

## Jorge Luis Borges

**One of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, JLB was born on 24 August 1899 in Buenos Aires. Poet, short story writer and essayist, he was awarded (along with Samuel Beckett) the International Literature Prize in 1961. His first book of poems was published in 1923, and in spite of his loss of sight he continued to live in the world of books until his death last year in Geneva, Switzerland.**

He was born a month early and was called Jorge after his father, Francisco after his paternal grandfather, Isidoro after his maternal grandfather and Luis after an uncle who was a legal expert. Spanish and English were the languages spoken at home, a home at the center of which was a cistern with a turtle in it, since in those days people believed that turtles purified water. He did translations and wrote poems, short stories, essays, songs and kisses of death. He was a friend of learned Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes, whose work he rescued from oblivion. He used to read on the streetcar on his way to work at the municipal library. But he was fired from the library, and later became Chicken, Hen, and Rabbit Inspector. He resigned and started lecturing on literature. His mother was put under house arrest for several days for singing the National Anthem on the street, and his sister landed in jail. Later, he was named Director of the National Library. One day the doctors forbade him to do any further reading or writing. So he began reading with his ears and writing with his breath. He would later say: The color of my blindness is not black, it is like the blaze of blue and yellow nebulae. He received awards, doctorates and other tributes, as well as insults. He stated that the native land is but a bad habit and that thus, he considered himself a citizen of many: Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Austin and Geneva, for example. He went through marriage and divorce, and then marriage again. Like any other human being, he was by no means exempt from contradictions. He once confessed: "I have committed the worst of sins a man can commit: I have not been happy. May the merciless glaciers of oblivion carry me away and lose me. I have let them down. I was not happy." But on a different occasion he stated that "Happily, I have often been happy." When asked about revenge and forgiveness he answered: "Forgetting is the only revenge and the only forgiveness. Do not hate your enemy, for if you do you are somehow his slave. Your hatred will never be better than your peace." He spent the years and they in turn spent him. They say his name was Jorge Luis Borges and he would have been 88 years old on August 24.

L.P.O.

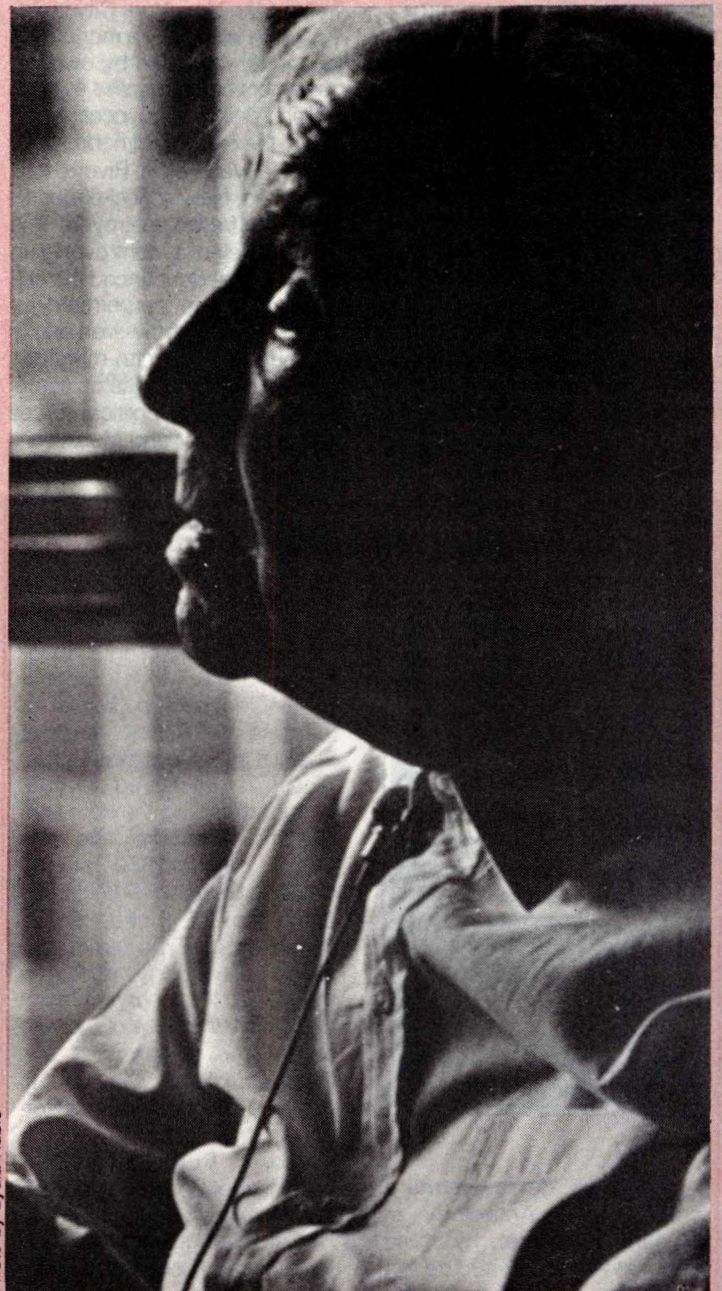


Photo by Lydia Rubio