

Two Aspects of Jorge Luis Borges

Translated from the Spanish by
[Evelyn Hooven](#) (July 2019)



Jorge Luis Borges and Kitty (photographer unknown)

*The poet, so frequently, of quest and affirming praise becomes
in "Remorse" the voice of assertive, extravagant self-
dismissal*

*and accusation, meriting grandiose punishment. The
perspective*

goes far beyond any more traditional art-life dichotomy or regret

for paths untrodden. Such vehemence of culpability remains disquieting even if one truthfully receives it as an aspect of Borges'

willingness to entertain all possibilities, even rejection of his own

(mighty) poetic faculties for not serving, as intended by his forbears,

worldly daring and valor.

Trying, in "End," to define his physical locale quickly becomes

a total quest to contain the burden of memories and to locate his

own voice. We inevitably recognize familiar Borges terrain in the

entreaty against oblivion.

Remorse

I have committed the worst of sins

that a man can commit. I have not been

happy. Let glaciers of oblivion

encircle and drop me, merciless.

My parents begot me for the game—
daring and lovely—of life itself,
for earth and water, for the air and fire.
I cheated them. I wasn't happy.
I didn't carry out their youthful will.
My mind applied itself to the obstinate
symmetries of art, that can interweave nothingness.
Valor was my legacy. I wasn't valiant.
Always it's at my side. It never leaves me,
the shade of having been a desolate man.

El Remordimiento

He cometido el peor de los pecados
que un hombre puede cometer. No he sido
feliz. Que los glaciares del olvido
me arrastren y me pierdan, despiadados.
Mis padres engendraron para el juego
arriesgado y hermoso de la vida,
para la tierra, el agua, el aire, el fuego.
Los defraudé. No fui feliz. Cumplida
no fue su joven voluntad. Mi mente

se aplicó a las simétricas porfías
del arte, que entreteje naderías.
Me legaron valor. No fui valiente
No me abandona. Siempre está a mi lado
la sombra de haber sido un desdichado.

End

The ancient boy, a man without history,
an orphan who might have been someone dead
makes use in vain of the deserted homestead.
(It was for two, today it's for memory.
It *is* for two.) Under the harsh fate,
nearly lost, the man in pain looks for
the voice that was *his* voice. The miraculous
would be no more irregular than death.
They weigh him down interminably
the trivial and the sacred he recalls,
and they're our destiny, these mortal
memories vast as a continent.
Make me, I ask of God, No One or Maybe,

boundaryless, not some oblivion.

El Fin

El hijo viejo, el hombre sin historia,
el huérfano que pudo ser el muerto,
agota en vano el caserón desierto.
(Fue de los dos y es hoy de la memoria.
Es de los dos.) Bajo la dura suerte
busca perdido el hombre doloroso
la voz que fue su voz. Lo milagroso
no sería más raro que la muerte.
Lo acosarán interminablemente
los recuerdos sagrados y triviales
que son nuestro destino, esas mortales
memorias vastas como un continente.
Dios o Tal Vez o Nadie, yo le pido
su inagotable imagen, no el olvido.

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