital bill. Kill someone and instead of paying

for it yourself you ask the government to punish you. You may say that I'm a fine one to talk like this, since the state is keeping me. But I still believe, sir, that a man has to shift for himself." "I too believe that, Mr. Parodi," [the suspect] Fang She said deliberately. "Many men are dying in the world today in defense of that belief." (158)

In 1942, Parodi's apparent advocacy of Reaganomics was a strongly polemical commentary in the face of popular and institutional sympathy for the tenets of Italian and German fascist ideology.⁹ In the context of national events, the coincidental presence of the agent of truth in the jailhouse provides a satirical view of Argentina. The prison is the frame that simulates the model of Argentine society. The strict delimitation that one assumes of the penal space is blurred in the Parodi stories as the characters visit, with institutional consent, to consult a prisoner who is, after all, serving time for someone else's crime. The prison is a model for a stratified world that organizes and contains the characters into a series of socially determined enclosures. The prison is also a living structure whose linguistic boundaries can be heard in the various accents of Parodi's visitors. In the spirit of Bustos Domecq's enterprise, it would not be unfounded to affirm that the living structure that contains and separates Parodi from his visitors represents "the prison-house of language" alluded to by Nietzsche: "We have to cease to think if we refuse to do it in the prison-house of language; for we cannot reach further than the doubt which asks whether the limit we see is really a limit" (522). And this interpretation of Parodi's predicament brings the reader again into the realm of parody.

In "Books and Friendship," Bioy recalls that Borges, Silvina Ocampo and he dreamed up a story in 1938 (never written) in which the protagonist, searching among the papers of a dead author found a list of prohibitions, under the rubric "In literature one must avoid." The list included the recommendation to disregard "the censorship or praise of the critics" (180). Given the wan reception given to Bustos Domecq and his works, and the tenacity with which "Bioy" continued to produce Bustos's art, it is evident that the precept was held close to his double heart. Knowing that the following appraisal will be of little or no interest to Honorio Bustos Domecq, it must be noted in conclusion that *Six Problems* is the fruition of an encounter that took place fifty years ago, when two individuals subsumed their personalities under one name to produce one of the most interesting, and pleasurable collaborative works of our literary heritage.

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1. *Seis problemas para Don Isidro Parodi* in 1942 would be followed by *Dos fantasías memorables* (1946), *Un modelo para la muerte* (1946), *Crónicas de Bustos Domecq* (1967) and *Nuevos cuentos de Bustos Domecq* (1977).

2. Even with this authorial capacity enacted by the detective, there is often a surplus left in the solution, that refers the case to the reader's attention and forces the formulation of a more complete or accurate version of the events explained by Parodi. This is not to say that Parodi is ever wrong; on the contrary, his solutions are imaginative and creatively satisfying. The inconsistencies that are found in Parodi's narration stand in contrast to an idealized text and seem to be deliberate. As Ann Banfield explains: "Where an inconsistency appears in an actual text, it is ascribed to the author as a mistake on his part, contaminating the text. Such an inconsistency is proper to a narrator only in *skaz*, where it is a deliberate part of the fiction" (219-20).

3. The *Dictionary of Narratology* defines *skaz* as "a narrative fashioned to give the illusion of spontaneous speech . . . [Skaz] is firmly set in a communicative framework. The manner of telling (the distinctive features and peculiarities of the narrator's speech) is as important to the effect of the narrative as the situations and events recounted" (Prince 88).

4. This practice found in Bustos's art has been denominated "narrated perception" by the critic R. J. Lethcoe and explained by him as follows: "the report of a character's conscious perceptions . . . presented in such a manner that they resemble objective report, but on careful consideration can be shown to be transcriptions of consciousness rather than reality" (205).

5. The parodic intention of Bustos's practices is yet another dimension of the Parodi stories. Asked in an interview whether Dr. Mario Bonfanti, a character in *Six Problems*, was a parodic rendering of the Argentine poet Arturo Capdevila (1889-1967), or Enrique Larreta (1875-1961), once Minister Plenipotentiary of Argentina to France and an admirer of Spain and the Hispanic tradition who won immediate fame for *La gloria de don Ramiro* (1908), a novel reconstructing Philip II's Spain, Borges answered: "I admire Capdevila, and as for Larreta, maybe he is reflected in another character in the book, in Gervasio Montenegro. And there's a remark once made by Larreta on some page of *Six Problems*, except that it is used jocularly there while Larreta wrote it in a totally serious vein" (Sorrentino 98).

6. The movement spearheaded by Tommaso Marinetti sought to celebrate industry, technical advance understood as progress, and the qualities of immediacy and dynamism. Marinetti dedicated poems to racecars, scaffolds, and to the machine gun alluded to by Anglada: Tap-tap-tap-tap . . . /Nuestra linda y loca ametalladora/sacude su pacifismo/por encima de todo;/los flautines de las balas/la talonean . . . /tzin-tzin . . . /tzin, tzin, zi tzin zi/ y/ zuuuu/ ;buuuu! (Rodríguez 167)

7. Parody, in *Six Problems*, is also to be found in relation to other specific literary exponents in Argentina. Along with characters that represent in their speech the movements of Italian Futurism and Latin American Modernism, the critic Mireya Camurati identifies in the speech of Gervasio Montenegro prosopopeias in the manner of Leopoldo Lugones (1874-1938) and a direct quote from Ricardo Güiraldes (1886-1927) (89).

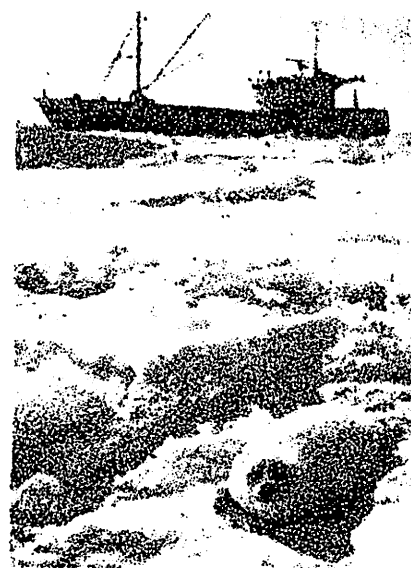
8. Cf. the articles by Cossío, Avellaneda, and the chapter in Simpson's dissertation on H. Bustos Domecq for discussions on the issues of parody and satire in relation to *Six Problems*.

9. In the book *Argentina, 1943-1976*, Hodges writes that "Argentina was the only nation in the Western Hemisphere that did not declare war against the Axis powers until the outcome of World War II was already decided, and then only to avoid becoming isolated and the subject of recriminations by the United States" (7).

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