

## “Borges and I”

To the other one, to Borges, is to whom things happen. I walk through the streets of Buenos Aires and I delay myself, perhaps almost mechanically, to look at the arch of an entrance hall and the grillwork on the gate; from Borges I find out through the mail and I see his name in a list of professors or in a biographical dictionary. I like hourglasses, maps, eighteenth century typography, the taste of coffee and the prose of Stevenson; he shares these preferences, but in a vain way that turns them into the attributes of an actor. It would be an exaggeration to say that ours is a hostile relationship; I live, let myself go on living, so that Borges may contrive his literature, and this literature justifies me. It is not hard for me to confess that he has achieved some valid pages, but those pages cannot save me, perhaps because what is good belong to no-one, not even to him, but rather to the language and to tradition. Besides, I am destined to perish, definitively, and only some instant of myself can survive in him. Little by little, I am giving over everything to him, although I am quite aware of his perverse custom of falsifying and magnifying things. Spinoza knew that all things long to persist in their being: the stone eternally wants to be stone and the tiger a tiger. I shall remain in Borges, not in myself (if it is true that I am someone), but I recognize myself less in his books than in many others or in the laborious strumming of a guitar. Years ago I tried to free myself from him and went from the mythologies of the suburbs to the games with time and infinity, but those games belong to Borges now and I will have to devise other things. Thus my life is a flight and I lose everything and everything belong to oblivion, or to the other.

I do not know which of us has written this page.

*Jorge Luis Borges, El hacedor, Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1960*

1. Who is the narrator? How do you interpret the opening lines?
2. How many Borges's are there? Are the Borges's in the story the same as the author of this story? What kind of relationship is there between “I” and Borges? With what tone does “I” describe Borges, and what do you make of this tone? Explain: “I recognize myself less in his books than in many others.”
3. Dissect the list of ‘my tastes.’ What do these items represent or why are they here? Why does he say these tastes become “accoutrements of an actor?”
4. In what ways might you interpret this story as commentary on topics broader than just Borges himself, his identity, and his sense of himself as a writer? What does the story suggest about life vs. writing more broadly?