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**Paper Two: The Rhetoric of Reality**

So far, we have seen how stories have a long tradition of conforming to genres. Epics always read like epics, lyrics always read like lyrics. Horace described some of our expectations when it comes to art. And we see them, even today. There is something eerily consistent about the structure of art.

In the story “The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero” in *Labyrinths*, Jorge Luis Borges writes about dramatic actors staging public performances that look real. Borges introduces another element: the actors stage Shakespeare. Shakespeare, it seems, can be mistaken for political reality. Strangely, the political reality in Borges is three hundred years out of date! Does the relevance of Shakespeare to (fictional) political life in Borges say something about the way stories float above history?

What is the line between the shape of a story and the shape of reality? Are our days mapped along dramatic lines? Do we imagine our lives as if they were biographies? Is each event in a life significant in some larger scheme, as it is in a story? Are our lives shaped like stories?

Conversely, do we measure the worth of a story by its realism? What kind of truth are we expecting in a story? True-to-life? True like a wise saying? How do we determine what St. Augustine called the wisdom of a text? Are our stories shaped like life?

Contemplate some of these questions and write 500 words or so on the relationship between reality and stories.

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500 words. Worth 6%, due **soon**.