Rather than a slow fade into the twilight of old age, the last two decades of Jorge Luis Borges’s life saw the transformation of his literary reputation and personal life (through the first International Publishers’ Prize in 1961; then later the Spanish-speaking world’s most prestigious literary award, the Cervantes; the translation of his collected works into English and French and his late marriage to María Kodama). And yet in a way not unlike the knife-fighters seeking their deaths in his imagined Buenos Aires, this success appeared to come at a price.

Following the 1976 Argentine coup d’état, Borges characterised the junta as ‘a government of soldiers, of gentlemen, of decent people’. After lunching with General Videla, he accepted honours from the regime of Augusto Pinochet. During a speech at the Chilean academy the same year, Borges urged the military to forge a patria fuerte (a strong fatherland) ‘in a barbarous continent’. Despite rejecting these views by 1980, the writer’s reputation among many, especially in Argentina and those on the Left, is yet to recover. To speak of Borges in the 1970s, one Argentine writer recalls, it was necessary to do so in a whisper.

Few writers attract such critical extremes as Borges; with readers
responding to his work in light of their bias as that of a right-wing appeaser, postmodern precursor, reactionary, lover. Yet moral absolutes are hard to divine in his literary universe. ‘The past is a predator’ according to an Argentine adage and without wanting to overstate the connection, an awareness of the hostile nature of memory links Borges with others writing from the post-colonial South. ‘A nation creates itself not just from what it remembers, but what it forgets,’ as Oscar Camilion, a former Argentine Minister of Defence said.

Throughout Borges’s oeuvre – the romantic early poetry, the claustrophobic tales written under Peron when, according to his memoirs, he was ‘promoted’ from his library position to chief poultry and rabbits inspector at the city markets, and the late lyrics – there is an emphasis upon memory, and yet his characters are often burdened by the weight of their obligation to remember.

It is here that we find the psychological landscape of the South, as imagined by the quintessential porteño, or resident of port city Buenos Aires, Jorge Luis Borges. ‘No other writer is more Argentine than Borges,’ the critic Beatriz Sarlo writes, ‘especially in his exploration of how great literature can be written in a culturally marginal nation located in the extreme South.’

Surprisingly, for a writer often seen to be the archetype of a detached metaphysician musing on labyrinths and dreamtigers, much of Borges’s writing is coloured by raw emotions close to the surface. ‘Violence drew Borges like a magnet,’ notes his biographer, Edwin Williamson in Borges: A Life. ‘It was as if he could feel truly alive by putting himself in the way of fighting and brawling and killing.’ Guilt, humiliation, manly courage and an obsession with self-murder where an individual’s destiny becomes known at the moment of death mark him as a southern writer, bound by distorted codes of chivalry. The South, for Borges, is both a locale where his ancestors battled for dominance and the Southside of Buenos Aires where he spent his childhood. It is also a state of consciousness.

When the British author John King visited Buenos Aires in 1973, the city teemed with flags to welcome the return of Borges’s nemesis, Juan Peron, after eighteen years in exile. University students asked King why he wanted to meet Borges, the author of elitist,
escapist fantasies so out of step with the nation’s mood of political mobilisation. Yet it was Borges’s tentative dystopic worldview and tolerance (this was the writer who welcomed an anti-Semitic ‘slur’ in the 1934 essay, ‘I, a Jew’), that more than any other reflected the violence of his era, while offering an imaginative escape from it.

‘It’s to the other man, to Borges, that things happen,’ Borges once said obliquely in an interview, paraphrasing one of his famous works.

Of Borges, I get news through the mail and glimpse his name among a committee of performers, or in a dictionary of biography. I have a taste for hourglasses, maps, eighteenth-century typography, the roots of words, the smell of coffee, and Stevenson’s prose. The other man shares these likes, but in a showy way that turns them into showy mannerisms.4

When introducing The Book of Sand, a collection playfully dismissed by the author as a series of ‘blind man’s exercises’ Borges said that he did not write for a ‘select minority, nor for the adulated platonic entity known as “The Masses”’, but for himself, his friends and to ease the passing of time.5 In one of the collection’s stories, ‘The other’, the narrator meets a stranger whistling a milonga that prompts memories of a ‘Buenos Aires patio long since disappeared’ and a cousin who had died many years ago.

Soon the narrator is convinced that the ‘other man’ is his boyhood self. To encourage the other to confess, he recites a list of objects from their home (a ‘silver maté cup with a base of entwined serpents’ that his grandfather had brought back from Peru and a list of books: Quicherat’s Latin dictionary; an edition of Don Quixote, a book on ‘sexual customs in the Balkans’). The other stubbornly refuses to acknowledge their shared lineage. ‘These proofs are nothing,’ he says:

If this morning and this meeting are dreams, each of us has to believe that he is the dreamer. Perhaps we have stopped dreaming, perhaps not. Our obvious duty, meanwhile, is to accept the dream just as we accept the world and being born and seeing and breathing.
Towards the story’s end, the men share an appreciation of one of Borges’s favourite lines of poetry from Victor Hugo:

*L’hydre-univers tordant son corps écaillé d’astres* (The hydra universe twisting its body scaled by stars).

Empathy develops when the narrator says that he has someone coming to collect him, but the other man still does not understand. ‘Coming for you?’ he asks.

Yes. When you get to my age, you will have lost your eyesight almost completely. You’ll still make out the colour yellow and lights and shadows…Gradual blindness is not a tragedy. It’s like a slow summer dusk.

‘Rivers of brown water, crumbling mansions, black slaves, battles on horseback, idle and cruel, the strange world of [Faulkner’s] *The Unvanquished* is a blood relation of this America,’ wrote Borges in 1938. ‘There are books that touch us physically, like the closeness of the sea, or of the morning,’ he wrote. ‘This, for me, is one of them.’

Five decades later, Borges said that he had always loved the South, the region he had long associated with the fiction of William Faulkner. ‘The common phrase, “the deep South” is a good one. In Spanish it goes well too, if I say, *el hondo Sur*, it sounds as it should.’ But what is the ‘deep South’ he is referring to here?

From the late 1930s, Borges turned away from Europe and found inspiration in the work of a Boston-born but Southern identified Edgar Allen Poe. Their backgrounds resembled each other. ‘Borges, like Poe, had a grandfather who was a local military hero,’ writes John T. Irwin, while on Borges’s maternal side were numerous heroes, including Colonel Isidoro Suárez, praised by Bolivar who said ‘when history describes the glorious battle of Junín…it will be attributed to the bravery of this young officer’.

‘On both sides of my family, I have military forebears; this may account for my yearning after that epic destiny which the gods denied me,’ Borges wrote in his *Autobiographical Essay*. ‘I was always very near-sighted and wore glasses, and rather frail. As most of my people had been soldiers and I knew I never would be, I felt ashamed, quite early, to be a bookish kind of person and not a man of action.’ (According to Irwin, Faulkner’s rejection by the U.S. Army in the Second World War
on the grounds that he was underweight and too short mortified him.)

Faulkner’s paternal great-grandfather ‘The Old Colonel’ was a hero in the Civil War, who after working as a lawyer and railroad builder became a writer. As with Borges, Faulkner believed his ancestors had shaped his destiny. He also transferred this view to his characters. In Faulkner’s *Light of August*, Gail Hightower, is compelled to relive his grandfather’s death, so that the exact moment of lost grandeur is preserved in his imagination. In Borges, this nostalgia becomes a yearning to experience his heroic ancestor’s suffering.

His ‘Conjectural Poem’ recounts the last moments of relative, Francisco Laprida, killed by a band of gauchos after serving in Argentina’s war of independence:

I who longed to be someone else, to weigh judgments, to read books, to hand down the law, will lie in the open out in these swamps; but a secret joy somehow swells my breast. I see at last that I am face to face with my South American destiny.

Sensing the ring of the bandits closing in, with their horses and horses’ manes, Laprida waits for his final moment, where he will understand ‘the mysterious key to all my years…my unsuspected true face’. The poem was written in protest against the military junta that seized power in 1942, according to Edwin Williamson, but it also expresses suicidal desire. The final lines: ‘The first blow, the lance’s hard steel ripping my chest, and across my throat the intimate knife.’

During a symposium in the early 1980s, where the 83-year-old writer noted that his country, Argentina, was ‘falling into pieces around him’, Borges was asked to explain his fascination with knife-fighters and the historical figure of Juan Muraña.

‘He was the most famous knife slinger in north Buenos Aires in barrio Tierra de Fuego, the Penitentiary, the Recoleta, the Maldonado, that neighbourhood. He was a truck driver and responsible for many deaths, or so I was told,’ Borges said before adding: ‘But as a friend of mine said, “Who wasn’t responsible for at least one death in our time?’
Even the most wretched! Everyone was responsible for one death; it was part of being human”.⁸

Within the Borgesian worldview, guilt and innocence are often inter-changeable. Williamson recounts an incident where Borges kissed a long-term rival who lay dying; around this time Borges had written a parable where Cain sought forgiveness from his murdered brother, Abel.

Abel replied: ‘Did you kill me, or did I kill you? I can no longer remember; here we are together again as before.’

‘Now I know that you have truly forgiven me,’ said Cain, ‘because to forget is to forgive. I shall also try to forget.’

‘That’s right,’ said Abel quietly. ‘One is guilty for as long as one feels remorse.’

Of interest is not so much the guilt, or innocence, but the way it is remembered in the present. Over his long life, especially as a young man, Jorge Luis Borges felt shamed by instances of courage that he knew he could never equal (usually where men acknowledged that a ‘fight could also be a celebration’). For many, his nostalgia marked Borges as prematurely aged. Indeed, despite the radical modernity (or post-modernity) of his prose, Borges read little published after 1920.

During that same symposium, the elderly man distanced himself from his youthful self. ‘I no longer care for the late afternoons, nor suburbs,’ he said.

No longer was he seeking out the twilight that so transfixed him in his youth: ‘I like the centre of town, I like the city and I like the morning.’⁹ Unlike his earlier love of the uncertain, ‘European’ mood offered by dusk, where things were rarely what they seemed, Borges now appreciated the ‘illusion that each day could be the beginning of something.’

Three years ago, an article written by Australian writer, Guy Rundle, inspired a minor literary mystery in Melbourne. In ‘A Surreal Visitor’ Rundle reported that Borges had spent some time in the ‘Southern’ city of Melbourne in May, 1938.
According to Rundle, Borges found Melbourne with its ‘wide Victorian streets and languorous gardens, the tang of rusting air from the wide verandas, the stately trams, the pompous stone buildings shaded by palms’ to be reminiscent of Buenos Aires (‘albeit more staid’). Melbourne had the timelessness Borges associated with all cities of the South: ‘Transcendental cities in which the eternal was open at every moment, where a set of locks in a window in Glenhuntly Road is as beguiling and mysterious as the sublime shadow of the Shrine at night...’

None of this was true, of course. In 1938, Borges was mourning his father, while developing his famous creation, Pierre Menard – the provincial French intellectual who compulsively rewrote Cervantes’ Don Quixote word for word. During a brief, slightly furtive, mobile phone conversation that took place in and out of the closing doors of a lift, Rundle told me he wanted to describe a Melbourne that had perhaps never existed: a forgotten city, as imagined by a great artist, Borges.

Such an ambition echoes Borges’s own, when in the early 1920s after seven years in Europe he prowled Buenos Aires in search of its essence. A poem called ‘The South’ (or ‘The Southside’) conveys something of his mood at the time:

From one of your patios to have looked up
at the ancient stars,
from a bench in deep shadow to have looked up
at those scattered points of light,
which my ignorance never learned to name
or to order into constellations,
to have been aware of the circle of water
in the hidden cistern,
of the odor of jasmine and honeysuckle,
the silence of the bird asleep,
the arch of the entranceway, the damp –
these things, perhaps, are the poem.

Here we see the familiar details that would later come to symbolise Borges’s nostalgia for a pre-modern Buenos Aires: the patio, the arch of
the entrance way, and water in the cistern. The poem’s final line reflects Borges’s desire to transfer the *Ultraíst*, or image-driven poetry of Madrid’s avant-garde to the Argentine new world. Perhaps, Borges thought, when walking the city streets the scent of jasmine and the ancient constellations of stars that he would later learn to name – *these* things were the poem.

Norman di Giovanni, Borges’s long-term translator, argues that the South (*el Sur*) refers to the Southside of Buenos Aires not ‘the South of Argentina [or] some abstract symbolic South’.¹² Even if true, the location in ‘Deathwatch on the Southside’ – a poem written seven years after the romantic excursion above – has an impact that transcends geography. The poem begins strangely, as if the reader were somehow interrupting the author’s chain of thought:

By reason of someone’s death –
a mystery whose empty name I know and whose reality is beyond us –

When the ‘house on the Southside’ is introduced, we are not sure if the poem is a dream, or some sort of waking nightmare. Borges describes it as a house that is ‘wasted away by bad nights and worn sharp/ into the fineness of reality’. According to Emir Rodriguez Monegal, Borges’s insomnia, in its ‘atrocious lucidity’ reflected the author’s troubled psyche.¹³ Borges called himself the ‘hateful watcher’ of Buenos Aires’ nights (a man tormented by memory and repelled by his body reflected in ‘the wakefulness of an incessant mirror, which multiplies and haunts it’).

His neuroses were duplicated in the world outside ‘which goes as far as the broken outskirts of paths of clumsy mud where the wind grows tired’. Buenos Aires is no longer a site of wonder, but one of terror and emotional distress. The poem appears to recreate the thoughts of a man seeking out his own death. ‘In my slow walk, in my expectancy I reach the block, the house, the plain door I am looking for.’ The basic adjective – ‘plain’ – used in this sentence sets the poem’s tone. There is no touching lyricism here. No, the writing is stripped of all artifice and affectation. ‘I am touched by the
frail wisdoms lost in every man’s death,’ the narrator says, before adding a mocking aside:

His habit of books, of a key, of one body
among the others –
irrevocable rhythms that for him
composed the friendliness of the world.

Within these lines there is an apparent contradiction. Rather than giving the first-person account of the victim – as initially thought – the poet’s voice has shifted to that of the murderer.

And the dead man, the unbelievable?
His reality remains under the alien reality of flowers,
and his hospitality in death will give us
one memory more for time

Far removed from the earlier mood of discovery, by the poem’s climax the voice in ‘Deathwatch on the Southside’ is tough and macho. In contrast to the victim’s ‘alien reality of flowers’ the murderer makes his retreat with a ‘dark breeze on his face’ walking home through ‘the graven streets on the Southside’.

Almost three decades later, Borges pursued these ideas further in his self-confessed favourite story, ‘The South’ (1953). On a first reading, it is a simple narrative describing Johannes Dahlmann’s journey to his country house to recuperate from a life-threatening illness. After getting off at the wrong station, Dahlmann waits for alternative transport in a remote bar where local thugs (some with Indian-looking faces) provoke him into accepting a duel that results in his death.

Generally seen to be Borges most explicit engagement with his own ‘southerness’ as a writer, the story is a major development in his aesthetic.14 Not unlike his early poetry, it relies on complex symbolism while drawing on the author’s life. On Christmas Eve, 1938, Borges had a bizarre accident. When running up some stairs to catch a lift, he sensed ‘something brush his scalp’ (it was broken glass on a freshly painted window).
Despite treatment, Borges contracted septicaemia and nearly died. For the next few weeks, he endured disturbing night-time hallucinations and a high fever. At one stage, his mother recalled, Borges saw wild animals creeping through the door into his room.

‘Though blind to guilt, fate can be merciless with the slightest distractions,’ Borges notes in the story. In his unbridled excitement after finding a copy of Weil’s German translation of Arabian Nights – with a few pages missing – Dahlmann takes to the stairs: ‘Something in the dimness brushed his forehead – a bat? a bird? On the face of the woman who opened the door to him, he saw an expression of horror, and the hand he passed over his forehead came back red with blood.’

Borges displays here his masterful use of ostranenie; the Russian Formalist idea of ‘making strange’ that captures something of the character’s felt experience. Or perhaps, as Rodriguez Monegal suggests, the passage translates Borges’s appreciation of Hitchcock’s and von Sternberg’s expressive editing styles. The inclusion of the woman’s shocked face also encourages a psychoanalytic reading. Monegal notes that Borges was in real life going to meet an attractive Chilean woman and that the accident may reflect the smothered author’s unresolved feelings of oedipal guilt.

During his hospitalisation, Dahlmann suffers violently: ‘His head was shaved, he was strapped with metal bands to a table, he was blinded and dizzied with bright lights, his heart and lungs were listened to, and a man in a surgical mask struck a needle in his arm.’ The injection presfigures his murder when a knife enters his body. From this point of view, the death may indicate an attempt by Dahlmann to reassert control over the frightening and humiliating sanatorium experience. Borges has indicated that this death can be understood as either the character’s ‘real’ death, or as the dream of his death (maybe during the operation).

For some, what matters most in terms of this death is where it happened: whether Dahlmann dies in the hospital, or on the expanse of the Argentine pampas. For others, the importance of Dahlmann’s death stems from Borges’s use of ‘parallelism’ – a technique borrowed from the cinema, with its ‘endless spectacles composed by Hollywood with silvery images of Joan Crawford...
[that are] read and reread in cities everywhere.' What interests me most is the way this literary device enacts the author's engagement with his southern inheritance.

To imagine the South is an act of doubling, where a tradition borrowed from elsewhere is re-invented in the new world. This process requires a degree of sympathy (or what might be called parallelism). In his 1932 essay 'Narrative art and magic' Borges dismissed naturalistic fiction where the narrative relied in notions of causality, in preference for a 'law of sympathy' – first put forward by Frazer in The Golden Bough – where distinct elements are brought together in a symbolic sense.

‘Medicine men in central Australia inflict a wound on their forearms to shed blood so that the imitative or consistent sky will shed rain,’ Borges writes. ‘Barren women in Sumatra adorn and cuddle a wooden doll in their laps so their wombs will bear fruit.’ More than just a fictional law or aesthetic credo; these acts possess the ‘primeval clarity of magic’. Despite these examples being ‘atrocious or ridiculous’ Borges argues that the world is ruled by ‘laws of nature as well as those of imagination’ and that literature is no different. To draw our attention to the artificial, or magical, nature of his story, ‘The South’, Borges makes a parallel between apparently discrete events (Dahlmann suffers a freak accident and then is injected with a needle that prefigures the blade of his murderer’s knife).

Borges suggests that this murder offers an opportunity for a wounded Dahlmann to recover his pride.17 ‘This violence is central to the very development of events: the presence of death coincides with the revelation, for the reader and for the dying character, of the true structure of the universe,’ Ariel Dorfman argues in ‘Borges and American Violence’ (1968). None of Borges’s characters fight their fate, or the social injustice it represents in Borges’s fictions, he notes.

Quite the reverse, they acquiesce with a fervour that strikes him as peculiarly Latin American. ‘It never occurs to Borges’s characters,’ he argues to either escape the physical aggression, or intellectualise it: ‘They live it; they may choose the form of the violence, but not the fact of violence itself.’ Though acknowledging Borges’s talent, the absent social context is a problem: ‘Borges, after hurling his characters into a
world of violence and Latin American passion, prefers to disguise that world, to distort, deny, erase and forget it.'

'Everyone knows that the South begins on the other side of Avenida Rivadavia,’ Borges writes so simply in the story that it seems that he is merely referring to a place found in the street directory. Teasing the reader’s certainty, he adds: 'By crossing Rivadavia one entered an older and more stable world.’ Travelling to the station, he seeks out the symbols of pre-modern Buenos Aires: ‘the door knocker, the arch of the doorway, the long entryway, the almost-secret courtyard.’

On the train, Juan Dahlmann, the secretary of a municipal library on Calle Córdoba, becomes aware that he is ‘travelling not only into the South, but into the past’. Later, at the bar, he sees an old man whom he describes as ‘outside time, in a sort of eternity’:

Dahlmann was warmed by the rightness of the man’s hair band, the baize poncho he wore, his gaucho trousers and the boots made out of the skin of a horse’s leg, and he said to himself, recalling futile arguments with people from districts in the North, or from Entre Ríos that only in the South did gauchos like that exist anymore.

This is the ‘motionless old gaucho’ who throws the ‘naked dagger’ into the air and instigates Dahlmann’s murder. ‘It was as if the South itself had decided that Dahlmann should accept the challenge,’ Borges writes. According to Beatriz Sarlo, the Argentine South is a place of history where gauchos, Indians, military men battled each other and engaged in duels.

It is also, following Borges’s emphasis upon Dahlmann’s mixed heritage (his Argentine-German blood that impels him to choose the lineage of ‘romantic death’) a place where racial identification or allegiances lose their clarity, she writes.

A similar premise is developed in Borges’s ‘Story of the Warrior and the Captive Maiden’ from his collection, Fictions. In it, Borges offers a parallel between a story from Croce, in which a Barbarian changes sides and decides to defend Ravenna against his compatriots to that of an Englishwoman, who, after being abducted by a local Indian
tribe, embraces her savage existence. 'Borges clearly thinks that crossing a cultural border and living on the edge of a frontier (what he calls in his poetry the orillas, the borderline) is a pattern not only of the captive’s story but of his own, and metonymically of Argentine literature,' Sarlo writes.

What is striking about the ‘Story of the Warrior and the Captive Maiden’ is the author’s intimate voice. Borges places his personal response at the heart of the narrative: ‘When I read the story of the warrior in Croce’s book it moved me in an unusual way and I had the impression of having recovered in a different form, something that had been my own.’ He then recounts the story of his English grandmother meeting the blonde Indian girl. What matters is the opportunity for communion between apparent opposites. He writes: ‘Perhaps the two women felt for an instant as sisters; they were far from their beloved island and in an incredible country.’

None of this means that Borges should be seen as an icon of interracial tolerance in Argentina, or anywhere else; there is no need to redeem his memory. Borges’s male masochism is subversive, in the way it enacts Bataille’s notion of sacrifice as a form of social excess. His persona has a frailty that undermines the clichéd stereotypes of masculinity often thought to dominate in post-colonial societies. And yet despite the allure of abjection (embodied in the knife-fighter trawling the Buenos Aires’ underworld for strangers to ‘justify his murder’), Borges valorised a militaristic version of his nation’s past, which arguably sustained his enthusiasm for the junta in 1976.

Still, over the course of Borges’s life these attitudes shifted perceptibly. ‘Until recently I felt proud of my military ancestors,’ he said in the 1980s. ‘I no longer do. I no longer feel proud of them. When I began to write I was known as the grandson of Colonel Borges. Luckily, Colonel Borges is now seen as my grandfather.’

‘Nationalism,’ he added, ‘is the main affliction of our times. In ancient times, the Stoics coined a word which, I think, we are still unworthy of; I am referring to the word “cosmopolitanism”. I believe we should be citizens of the world or, as Goethe would express it, “Weltbürger”, which means the same.’ On the cover of the first issue of Argentina’s most influential literary magazine, Sur (South), there
was an arrow pointed South, with the phrase: ‘Turning one’s back on Europe? Don’t you see the infinite ridiculousness of the phrase?’

Borges developed this idea in his 1951 lecture ‘The Argentine Writer and Tradition’ suggesting that asking the question reflects a limited (perhaps Southern) perspective. Characterising the north/south divide as a ‘simulacrum, a pseudo problem’ he writes that the ‘idea that Argentine poetry should abound in differential Argentine traits and Argentine local colour seems to me a mistake.’ To prove his point, he compares his country’s ‘national’ poem, Martin Fierro, with some lines from a sonnet called La urna: ‘The sun shines on the slanting roofs/ and on the windows. Nightingales/ try to say they are in love.’ No nightingales exist in Argentina. The roofs of Buenos Aires are flat, not slanted. The poet’s decision to use tropes from another hemisphere (to refer to a bird that is less a bird of reality than of literature) offers Borges an insight into a temperament that he describes as distinctly Argentine. Overwhelmed by the loss of his beloved, the poet grapples with symbols and language that remain foreign, evasive. Suggesting, Borges says, an ‘Argentine reserve, distrust and reticence’ and the difficulty his compatriots have ‘revealing our intimate nature’.

‘Perhaps I may be permitted to make a confession here, a very small confession,’ Borges notes at another point in the essay. ‘For many years, in books happily forgotten, I tried to copy down the essence of the outlying suburbs of Buenos Aires.’ This impulse, inspired by Joyce, was destined to fail. By contrast, his story, ‘Death and the Compass’ recreates the psychology of Buenos Aires in the way it deforms recognisable elements of the city via the nightmare experience. ‘Because I had not set out to find that flavour, because I had abandoned myself to a dream, I was able to accomplish, after so many years, what I had previously sought in vain.’

Similar to the European Jews or the Irish, who thanks to their lack of ‘special devotion’ to the Western canon, are able to create innovative art, Argentines should be free to tackle all themes, he writes: ‘Our patrimony is the universe. Either being Argentine is an inescapable act of fate – and in that case we shall be so in all events – or being Argentine is a mere affectation, a mask.’
Notes
3 Williamson 167
7 Williamson 4
8 Cortinez 61
9 Cortinez 46
12 *Selected Poems* xxii
14 Irwin 416
17 For Williamson ‘The South’ is an anti-Peronist story of revenge (and ‘return to the timeless spirit of the gaucho, to a tradition of the individual’s resistance to the power of the state that Borges derived from the anarchist ideas of his father and Evaristo Carriego’). Williamson 318