

JORGE LUIS BORGES IN CONTEXT

Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) is Argentina's most celebrated author. This volume brings together for the first time the numerous contexts in which he lived and worked; from the history of the Borges family and that of modern Argentina including his fascination with the Banda Oriental, through two World Wars, to events including the Cuban Revolution, military dictatorship, and the Falklands War. Borges's distinctive responses to the Western tradition, Cervantes and Shakespeare, Kafka, and the European Avant-Garde are explored, along with his appraisals of Sarmiento, gauchesque literature and other strands of the Argentine cultural tradition. Borges's polemical stance on Catholic Integralism in early twentieth-century Argentina is accounted for, whilst chapters on Buddhism, Judaism, and landmarks of Persian literature illustrate Borges's engagement with the East. Finally, his legacy is visible in the literatures of the Americas, in European countries such as Italy and Portugal, and in the novels of J. M. Coetzee representing the Global South.

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Note on Primary Sources and Editions Used

Throughout this volume, where reference is made to Borges's works in the original Spanish the preferred source is *Obras completas* (Barcelona and Buenos Aires: María Kodama and Emecé Editores, 1989), 3 vols. In the instances where contributors have used another source, they make this clear in the notes to the chapters concerned. The following works not included in the *Obras completas* are also cited: *Inquisiciones* (1925) (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1994); *Textos cautivos. Ensayos y reseñas en 'El Hogar'* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1986); *Textos recobrados, 1919–1929* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1997) and *Textos recobrados, 1931–1955* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2002).

Chronology

Note: Besides recording significant moments in the life and career of Jorge Luis Borges, this chronology lists events from the public sphere, including cultural landmarks, where they are relevant to a contextual understanding of the writer's life and works. The Chronology draws on previous scholarship including *The Cambridge Companion to Jorge Luis Borges* (2013), the diary-format of Adolfo Bioy Casares, *Borges* (2006), and the archives of the *Borges Center*, University of Pittsburgh (www.borges.pitt.edu).

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1776 | Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata established with its capital in Buenos Aires. |
| 1810 25 May. | The city of Buenos Aires forms its own ruling council ('junta'), which breaks with Spain. |
| 1816 9 July. | An assembly of the members of the Viceroyalty meeting in San Miguel de Tucumán declares Argentina formally independent under the name 'United Provinces of the Río de la Plata'. |
| 1824 6 August. | Battle of Junín, in the Andes, where Borges's great-grandfather, Isidoro Suárez distinguishes himself in the closing stages of the fight for South American independence from Spanish rule. |
| 1829 | Juan Manuel de Rosas becomes governor of the province of Buenos Aires. |
| 1835 | Rosas begins 17-year-long rule over Argentina. |
| 1838–1840 | Esteban Echeverría writes 'The Slaughterhouse', which will not be published until 1871. |
| 1845 | Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, <i>Facundo, or Civilisation and Barbarism</i> . |
| 1850 | Domingo F. Sarmiento, <i>Recollections of a Provincial Past</i> . |

xvi	<i>Chronology</i>
1872	José Hernández, <i>The Gaucho Martín Fierro</i> (Part One; Part Two follows in 1879).
1874	Paternal grandfather Colonel Francisco Borges dies in action in the final stages of the Conquest of the Desert.
1899 24 August.	Jorge Luis Borges is born in Buenos Aires to Jorge Guillermo Borges, a half-English lawyer and aspiring writer, and Leonor Acevedo Suárez.
1914–1918	The Borges family spends the bulk of the years of the First World War in Geneva, Switzerland, where the young Jorge Luis attends school.
1916	Leopoldo Lugones publishes <i>El Payador</i> . Tercentenary of deaths of Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare.
1918–1920	The Borges family moves to Madrid, where Jorge Luis works closely with the Ultraist group. In 1920, he publishes ‘Expressionist Lyric: A Synthesis’, which is an essay on German Expressionist poetry, and more than a dozen other essays and translations, all in <i>Grecia</i> (Madrid).
1921	Family returns to Buenos Aires. Borges collaborates in the ‘mural magazine’, <i>Prisma</i> , which lasts two issues.
1922	James Joyce, <i>Ulysses</i> . Borges launches the magazine, <i>Proa</i> ; he also writes ‘The Nothingness of Personality’.
1923	Publishes <i>Fervour of Buenos Aires</i> (poetry). Makes a second trip to Europe.
1924	Returns to Buenos Aires, where he re-launches <i>Proa</i> and promotes a type of cultural nationalism called ‘criollismo’.
1925	Publishes <i>Moon Across the Way</i> (poetry) and <i>Inquisitions</i> , a volume of essays including ‘The Complaint of Every <i>criollo</i> ’. Publishes a short review-essay, ‘Joyce’s <i>Ulysses</i> ’, in <i>Proa</i> .
1926	Ricardo Güiraldes publishes <i>Don Segundo Sombra</i> . Borges publishes <i>The Full Extent of My Hope</i> (essays).

Chronology

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- 1927 Undergoes operation for cataracts. Campaigns for the re-election to the Argentine presidency of Hipólito Irigoyen.
- 1928 *The Language of the Argentines* (essays). Irigoyen elected President in April.
- 1929 William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*. Borges publishes *San Martín Notebook*, which is a set of poems. 'Paul Groussac' is an obituary for the French-born emigré who would become a literary critic, polemicist and, eventually, Director of the National Library in Buenos Aires from 1885 until his death.
- 1930 General José F. Uriburu leads a coup d'état against President Irigoyen. Borges publishes *Evaristo Carriego* – a prose biography of a local poet (1883–1912), supplemented by writings on themes of popular culture.
- 1932 Publishes *Discussion* – a volume of essays containing 'Gauchesque Poetry', 'Films', 'A Defence of the Cabbala', 'Our Inabilities', and others.
- 1933 Co-Editor of the 'Saturday Colour Magazine' of the tabloid newspaper *Crítica*, where he publishes stories, essays, reviews, and sketches.
- 1935 *A Universal History of Infamy*.
- 1936 William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom*. Borges publishes *A History of Eternity* (essays). Begins regular contributions to *Home* weekly magazine (*El Hogar*), for which he writes reviews and capsule biographies of writers such as Benedetto Croce and Virginia Woolf. Founders the magazine *Destiempo* with Adolfo Bioy Casares.
- 1938 In February, Jorge Guillermo Borges dies. Borges himself suffers a freak accident on Christmas Eve which leads to life-threatening septicaemia.
- 1939 Loses job at *Home*. Publishes 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*' and 'An Essay on Neutrality', which is followed by other writings on the War. 'Joyce's Latest Novel' is a short note on *Finnegans Wake*.

xviii	<i>Chronology</i>
1940	Begins literary collaborations with Bioy Casares. Contributes regularly to <i>Sur</i> , the cultural periodical founded by Victoria Ocampo in 1931.
1941	<i>The Garden of Forking Paths</i> (fiction). Publishes 'A Fragment on Joyce', in the February number of <i>Sur</i> . 1941 sees the publication, in Buenos Aires, of Américo Castro's provocative essay, <i>La peculiaridad lingüística rioplatense y su sentido histórico</i> .
1942	Borges is overlooked by the panel awarding the National Literary Prize. <i>Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi</i> is a collection of detective stories co-written with Bioy Casares.
1943	Military coup by Argentinian officers sympathetic to Mussolini. <i>Los mejores cuentos policiales</i> , with Bioy Casares.
1944	<i>Fictions</i> . Publishes 'A Comment on August 23, 1944', which is prompted by the liberation of Paris from German occupation.
1946	Juan Domingo Perón officially elected President of Argentina. Borges takes over the editorship of a literary and cultural review, <i>Los Anales de Buenos Aires</i> .
1947	Fourth centenary of the birth of Miguel de Cervantes. Borges writes 'La fiesta del Monstruo', with Bioy Casares.
1948	Writes 'The Simurgh and the Eagle', which will subsequently be collected in <i>Nine Dantesque Essays</i> (1982). With Bioy Casares, <i>Prosa y verso de Francisco de Quevedo</i> .
1949	<i>The Aleph</i> (fiction).
1950	'Personality and the Buddha' appears in <i>Sur</i> , nos. 192–194 (Oct.–Dec.) and will never be reprinted.
1951	Delivers lecture, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition', on 19 December at the Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores. Publishes 'Kafka and His Precursors', which will be included in <i>Other Inquisitions</i> (1952), along with 'Keats' Nightingale' and others.
1954	The year when, according to Borges, he lost his sight.

Chronology

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- 1955 Perón is overthrown in a military coup. ‘A History of the Tango’ is printed in its entirety in the 1955 edition of *Evaristo Carriego*. Borges writes ‘Parable of Cervantes and Don Quixote’. With Betina Edelberg, he co-authors *Leopoldo Lugones*, which is an essay on the older poet and essayist. Appointed Director of the National Library in Buenos Aires.
- 1959 1 January. The forces of the Cuban Revolution oust the régime of Fulgencio Batista.
- 1960 *The Maker* is a collection of prose and poems, including ‘The Simulacrum’, ‘Parable of Cervantes and Don Quixote’, ‘Everything and Nothing’, ‘The Borgeses’, and ‘To Luis de Camões’, amongst others.
- 1961 Awarded International Publishers’ Prize, shared with Samuel Beckett.
- 1961–1962 Spends semester as Visiting Professor at University of Texas at Austin.
- 1964 *The Self and the Other* is a collection of poems including ‘Sarmiento’, ‘The Golem’, and ‘Junín’, amongst others.
- 1965 *For Six Strings* contains lyrics for *milongas*.
- 1967 With Bioy Casares, *Chronicles of Bustos Domecq*.
- 1968 Uprising of workers and intellectuals in cities including Córdoba (the *Cordobazo*).
- 1969 *In Praise of Darkness* (poems).
- 1970 *Brodie’s Report* is a collection of stories mostly on Argentine themes.
- 1973 Under pressure from the new Peronist government, Borges resigns his post as Director of the National Library as a political act to express his disgust with the re-election of Perón as president.
- 1974 First edition of *Obras completas*.
- 1975 In July, his mother, Leonor Acevedo Suárez, dies, aged 99. *The Book of Sand* (fiction) and *The Unending Rose* (poems); *Prólogos, con un prólogo de prólogos* is a compendium.
- 1976 *The Iron Coin* (poems).
- 1977 *New Stories by Bustos Domecq*, with Bioy Casares.

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Chronology

- 1979 Visits Japan in the company of Maria Kodama. Publishes 'Franz Kafka: *The Vulture*' in *The Library of Babel*, which is a series of short volumes of fantastic tales, each selected and introduced by Borges, and published in Spain from 1978 to 1986.
- 1980 Awarded the *Premio Cervantes* (*ex aequo* with Gerardo Diego).
- 1981 *La cifra*/*The Limit*, for the most part, poetry.
- 1982 *Nine Dantesque Essays*.
- 1983 *La memoria de Shakespeare* comprises four stories.
- 1985 *Los conjurados* is a miscellany of writings on essential themes.
- 1986 Dies in Geneva, Switzerland, on 14 June.

Note on Translations and Abbreviations

Quotations in English from the works of Jorge Luis Borges derive from a number of different sources, identified as follows:

- CF* *Collected Fictions* by Jorge Luis Borges, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York/London: Penguin, 2000).
- Lab* *Labyrinths*, trans. Donald Yates and James E. Irby (London/New York: Penguin 1970).
- OA* Jorge Luis Borges. *On Argentina*, trans. Alfred Mac Adam (New York: Penguin, 2000).
- SN-F* Jorge Luis Borges. *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (New York: Viking, 1999; also, Penguin, 2000).
- TTL* Jorge Luis Borges. *The Total Library: Non-Fiction, 1922–1986*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 2000). In essentials, identical to *SN-F*.

Where contributors have worked with other sources, and where they are responsible for their own translations, they indicate so in the notes to the chapters concerned.