

Jorge Luis Borges

August 24th. 1899

Buenos Aires, Argentina

June 1986 Geneva

A presentation by Jutta Hesketh May 2020

My choice of author is perhaps one that some may not have read before but as I grew up at the time when Jorge Luis Borges was at last becoming well known in his own country, although already known abroad, I thought that I would find it relatively easy to deliver this paper.

How mistaken was I!

Although he was a very good poet, I will not write about his poetry because, in spite of some excellent translations into English, I don't feel comfortable with the latter. Maybe because Spanish is my first language and approaching old age too rapidly I seem to revert into it all too often.

However, as to Borges' background, he was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 24th August 1899.

He could truly be judged as a writer, but time and again he stated:

Quote: 'I am not a writer, I am a reader'

Perhaps he is not a genius of the very first class, a group to which I attribute, as an example, Virgil, Dante, Homer, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Proust, even Goethe.

These are authors who are and have been the basis of the literature of most countries.

Yet Spencer, Addison, Fielding, Thackeray, Dickens, Tennyson and countless others are without a shadow of doubt English, or Anglo Saxon authors, their enormous literary output cannot be anything but the latter.

Equally, when reading Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, or Tolstoy the flavour of their writing is Russian or Baudelaire, Moliere, Victor Hugo, they cannot be any other than French authors.

So we come to Borges, I would put him in with a particular group which does not fit into the universal group as Shakespeare does.

Just as the above are unmistakably French, British or other, Borges cannot be mistaken for any other than an Argentine author.

Reading his responses to interviews given in USA at Harvard in 1968, and in English, as Borges had grown up speaking both Spanish and English, one can sense what was in his heart and mind, the soulful, introspective tone which is so typical of the Argentine character.

There is a rhythm in his sentences and an inversion in sentence formation which I can detect. At times I still suffer from that and am not always conscious of it.

A little more about his background as it is that which shaped this unusual man's thinking and character.

His mother, Leonor Acevedo, was the granddaughter of Colonel Isidoro Suarez. A great hero who was involved in fighting for Argentine independence from Spain in 1816.

The Acevedos were Unitarios, but not in the religious sense as we understand the word 'Unitarians', but were united against Spanish oppression in the country.

They were a real 'criollo' family which never deviated from its political beliefs. They were very much against the 'gringos', ie: the immigrants, Italians, Germans, English, Hungarians, etc.

Leonor Suarez Acevedo, Borges' grandmother, considered herself a criolla, a through and through 'portena', a patrician in the eyes of society.



This was fortunately tempered by Borges' grandmother on his father's side. She was English, born in Handley, Staffordshire, whose father and his family had travelled to Buenos Aires to teach English in a bi-lingual school in the city.

Frances (Fanny) Haslam married Colonel Borges, a step up in the social scale, who also spoke English, a language that was always spoken at home. Borges writes in one of his Essays that as soon as they stepped out of their home, they reverted to Spanish!

Both he and his sister were encouraged from a very early age to read English literature, in English of course.

No small wonder that Jorge Luis was growing up bilingual and deeply steeped in English Literature.

He tells us in one of the many interviews in the USA that he only realized as he was growing up that he was speaking in two languages, Spanish and English, which to him were interchangeable.

I know myself what it is to grow up bilingual. When I first came to England as a student in 1953 whenever I was 'stuck' for a word, I used a Spanish one! That soon had to be corrected!

The family was not well off; they moved to a house in the district of Palermo, a poor area of the city, at a time when hoodlums and cut throats were roaming the streets.

In my own youth, some thirty or forty years later, it would have been beyond my parents' income to buy a property there, how things change just in one generation.

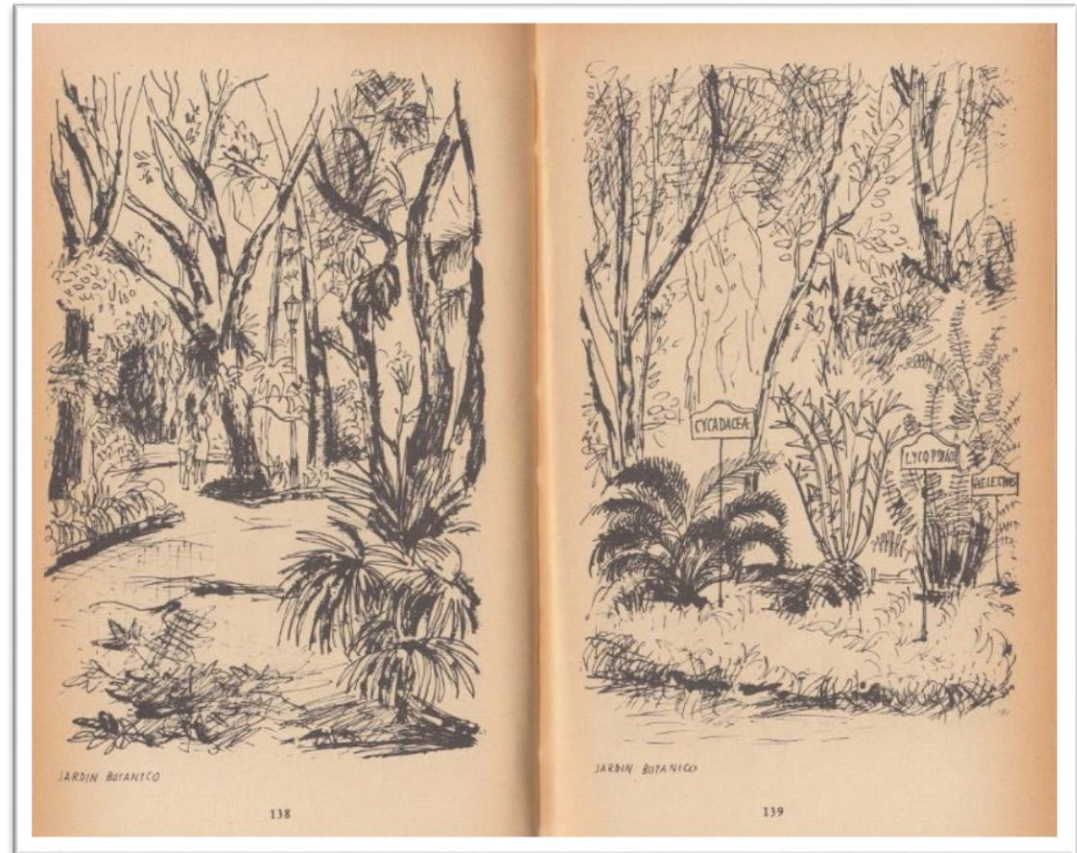
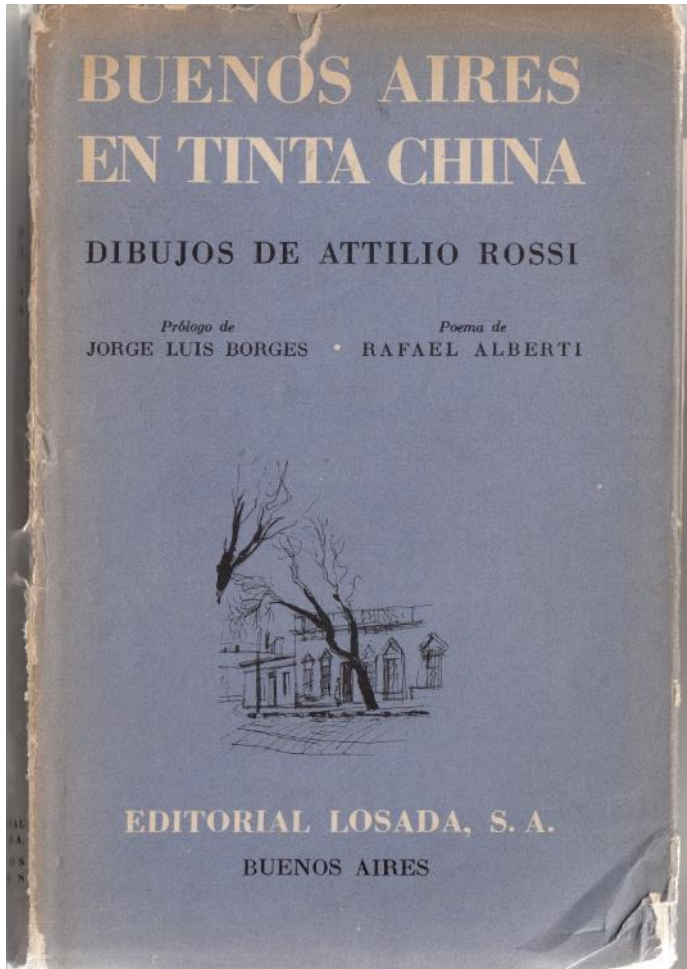
One of the lakes in Palermo Park, as I remember it.

When they became better off, the family moved with both grandmothers, to a house in a more central area, a street called Tucuman.



In 1951, Borges wrote a Prologue to this little book:

'Buenos Aires en Tinta China'
(Indian Ink) which is illustrated by **Attilio Rossi** with poems by **Rafael Alberti**.



Borges always felt that the Sur (the South of the city) is the original 'substance' of Buenos Aires, he stresses the platonic or universal idea that it defines the city, the real city.

It is interesting that in 1921, thirty years before he wrote the prologue to the above mentioned book, he was going to celebrate the Sur with metres based on Walt Whitman's poetry, an author and poet whom he much admired throughout his life.

He lauds the low built houses, the rose covered corners, the fig trees. He mentions the almacén, the grocer's shop found on most corners. I well remember that as they were lit late into the night.

To Borges the South side of the city is still, in a mysterious way, the modest , secret centre of the city, not the other somewhat ostentatious centre that is shown to tourists nowadays.

The Boca or San Telmo, two districts, which when I was young were almost forbidden areas, are now in the C21st a must for visitors!

The North districts of the city were to Borges an imperfect symbol of the Argentine yearning for Europe, the Old World, as it was called in my day.

Borges was a sickly, myopic child, at first educated at home then sent to a local school in Palermo where he was very unhappy. Bullied and not being able to keep up with the tougher children, led his parents to move him to a very academic school, Manuel Belgrano. My three brothers went there, my cousins and their children. The teachers were Hermanos Maristas, teaching Brothers, in fact, I believe St. Anselm's in Birkenhead, is/was run by the Congregation of Christian Brothers.

Two of our grandsons were educated there. One now a dental surgeon, the other an economist.

It was at this school that Borges learnt to use words in a more meaningful way. He states in an early Essay "A Profession of Literary Faith" that:

Quote: "I am a man who ventured to write and even publish some verses that recall the memory of two neighbourhoods of this city that are deeply entrenched in his life, for in one of them he spent his childhood and in the other he delighted and suffered in a love that perhaps was great....' he continues to say that 'My postulate is that all literature, in the end, is autobiographical. Everything is poetic that confesses, that gives us a glimpse of a destiny. In lyric poetry, this destiny usually remains immutable, alert but always by symbols that are congenial to its idiosyncrasy and allows us to follow its trace."

He continues: "The variety of words is another error. All the academicians recommend it, I think, mistakenly. I believe words must be conquered, lived, and that the apparent publicity they receive from the dictionary is a falsehood.

The page that justifies me, that summarizes my destiny, is the one that perhaps only the attending angels will hear when Judgement Day arrives."

In 1914 his parents made the extraordinary decision to travel to Geneva, ostensibly for his father to consult an eye specialist. Just before the 1st World war started! But it was thought that as Switzerland was a neutral country there would be no danger.

Both Borges' father and grandmother Fanny suffered from a genetic deterioration in their sight, as Jorge Luis himself did, he was to become completely blind in later age. Borges finally got a Baccalaureate in Geneva but did not shine in academic subjects.

After the war ended in 1919 the family travelled through Spain, then Majorca where Borges was inspired by the beauty of the island and wrote the first poems that he allowed to be published.

This visit led him to write, although much later on in his life, an essay titled 'Kafka and his Precursors' in which he mentions Robert Browning, whom he much admired.

In the latter's poem "Fears and Scruples"* Browning already prophesies the work of Kafka.....he did not read the word 'precursor' as we read or understand it now. The word 'precursor' is indispensable to the vocabulary of criticism.....The fact is that each writer creates his precursors.

* Written in 1876, 12 stanzas with 48 lines; a religious poem.

In Sevilla young Borges met and joined the 'Grecia' Group, an outpost of the ULTRA movement in Madrid which was closely related to German Expressionism and Italian Futurism.

The Ultraists, as the name denotes, was an extreme group who attempted to pass beyond the limits of the known! Could one now call them Avant- Garde? I personally would like to posit a question, are our C21st scientists already getting there?

In later life, Borges' opinion was that the Ultraists, who had set out to renew literature, knew nothing whatsoever!

Quote: "It baffled my Argentine mind to learn that they had no French and no inkling at all that such a thing as English Literature existed."

He emphasises that their knowledge was not great in spite of their Avant- Garde ideas of the early C20th.

At the time that the family was travelling through Spain, Borges' father was working on a translation into Spanish of Edward Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam .

RUBAIYAT · OF
OMAR · KHAYYAM

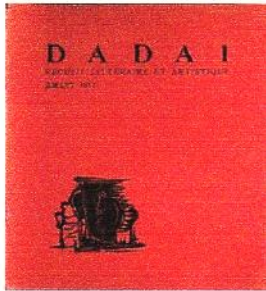
TRANSLATED · INTO · ENGLISH
VERSE · BY · EDWARD · FITZGERALD
WITH · AN · INTRODUCTION · BY

 A.C. BENSON.
FELLOW · OF · MAGDALENE
COLLEGE · CAMBRIDGE · 

REPRODUCED · FROM · A · MANUSCRIPT · WRITTEN
AND · ILLUMINATED · BY · F. SANGORSKI & G. SUTCLIFFE.

SIEGLE, HILL & Co.
LONDON 





Cover of the first edition of the publication *Dada* by Tristan Tzara; Zurich, 1917



Grand opening of the first Dada Fair, Berlin, June 1920. File: Grand opening of the first International Dada Fair, Berlin, am 5. Juni 1920. Von links nach rechts: Hansmann, Hans Höck, Dr. Borchard, Baader, W. Herzfeld, Hans Borchardt, Berlin, 5 June 1920.jpg

As a young man he was warmly welcomed into the group. They discussed literature, philosophy and art.

They recited their own poems, were keen on Tristan Tzara's Dada Movement in art. As time went by, Borges rejected Dadaism and became much more influenced by German Expressionism.

Quote: "...a poet's experience of reality must be REFRACTED through the active prism of feeling and imagination."

He questions whether reality and its interpretation are affairs of the mind and therefore "...are there as many realities as there are minds?"

Most of us evaluate a given event in different ways, so Borges deduces that none can be wrong.

Throughout his life he insisted that he was first and foremost a **reader** not a **writer**. He always, to the end of his life, insisted that “.....I lay no claim to any particular theories”.

In fact, he was sceptical of aesthetic theories and useless abstractions. Literature was to him a joy.

When writing he had no system, no programme or a grand scheme. Most if not all his prolific output was based on dreams, or day dreams.... that, again, is part of his introspective, soulful character.

There is an Argentine reserve, a reticence, a wariness, a difficulty in confiding or in being intimate.

Borges imagines most of the plots in his stories; if you were to read some of his essays you can immediately detect the great influence of the vast knowledge he acquired throughout his life.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his book ‘100 Years of Solitude’ pays tribute to Borges’ “...extraordinary capacity for verbal artifice”.



Borges travelled to the USA in 1967, during an interview with Richard Burgin they discussed the merits of Lewis Carroll’s “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”.

Jorge Luis had read the book as a child and had felt it was eerie and uncanny. He was conscious of it being a nightmarish book, he wondered whether Lewis Carroll was aware of that.

Quote: “But now when I re-read it...(remember this interview took place in 1967 when he was 68 years old)... I think the nightmare touches are pretty clear.”



Another question that remains for me to be answered : 'is he a craftsman, a pure old fashioned teller of tales?'

His message is about ideas, insights into life and his observations of the latter, they do not necessarily have a moral message as William Hogarth, Henry Fielding or Miguel de Cervantes do in their novels.

Borges used earlier literature as a source for his stories, his articles and his essays. His prose is largely modelled on Robert Louis Stevenson, whom he also much admired, on H.G.Wells , there is a compactness reminiscent of G.K.Chesterton's writings.

Borges sees both sides of an argument, it is always ..."What if" or "...but...suppose...". I have a similar tendency to see both sides of an argument or what might make people react in one way or another. It is not about 'not being able to make up one's mind but being able to 'suppose such and such were to happen or be or has been...'

In Lord Byron's Don Juan we read that " I only suppose this supposition".

Very frequently Borges has been made out to be inhuman, of a monstrous literary intelligence. When speaking with my niece who studied his work at school in the 1970's, she told me that he was not known to be a pleasant man, in fact, he was disliked, as was his literary output by that young generation.

Personally, I can only say '...a man is not a prophet in his own country...'

That Borges is more a reader than a writer is certain. His diffidence, his humility and his struggle to come to terms with what life has dealt him, has set him up as an influential author.

His blindness, I touched upon it earlier on, led him to:

Quote: "I did not find myself in a dark black world". He quotes a line from Shakespeare:

"Looking on blindness which the blind do see" which encouraged him throughout his affliction.

Blindness or darkness is not what he saw it as. To him it was a modest blindness as it came on gradually. He no longer slept in the dark, he slept in a world of mist, a greenish, bluish one.

Although his father and his grandmother died blind, it was with laughter and bravery. He also hoped to die with laughter but doubted that bravery was his strength.

Certain colours became clearer to him, yellow, blue, except that blue was at times green and vice versa. White had disappeared, only to come back as a greyish shade. He hoped that some day red would return; red is a colour which shines in poetry and has many beautiful names in other languages: scharlach, escarlata, scarlet, ecarlate. Borges could 'see' the Casa Rosada, the President's House on Plaza de Mayo, which has always been and is up to this day, painted in a light red colour.

Surprisingly, living in a world of partial blindness, colour, in his words "...was a mixture of what I could still see and what I could remember..."

Quote: "I could see clearly when I was born in 1899 and for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a century after, it was like a slow nightmare".

Please view this 'photo of the Medical University Building with the writing on the next page.



One of the happiest honours that he had received was the Directorship of the National Library. This prestigious appointment was given to him by the Aramburu government, (1955- 1958)..

In 1946 Borges had been demoted from another library to a very menial job by the Peron government which he refused to accept.

He had openly complained about the regime that Peron imposed on the country as he was against fascism and the military government that came into power in the early 1940's. Both his mother and his sister were in prison for a while.

I remember those years clearly, it was not an easy time for most of the citizens of the country.

My father refused to sign allegiance to Peron's regime and consequently had to resign from his post at the Faculty of Odontology where he held the Chair of Microbiology.

(see 'photo of Faculty of Medicine/ Odontology in previous slide)

Equally, one of my brothers, a medical student in the early 1950's, was involved in anti Peronista demonstrations. Had family friends not helped him leave the country quickly, he would have been imprisoned and possibly tortured as some of his fellow students were.

At this time Borges began to study Anglo Saxon Literature which to him is full of elegiac poetry, he knew that to do full justice to the Sagas he would have to learn the Scandinavian language as well.

Both the literature and its sagas encouraged him to write poems on those themes.

This, as he tells us in one of his essays, had been inspired through blindness. What he did from then on was to replace the visible world with the aural world and in so doing, he knew that he had moved on to an even richer world of literature.

In 1977, as he was preparing a collection of Scandinavian Literature, he was made an excellent offer. If he could write thirty poems within the next year, they would be published in a collected edition. Borges, in his usual positive way, thought this would be no problem and accepted in spite of his worsening blindness!

He felt he could compose poetry in his mind when on long walks, he could also correct them in his mind.

He 'wrote' short stories in his mind which he then dictated, initially to his mother, then to various younger people who read them back to him should any corrections be needed. They also took down other notes as he dictated them. Many of his amanuensis worked in bookshops that Borges knew well so he had plenty of help at hand.

A close friendship was formed when he was giving lectures and interviews in the USA. Norman Thomas di Giovanni, an American, then living in Scotland who worked with Borges from 1968- 1972 in Buenos Aires itself, also in the USA.

di Giovanni's translations are probably more acceptable than many others, both men also worked on articles that Borges had written in English. He has also produced six volumes of Borges' prose and poetry

The Book of Imaginary Beings is one such book, both Borges and di Giovanni researched world wide literature to write these stories. You might enjoy many of the chapters in it. As the back cover tells us: 'This is an inventory (from A to Z) of curious creatures compiled by a great South American writer.'

From A: 'On the Stairway of the Tower of Victory in Chitor there has lived since the beginning of time a being sensitive to the many shades of the human soul and known as **A Bao A Qu**.....'

To Z: 'As to the **Zaratan**, I never met anyone who actually saw it with his own eyes....'

An Animal Imagined by C.S.Lewis

The noise was very loud now and the thicket very dense so that he could not see a yard ahead, when the music stopped suddenly. There was a sound of rustling and broken twigs and he made hastily in that direction, but found nothing.....

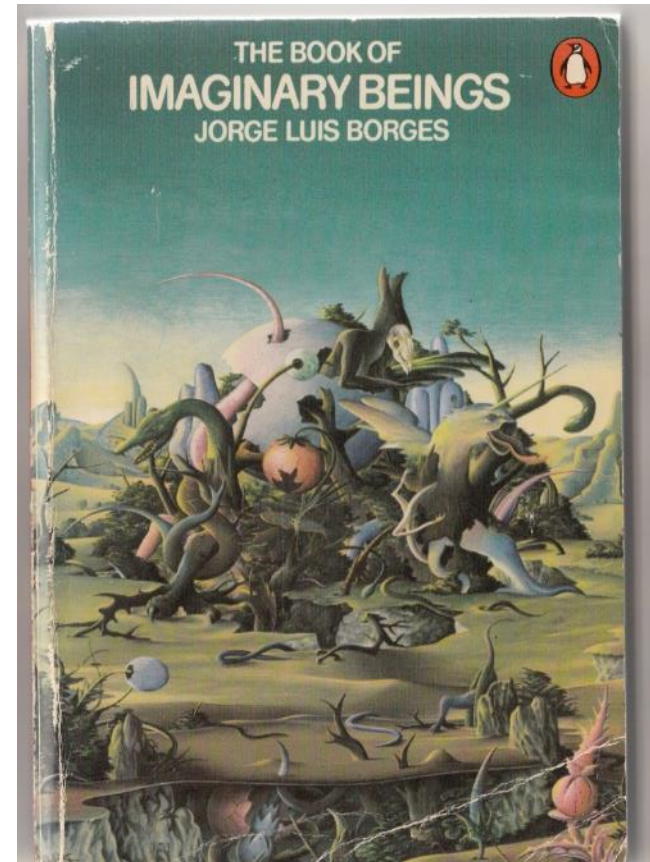
Treading delicately during one of the loudest bursts of music he at last saw through the flowery branches a black something.

...It sat upright like a dog, black and sleek and shiny, but its shoulders were high above Ransome's head and the fore legs on which they were pillared were like young trees and the wide soft pads on which they rested were large as those of a camel.....

When he called to it it came nearer. It put its velvet nose into his hand and endured his touch.

.....

.....C.S.Lewis: *Perelandra*



One story “The Double” ...’is suggested or stimulated by reflections in mirrors and in water.’ As I mentioned before, Borges was very taken with the theme of a double, an idea common to many other countries.

Quote: Pythagoras:“A friend is another self” or the platonic “Know thyself.”

In Germany ‘Der Doppelganger’, in Scotland ‘The Fetch’ where to meet oneself is ominous. Yet in the Jewish faith, the appearance of one’s double was not an omen of imminent death, it was proof of having obtained prophetic powers.

The above amongst so many other essays, is a very interesting one.

In an essay titled 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' written in 1951 he:

Quote: "Everything we Argentine writers do felicitously will belong to Argentine tradition, in the same way as the use of Italian subjects belong to the tradition of England through the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare."

The above quotation brings me to Leopoldo Lugones, a major Argentine poet and friend of the Borges family as far back as their Palermo days.

Lugones wanted to 'fix' the Argentine identity in the past, whereas Borges had a dynamic vision of nationhood and urged his fellow 'criollos' to look to the future.

In particular, Borges wanted them and their literature to be different from Spanish writing.

Lugones proposes that the country possesses a classic poem "Martin Fierro" by Jose Hernandez and that this poem should be for them what the Homeric poems were for the Greeks.

Borges does agree and believes that "Martin Fierro" is the most lasting work that "...we Argentines have written....yet it is not their Bible nor their canonical book."

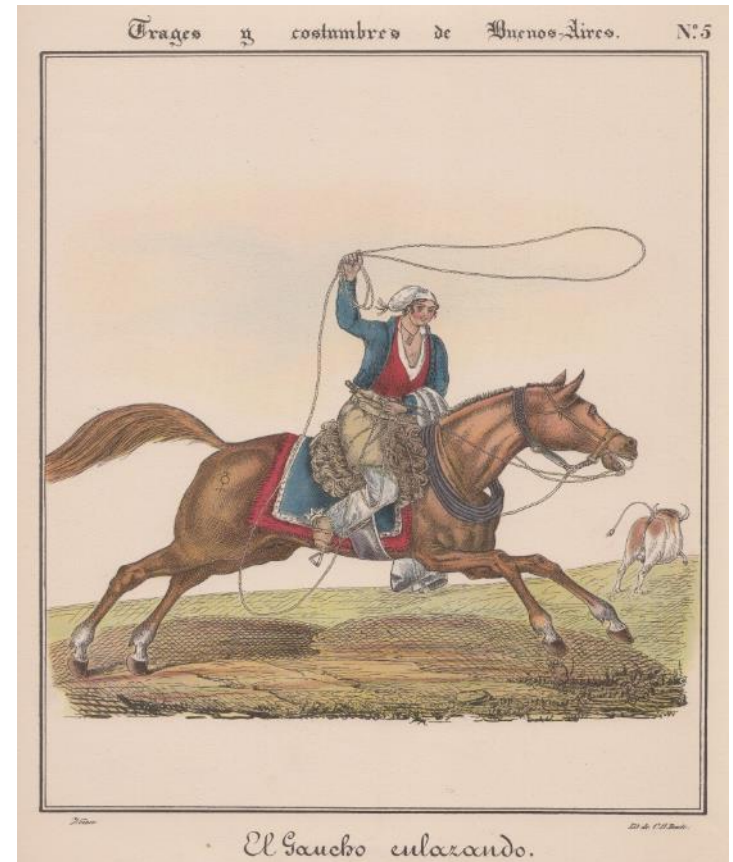
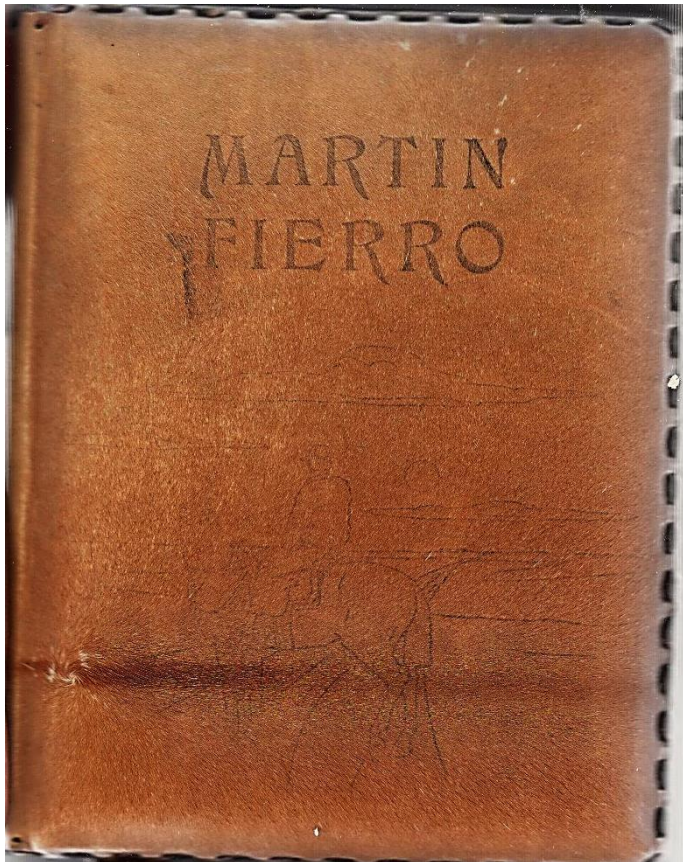
He makes a distinct difference between the 'payadores'* that Lugones lauds and the gauchos but does link the two by saying that their poetry is spontaneous, it is of the gauchos themselves.

Can we find a connection here with the strolling players and minstrels in earlier centuries in England?

*payadores were actors, singers and story tellers.

Quote: “...the popular poets of the countryside and of the outskirts of the city versify several themes, the pain of love and absence and the sorrow of love....”

Martin Fierro is a sainted deserter and his friend Cruz is the sainted police deserter. There is a wonderful short story which tells us how Tadeo Isidoro Cruz came to be so close to Martin Fierro.



To divert again, I became acutely aware of partisanship, for want of a better word, when Evita Peron died in 1952. Our caretaker Manuel on my parents' weekend quinta, about one hour's train journey from the centre of the city, had pictures of Fierro and Cruz on the wall of his room.

After Evita's death he took those down and pinned up her photograph. Under that he fitted a ledge where he lit candles and kept vases filled with fresh flowers.

Whether he prayed or not to her, I never found out!

The gauchos from the Rio de la Plata and the Parana created a mythological 'religion' with its own martyrs; it was a hard religion of courage, of being ready to kill and die. Of course, to a patrician as Borges' mother was, to kill and die was to disgrace oneself. Borges questions whether this is a manly faith? He stresses time and again that it was not vanity but an awareness that God may be found in any man.

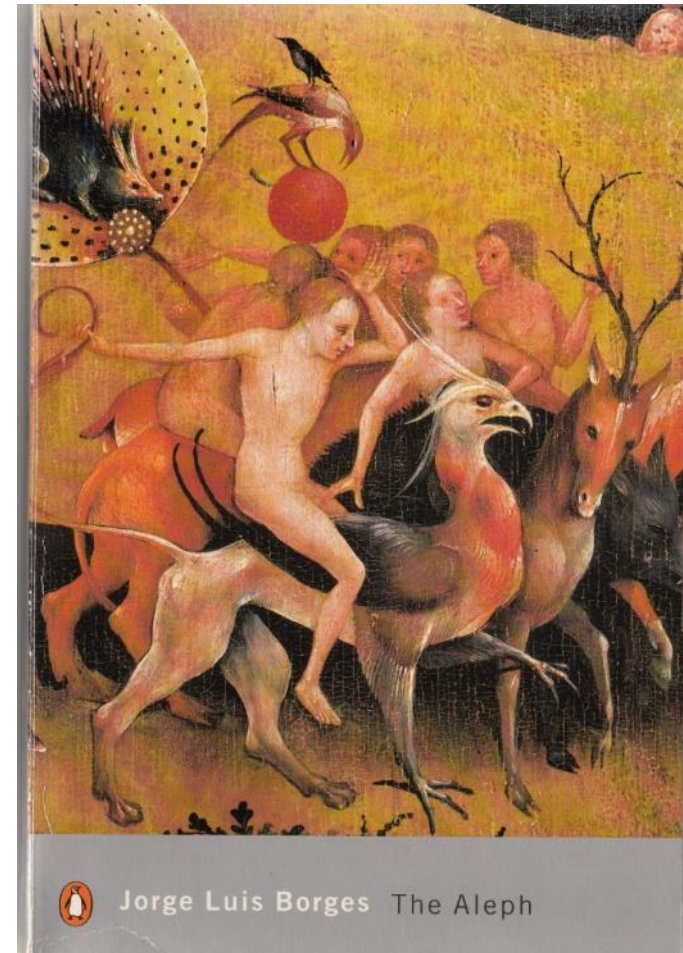
Jose Hernandez' narrative poem, published in 1872 and revised in 1879, is generally considered an Argentine National Epic.

The eponymous gaucho/ hero is the nostalgic symbol of gaucho values, yet he is also a deserter, a murderer and a coward which Borges points out in many of his essays.

This book **“The Aleph”**, is full of philosophical puzzles and supernatural surprises.

Andrew Hurley in his afterword to this book tells us that most of Borges’ musings in these stories are cast as parables and questions about self and the world, about the poet and his created self and universe, about the avatars of self through time, they ‘are rounded out by an afterword whose last paragraph has often been cited as the perfect description of the phenomenon Borges.’

The central motif of identity and self in this carefully compiled and unerringly crafted prose fiction is intriguing enough to stand as the last words of an introduction to and an invitation to explore these fascinating labyrinths of knowledge.



Di Giovanni, who helped Borges write his short autobiography and in English, feels that the gentle pages in the latter should be his epitaph:

Quote from di Giovanni: “Despite a large share of adversity, blindness and sexual failures , his determination to find happiness shines through on every page.”

It was not easy to present a paper on Borges because I realize that he has ‘tinkered’ (a word he has used himself about his prolific work) with other authors who have written through the ages.

I have no doubt now that he was foremost a reader rather than a writer, yet what knowledge, what erudition. His works will always remain a source of enormous joy to me. Yet he always belittled himself!

As Lord Byron briefly described in a memoranda: “I awoke one morning and found myself famous...”

He was of course referring to the success of Child Harold in 1812, over a hundred years ago.

Very akin to Borges and the recognition he much deserved but was never sure himself whether he really deserved it.

I would like to finish with a quote from Borges himself:

“At my age one should be aware of one’s limits and this knowledge should make for happiness.

I thought of literature as a game of skilled and surprising variations.....

As to failure or fame, they are quite irrelevant and I never bother about them.

What I am out for now is peace, the enjoyment of thinking and of friendship, and, though it may be too ambitious, a sense of loving and of being loved.”

Some 'photos of the city of Buenos Aires.

Bookmarks from some of the Bookshops that Borges frequented.



Casa Rosada, Government House, Plaza de Mayo



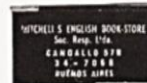
Roman Catholic Cathedral, Plaza de Mayo. The twelve Columns represent the twelve Apostles.



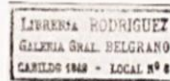
The Cabildo, the original Town Hall on Plaza de Mayo. It is now a museum.



San Telmo, an old district that J.L. Borges felt was part of the real Buenos Aires in the early C20th.



Houses in the district of Belgrano, north of the city. "A yearning for The Old World (Europe)" J.L. Borges wrote that Belgrano was not representative of the true Buenos Aires that he loved so much.



Municipality of Water Works, an interesting building. The architecture is a mixture of European styles, as so many buildings are which were built in the late C19th.

Titles of essays
Borges wrote.

I. EARLY WRITINGS 1922-1928

The Nothingness of Personality
After Images
Joyce's Ulysses
A History of Angels
Verbiage for Poems
A Profession of Literary Faith
Literary Pleasure
An Investigation of the Word

II. 1929-1936

The Perpetual Race of Achilles and the Tortoise
The Duration of Hell
The Superstitious Ethics of the Reader
Our Inabilities
The Postulation of Reality
A Defense of Basilides the False
The Homeric Versions
Narrative Art and Magic
A Defense of the Kabbalah
The Art of Verbal Abuse
The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*
I, a Jew

The Labyrinths of the Detective Story and Chesterton
The Doctrine of Cycles
A History of Eternity

FILM REVIEWS AND CRITICISM

The Cinematograph, the Biograph
Films
Street Scene
King Kong
The Informer
Two Films (*Crime and Punishment; The Thirty-nine Steps*)
The Petrified Forest
Wells, the Visionary

CAPSULE BIOGRAPHIES

Isaac Babel
Ernest Bramah
Benedetto Croce
Theodore Dreiser
T. S. Eliot
Will James
Liam O'Flaherty
Oswald Spengler
Paul Valéry
S. S. Van Dine
Virginia Woolf

III. WRITINGS FOR EL HOGAR (HOME)
MAGAZINE 1936-1939

Ramón Llull's Thinking Machine
When Fiction Lives in Fiction

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES

Gustav Meyrink, *Der Engel vom Westlichen Fenster*
Alan Pryce-Jones, *Private Opinion*
Louis Golding, *The Pursuer*
Lord Halifax's Ghost Book

William Faulkner, *Absalom! Absalom!*
Gustaf Janson, *Gubben Kommer*
Aldous Huxley, *Stories, Essays and Poems*
Rabindranath Tagore, *Collected Poems and Plays*
Ellery Queen, *The Door Between*
Sir William Barrett, *Personality Survives Death*
Wolfram Eberhard, tr., *Chinese Fairy Tales and Folk Tales*
The Literary Life: Marinetti
Richard Hull, *Excellent Intentions*
Meadows Taylor, *The Confessions of a Thug*
William Faulkner, *The Unvanquished*
Lady Murasaki, *The Tale of Genji*
Lord Dunsany, *Patches of Sunlight*
Two Fantasy Novels
The Literary Life: Oliver Gogarty
An English Version of the Oldest Songs in the World
Alan Griffiths, *Of Course, Vitelli!*
A Grandiose Manifesto from Breton
H. G. Wells' Latest Novel
E. S. Pankhurst, *Delphos, or the Future of International Language*
Joyce's Latest Novel
The Literary Life: The Dionne Quints

IV. 1937-1945

NOTES ON GERMANY & THE WAR

A Pedagogy of Hatred
A Disturbing Exposition
An Essay on Neutrality
Definition of a Germanophile
1941
Two Books
A Comment on August 23, 1944
A Note on the Peace

The Total Library

Time and J. W. Dunne

A Fragment on Joyce
The Creation and P. H. Gosse
Circular Time
John Wilkins' Analytical Language
On Literary Description
On William Beckford's *Vathek*
Coleridge's Flower

PROLOGUES

Adolfo Bioy Casares, *The Invention of Morel*
Herman Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener*
Henry James, *The Abasement of the Northmores*

BOOK REVIEWS

Edward Kasner & James Newman,
Mathematics and the Imagination
Edward Shanks, *Rudyard Kipling:*
A Study in Literature and Political Ideas
Arthur Waley, *Monkey*
Leslie Weatherhead, *After Death*

FILM REVIEWS AND CRITICISM

Two Films (*Sabotage; Los muchachos de antes*)
An Overwhelming Film (*Citizen Kane*)
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Transformed
Two Films (*Now Voyager; Nightmare*)
On Dubbing

V. NINE DANTESQUE ESSAYS 1945-1951

Prologue
The Noble Castle of the Fourth Canto
The False Problem of Ugolino
The Last Voyage of Ulysses
The Pitying Torturer
Dante and the Anglo-Saxon Visionaries
Purgatorio I, 13
The Simurgh and the Eagle
The Meeting in a Dream
Beatrice's Last Smile

VI. 1946-1955

Our Poor Individualism
The Paradox of Apollinaire
On Oscar Wilde
A New Refutation of Time
Biathanatos
From Allegories to Novels
From Someone to Nobody
The Wall and the Books
Personality and the Buddha
Pascal's Sphere
The Innocence of Layamon
On the Cult of Books
Kafka and His Precursors
The Enigma of Edward FitzGerald
Coleridge's Dream
Forms of a Legend
The Scandinavian Destiny
The Dialogues of Ascetic and King
A Defense of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*
Flaubert and His Exemplary Destiny

A History of the Tango
A History of the Echoes of a Name
L'Illusion Comique

1946-1955

PROLOGUES

Bret Harte, *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches*
Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in*
History, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men*
Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*

LECTURES

The Argentine Writer and Tradition
German Literature in the Age of Bach

VII. DICTATIONS 1956-1986

PROLOGUES

Ryunosuke Akutagawa, *The Kappa*
Edward Gibbon, *Pages of History and Autobiography*
Catalog of the Exhibition *Books from Spain*
Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*
Emanuel Swedenborg, *Mystical Works*

LECTURES

The Concept of an Academy and the Celts
The Enigma of Shakespeare
Blindness
Immortality
The Detective Story

PROLOGUES TO THE LIBRARY OF BABEL

The Library of Babel
Franz Kafka, *The Vulture*
Jack London, *The Concentric Deaths*
Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *The Guest at the Last Banquets*
P'u Sung-ling, *The Tiger Guest*
Charles Howard Hinton, *Scientific Romances*

PROLOGUES TO A PERSONAL LIBRARY

A Personal Library
Prologue to the Collection
Julio Cortázar, *Stories*
The Apocryphal Gospels
H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine; The Invisible Man*
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*
Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*
Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*
Virgil, *The Aeneid*
William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience;*
The Study of Human Nature

As Borges thought Walt Whitman was an excellent poet, maybe his favourite, I hope you will allow me one last 'indulgence'. I also like Whitman's poetry very much so I am writing out one that encapsulates so much of my own childhood and love of the country that I grew up in. We often watched the beautiful Condors in their silent flight when on holidays in the Andes.

The Dalliance of the Eagles

Skirting the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,)
Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the eagles,
The rushing amorous contact high in space together,
The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating wheel,
Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling,
In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward falling,
Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull,
A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons loosing,
Upward again, on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate diverse flight,
She hers, he his, pursuing.

Walt Whitman (1880- 1881)

Addendum

In 1960, my eldest brother Federico, an engineer, moved to Recife with his family to set up his own firm designing , amongst other designs, sugar refineries.

My nephew Oscar Federico, a professor in the department of Philosophy at the University of Natal, has been lecturing on Borges throughout Europe as well as leading group discussions on Metaphysics and Philosophy.

He has written extensively on Borges himself and has also organized a group of other professors from the University of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil, to contribute to the two books whose covers I illustrate here.

He has also, as has his wife Lia, a prof. of History, Metaphysics and Tradition at the University, contributed to these books which are in Portuguese but easily read!

