

# On Listening to Jorge Luis Borges

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The warmth of his humanity reaches out  
Like force from a magnetic field.  
Because he cannot see, he speaks to the unseen  
(Yeats' Spiritus Mundi maybe),  
Speaks without distraction of a vacuous face  
There out of curiosity:  
Come negligent to see the old man  
Before he dies.  
And Borges speaks of his approaching death  
And present blindness  
With the detachment of a farmer  
Appraising an autumn frost,  
Till blindness, old age, and time become,  
In his words, not his but ours—  
And ours also ghosts of apprehensions  
That dog our shadows, drain our cups.  
Di Giovanni reads and Borges nods  
In approbation of the word or in the inflection,  
One cannot tell. How  
Could the English seed have taken root  
In Argentina? Piers Plowman speaks his vision

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Or Stevenson pirates his way through Borges' lips;  
And we are peeled, layer by layer,  
Of all that is not us  
To ultimate core,  
And so exposed, grown vulnerable,  
Not shriveled to cinders but unfractionably wrapped  
In English speech transformed to racial voice  
That heals us in its flow,  
Familiar though it pours from alien lips  
To call us human,  
Haling us homeward whole.