Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) was one of the great writers of the twentieth century and the most influential author in the Spanish language of modern times. He had a seminal influence on Latin American literature and a lasting impact on literary fiction in many other languages. However, Borges has been accessible in English only through a number of anthologies drawn mainly from his work of the 1940s and 1950s. The primary aim of this Companion is to provide a more comprehensive account of Borges’s œuvre and the evolution of his writing. It offers critical assessments by leading scholars of the poetry of his youth and the later poetry and fiction, as well as of the “canonical” volumes of the middle years. Other chapters focus on key themes and interests, and on his influence in literary theory and translation studies.

Edwin Williamson is the King Alfonso XIII Professor of Spanish Studies at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. His books include *The Penguin History of Latin America* (updated and revised edition, 2009) and his acclaimed biography, *Borges: A Life* (2004), which has been translated into several languages.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
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Literature (1845–1902) and Short Fiction by Spanish American Women. She has co-edited Science and the Creative Imagination in Latin America.

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Y poder en el Siglo de Oro. His Penguin History of Latin America (updated 2009) has been translated into Spanish and Portuguese, and his biography Borges: A Life has been translated into Spanish and six other languages.

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MICHAEL WOOD is Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Princeton University. He is the author of, among other works, García Márquez: One Hundred Years of Solitude; The Magician’s Doubts; Children of Silence; The Road to Delphi; Literature and the Taste of Knowledge; and Yeats and Violence. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and the Royal Society of Literature as well as of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.
NOTE ON EDITIONS AND QUOTATIONS

In all chapters, unless otherwise indicated, quotations in English from Borges’s work refer to the following three editions by Viking Penguin. Page references are given in brackets after quotations in the main text, as shown in bold below:


Unless otherwise indicated, other quotations refer to the four volumes of the *Obras completas*, Buenos Aires, Emecé, 1996, and have been translated into English either by the editor or by the author of the chapter. Page references will be given in brackets after quotations in the main text, thus: (OC followed by volume and page number). The English titles of Borges’s works follow the style of the Viking Penguin editions above. Titles from the *Obras completas* and other sources have been translated into English; Spanish titles are given, or added in brackets, only when appropriate for identification of the original texts.
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<th>Event</th>
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<td>1899</td>
<td>Born on August 24 in Calle Tucumán 840, in the center of Buenos Aires, to Jorge Guillermo Borges, a half-English lawyer and aspiring writer, and Leonor Acevedo Suárez.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Family moves to Palermo, a poor district bordering the pampas, inhabited by immigrants and once notorious for knife-fighters and brothels.</td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>Family goes to Europe and settles in Geneva until end of World War I. Attends secondary school, and learns French, Latin and German.</td>
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<td>1919–21</td>
<td>Family spends time in Majorca, Seville, and Madrid. Joins an avant-garde group of poets known as the Ultra.</td>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>Returns to Buenos Aires. Forms a group of <em>ultraístas</em> and introduces avant-garde ideas through “mural magazine” <em>Prisma</em> and little review <em>Proa</em> (<em>Prow</em>).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td><em>Fervor de Buenos Aires</em> (poems).</td>
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<td>1923–24</td>
<td>Second visit to Europe. Becomes disillusioned with Spanish <em>ultraísmo</em>. On return to Buenos Aires, relaunches <em>Proa</em> with a group of young writers and develops a left-of-center cultural nationalism called <em>criollismo</em>.</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td><em>Moon Across the Way</em> (<em>Luna de enfrente</em>) (poems) and <em>Inquisitions</em> (essays). Frequent clashes between Borges's <em>criollistas</em> group around <em>Proa</em> and an avant-garde group associated with the “cosmopolitan” review <em>Martín Fierro</em>.</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td><em>The Extent of My Hope</em> (<em>El tamaño de mi esperanza</em>) (essays, many on <em>criollismo</em>).</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>Creates a “Committee of Young Intellectuals” with a group of <em>criollistas</em> to campaign for the re-election to the presidency of the Radical party candidate, the populist Hipólito Yrigoyen. Increasingly opposed by right-wing nationalists.</td>
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CHRONOLOGY

1928  The Language of the Argentines (essays). Yrigoyen elected president.

1929  San Martín Copybook (Cuaderno San Martín) (poems). Meets Nicolás Paredes, a former Palermo gang boss, who will inspire his first story, “Man on Pink Corner.”


1931  Invited by Victoria Ocampo to join board of new cultural journal Sur.

1932  Discusión (essays). Contributes to various literary magazines.

1933  Co-editor of the Saturday color supplement of mass daily newspaper Crítica, where he publishes stories, essays, reviews, and sketches, until 1934. Becomes a leading opponent of right-wing Argentine nationalism and repeatedly denounces fascism and Nazism in Europe.

1935  A Universal History of Iniquity (fictionalized biographical sketches).

1936  A History of Eternity (essays). Edits fortnightly books section of popular weekly magazine El Hogar (The Home), for which he writes reviews and capsule biographies of writers.

1938  Employed as library assistant in a municipal library, his first full-time job. Father dies. Accident on Christmas Eve leads to life-threatening septicemia.

1939  Writes “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” while recuperating. Loses job at El Hogar. Publicly supports the Allies in World War II, and will condemn Nazism and its many sympathizers among Argentine nationalists throughout the conflict. Joins Unión Democrática, a coalition of Radicals, socialists, and communists opposing the pro-Axis nationalists.

1940  Begins collaboration with Adolfo Bioy Casares, which will produce stories, film scripts, and translations over the years. They compile, together with Silvina Ocampo, an Anthology of Fantasy Literature and an Anthology of Argentine Poetry. Begins contributing regularly to Sur, where he will first publish many of his famous texts.

1941  The Garden of Forking Paths (fiction).

1942  Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi (detective stories), with Bioy Casares under common pseudonym H. Bustos Domecq.
1943  Poemas (1922–43). First edition of his collected poems, but the three collections of the 1920s considerably revised, a process continued until tenth edition in 1978. Military coup by nationalist officers sympathetic to Mussolini, including Colonel Juan Domingo Perón.

1944  Ficciones (Ficciones), consisting of The Garden of Forking Paths (above), and Artifices, comprising six new stories.

1946  Perón elected president of Argentina. Borges resigns post as library assistant when offered dubious promotion by Peronist authorities. Becomes an implacable opponent of the Peronist regime. Earns living by giving lectures on literature. Editor of Los Anales de Buenos Aires but resigns in 1947.

1948  Mother and sister arrested and latter briefly imprisoned for demonstrating against Perón.

1949  The Aleph (fiction).

1950  Elected president of SADE, the Society of Argentine Writers, a focus of opposition to Perón.

1951  French edition of Ficciones, first book to be translated into a foreign language.

1952  Other Inquisitions (essays). Death of Perón’s wife, Eva. SADE closed down after Borges refuses to comply with official mourning decreed by Peronist authorities. In Paris, Roger Caillois publishes Labyrinthes, an anthology.

1954  Accident damages his congenitally weak eyesight and can no longer read or write.

1955  Perón overthrown in a military coup and goes into exile. Borges strongly supports the new junta in its campaign to root out Peronism from public life. Appointed Director of the National Library. Elected to the Argentine Academy of Letters. Jean-Paul Sartre publishes eight essays by Borges in Les Temps modernes. La biblioteca di Babele, a collection of his ficciones, appears in Italian.

1956  Appointed to a professorship of English and American Literature at the University of Buenos Aires. Receives honorary doctorate from the University of Cuyo, Mendoza, the first of many. Awarded the National Prize for Literature.


1960  The Maker (El hacedor) (prose and poems).
1961 Awarded International Publishers’ Prize, jointly with Samuel Beckett.
1963 First lecture tour of Britain.
1964 *Obra poética* 1923–1964 (new title for collected poems). Includes new poems in a section called *The Self and the Other* (*El otro el mismo*), later published as separate volume in 1969.
1965 *For Six Strings* (lyrics for milongas).
1970 Legal separation from Elsa Astete.
1972 *The Gold of the Tigers* (poems).
1974 First edition of *Obras completas*.
1976 *The Iron Coin* (poems). María Estela Perón’s government overthrown by military coup. Borges makes controversial statements in the media supporting the new Argentine junta as well as General Pinochet in Chile. Armed forces pursue a “Dirty War” against the guerrillas through torture and “disappearances” of opponents.
CHRONOLOGY

1977–78 Borges criticizes Argentine military junta for nationalistic saber-rattling against Chile over islands in the Beagle Channel.

1979 Borges oral (lectures given at the Universidad de Belgrano). Dispute with sister and a nephew over joint bank account. Maria Kodama named his sole heir in new will.

1980 Seven Nights (lectures at Teatro Coliseo, Buenos Aires). “Shakespeare’s Memory” (story) published in Clarín newspaper; subsequently the title story of a collection incorporated in Obras completas, 1989. Supports “Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo” and calls on junta to provide information on the “disappeared.”

1981 The Limit (La cifra) (poems).

1982 Nine Dantesque Essays on Dante (five previously published in 1948, one in 1951). Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands/Malvinas. Publishes poems regretting the ensuing war with Britain. Calls himself a pacifist and an “inoffensive anarchist.”

1982–83 Fall of military junta. Denounces torture and “disappearances.” Calls for investigation into crimes by both sides during the “Dirty War” and for punishment of military officers. Writes the poem “Los conjurados” (“The Confederates”), praising Swiss Confederation for enabling citizens to “forget their differences and accentuate their affinities,” and claiming Geneva as “one of my patrias.”


1984 Atlas (travel pieces), with María Kodama.

1985 Los Conjurados (The Confederates), (poems and prose). In September diagnosed with cancer. In November secretly leaves Buenos Aires with María Kodama.