Jorge Luis Borges
NON-FICTION 1922–1986
THE TOTAL LIBRARY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND TRANSLATIONS

Professor Allen has translated numerous works from Spanish and French.

Several volumes of his work are published as bookend editions in Penguin.

...he was a superb storyteller. One reads most of his stories with the
...expressed in many creative, often unusual, and poetic ways. His

...in 1986. In 1996 Professor Allen received the
...and short stories, essays, and bookend editions of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction from

...the most widely read writer of our time. He

translated numerous works from Spanish and French.

Professor Allen has received the PEN/R座谈es Award for his work promoting

His translations include the collected poems of Cesar 1977–1977 of Cervantes, Teseo,

...one of the most widely read writers of our time. He

Jorge Luis Borges was born in Buenos Aires in 1896 and educated in

Several volumes of his work are published as bookend editions in Penguin.

...he was a superb storyteller. One reads most of his stories with the

...expressed in many creative, often unusual, and poetic ways. His
I recently heard a lecture on the importance of understanding the foundation of the poetry of Hāfez. The lecture emphasized the necessity of understanding the context and cultural background in which the poetry was written. Hāfez is known for his profound and insightful verses, which often reflect on love, nature, and the human condition.

The lecture began with an overview of Hāfez's life and his contributions to Persian literature. It was highlighted that Hāfez's poetry is not just about love, but also about life, death, and the transient nature of things. The lecture pointed out that understanding Hāfez's poetry requires a deep appreciation of Persian culture, which has a rich history and tradition.

The lecture then delved into specific examples of Hāfez's poetry, focusing on how his verses can be interpreted differently depending on the cultural context. It was emphasized that Hāfez's poetry is not just a collection of words, but a reflection of the society in which it was produced. The lecture concluded with a call to appreciate Hāfez's poetry not just as a beautiful form of art, but as a window into the social and cultural landscape of Persia.

Overall, the lecture was a rich exploration of Hāfez's poetry and its significance in understanding Persian culture. It highlighted the importance of cultural context in interpreting literature and the value of appreciating poetry as a reflection of the human experience.
There are two things that are rare when you see a picture book: the pages are not blank, and there are no empty spaces. In this book, the two are combined into a single image. The colors are vibrant, the text is clear, and the illustrations are engaging. The book is a feast for the eyes, a journey into a world of imagination and creativity. The story is told through pictures and words, each page a new adventure. The author and illustrator have worked together to create a masterpiece that will delight both children and adults alike. This book is a testament to the power of art and storytelling, and a reminder of the importance of imagination in our lives.
problem and can easily be answered. I believe that our tradition is the whole
of Western culture, and I also believe that we have a right to this tradition, a
greater right than that which the inhabitants of one Western nation or an-
other may have. Here I remember an essay by Thorstein Veblen, the North
American sociologist, on the intellectual preeminence of Jews in Western
culture. He wonders if this preeminence authorizes us to posit an innate
Jewish superiority and answers that it does not; he says that Jews are promi-
nent in Western culture because they act within that culture and at the same
time do not feel bound to it by any special devotion; therefore, he says, it
will always be easier for a Jew than for a non-Jew to make innovations in
Western culture. We can say the same of the Irish in English culture. Where
the Irish are concerned, we have no reason to suppose that the profusion
of Irish names in British literature and philosophy is due to any social preemi-
ence, because many of these illustrious Irishmen (Shaw, Berkeley, Swift)
were the descendants of Englishmen, men with no Celtic blood; neverthe-
less, the fact of feeling themselves to be Irish, to be different, was enough to
enable them to make innovations in English culture. I believe that Argenti-
nes, and South Americans in general, are in an analogous situation; we
can take on all the European subjects, take them on without superstition
and with an irreverence that can have, and already has had, fortunate
consequences.

This does not mean that all Argentine experiments are equally felici-
tous; I believe that this problem of the Argentine and tradition is simply a
contemporary and fleeting version of the eternal problem of determinism.
If I am going to touch this table with one of my hands, and I ask myself:
"Will I touch it with the left hand or the right?" and I touch it with the right
hand, the determinists will say that I could not have done otherwise and
that the whole prior history of the universe forced me to touch the table
with my right hand, and that touching it with my left hand would have been
a miracle. Yet if I had touched it with my left hand, they would have told me
the same thing: that I was forced to touch it with that hand. The same oc-
curs with literary subjects and techniques. Everything we Argentine writers
do felicitously will belong to Argentine tradition, in the same way that the
use of Italian subjects belongs to the tradition of England through the work
of Chaucer and Shakespeare.

I believe, moreover, that all the foregoing discussions of the aims of li-
terary creation are based on the error of supposing that intentions and plans
matter much. Take, for example, the case of Kipling: Kipling dedicated his
life to writing in accordance with a given set of political ideals, he wanted to
make his work a tool for propaganda, and nevertheless, at the end of his life
he had to confess that the true essence of a writer's work is usually un-
known by that writer; and he remembered the case of Swift, who while
writing Gulliver's Travels wanted to raise an indictment against mankind
and instead left behind a children's book. Plato said that poets are the
amanuenses of a god who moves them against their will, against their in-
tentions, as the magnet moves a series of iron rings.

Therefore I repeat that we must not be afraid; we must believe that the
universe is our birthright and try out every subject; we cannot confine our-


to what is Argentine in order to be Argentine because either it is our
invitable destiny to be Argentine, in which case we will be Argentine what-
ever we do, or being Argentine is a mere affectation, a mask.

I believe that if we lose ourselves in the voluntary dream called artistic
creation, we will be Argentine and we will be, as well, good or adequate
writers.

[1951]

German Literature in the Age of Bach

In De Quincey's famous essay on murder considered as one of the fine arts,
there is a reference to a book about Iceland. That book, written by a Dutch
traveler, has a chapter which has become famous in English literature and
was mentioned by Chesterton. It is a chapter entitled "On the Snakes in Ice-
land," and it is brief and to the point, as it consists of a single sentence:
"Snakes in Iceland; there aren't any."

The task that I will undertake today is a description of German litera-
ture in the age of Bach. After some investigation, I was tempted to imitate
the author of that book on Iceland and say: "Literature in the age of Bach;
there wasn't any." But such brevity strikes me as contemptuous, a lack of ci-
vility. Moreover, it would be unjust, as it concerns an era that produced so
many didactic poems in imitation of Pope, so many fables in imitation of
La Fontaine, so many epics in imitation of Milton. To this we may add the
literary societies that flourished in a truly unusual manner, and all the
polemics that were launched with a passion that is absent from the litera-
ture of our own time.

There are two distinct criteria for literature. There is the hedonistic,
that of pleasure, which is the criterion of readers; from this point of view,