

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

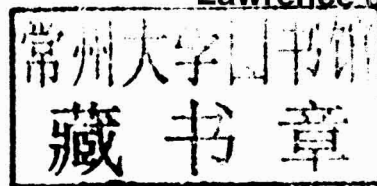
TCLC 320

Volume 320

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short-Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**

Lawrence J. Trudeau
Editor



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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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Authors now living or who died after December 31, 1999	<i>CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM (CLC)</i>
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Authors who died between 1400 and 1799	<i>LITERATURE CRITICISM FROM 1400 TO 1800 (LC)</i> <i>SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM (SC)</i>
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Hispanic writers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries	<i>HISPANIC LITERATURE CRITICISM (HLC)</i> <i>HISPANIC LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (HLCS)</i>
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Major authors from the Renaissance to the present	<i>WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM, 1500 TO THE PRESENT (WLC)</i> <i>WORLD LITERATURE CRITICISM SUPPLEMENT (WLCS)</i>

Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author’s works. The great poets, novelists, short-story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey of an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Volumes 1 through 87 of TCLC featured authors who died between 1900 and 1959; beginning with Volume 88, the series expanded to include authors who died between 1900 and 1999. Beginning with Volume 26, every fourth volume of TCLC was devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers. With TCLC 285, the series returned to a standard author approach, with some entries devoted to a single important work of world literature and others devoted to literary topics.

TCLC is part of the survey of criticism and world literature that is contained in Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (LC), *Shakespearean Criticism* (SC), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (CMLC).

Organization of the Book

A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the author’s name (if applicable).
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication information of each work is given. In the case of works not published in English, a translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is a published translated title or a

free translation provided by the compiler of the entry. As a further aid to the reader, a list of **Principal English Translations** is provided for authors who did not publish in English; the list focuses primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, plays are dated by first performance, not first publication, and the location of the first performance is given, if known. Lists of **Representative Works** discussed in the entry appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Citations conform to recommendations set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (2009).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** describing each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors who have appeared in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *TCLC* as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *Drama Criticism*, *Poetry Criticism*, *Short Story Criticism*, and *Children's Literature Review*.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the numbers of the *TCLC* volumes in which their entries appear.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of titles published in other languages and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, plays, nonfiction books, and poetry, short-story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks. All titles reviewed in *TCLC* and in the other Literary Criticism Series can be found online in the *Gale Literary Index*.

Citing Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as Modern Language Association (MLA) style or University of Chicago Press style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009. Print); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Cardone, Resha. "Reappearing Acts: Effigies and the Resurrection of Chilean Collective Memory in Marco Antonio de la Parra's *La tierra insomne o La puta madre*." *Hispania* 88.2 (2005): 284-93. Rpt. in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau. Vol. 206. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 356-65. Print.

Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*. Ed. Reginald M. Nischik. Rochester: Camden House, 2007. 163-74. Rpt. in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau. Vol. 206. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 227-32. Print.

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Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." In *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*, edited by Reginald M. Nischik, pp. 163-74. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2007. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 206, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 227-32. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

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Jorge Luis Borges

1899-1986

(Also wrote under the pseudonym F. Bustos; joint pseudonyms with Adolfo Bioy Casares include H[onorio]. Bustos Domecq, B. Lynch Davis, and B. Suárez Lynch) Argentinean short-story writer, poet, essayist, critic, translator, biographer, and travel writer.

The following entry provides criticism of Borges's life and works. For additional information about Borges, see *CLC*, Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 19, 44, 48, 83; and *TCLC*, Volume 109.

INTRODUCTION

Jorge Luis Borges is known for complex, idiosyncratic fictions, often filled with puzzles and intellectual games, in which readers must navigate multiple layers of meaning, philosophical subtext, and intertextual reference. His most celebrated works are short, abstract narratives that cross genre boundaries and raise provocative questions about the nature of literature and reality. In addition to his innovative and influential short stories, he also wrote many volumes of poetry and wide-ranging essays about literature, philosophy, language, religion, and history. Borges's work appeals to general readers as well as to academics, intellectuals, and fellow writers. His work has been translated into many languages and has been the subject of extensive critical commentary.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Borges was born on 24 August 1899 in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and grew up in the moderately prosperous suburb of Palermo. Although he received little formal education as a child, he was raised in an intellectually rich environment and was bilingual from an early age. His half-English father was a lawyer who aspired to be a writer, and whose large library included books in both English and Spanish. The young Borges exhibited interest in the fantastic in literature, particularly the works of Edgar Allan Poe and H. G. Wells. He was seven years old when he wrote his first short story and nine when his Spanish translation of Oscar Wilde's 1888 short story "The Happy Prince" appeared in a Buenos Aires newspaper in 1908. From 1914 to 1921 the family lived in Europe, first in Switzerland, where Borges attended secondary school at the Collège de Genève, then in Spain, where he was exposed to such avant-garde literary movements as Dadaism and Imagism. By this time literary journals were publishing his

reviews, essays, and poems, and when he returned to Buenos Aires at the age of twenty-two, he was recognized as an important new voice in the city's intellectual community. In addition to three volumes of poetry, he published three collections of essays on metaphysics, language, and philosophy during the 1920s and helped to found several literary journals.

In 1935 Borges published his first fiction collection, *Historia universal de la infamia* (published as *A Universal History of Infamy*), a series of vignettes that combine the conventions of crime fiction with sly erudition to present seemingly factual accounts of real and mythical world criminals. The appearance in 1936 of "El acercamiento a Almotásim" (published as "The Approach to al-Mu'tasim") marked Borges's first attempt at the playful, genre-defying approach for which he is best known. Taking the form of a literary note, the piece was published as straightforward criticism, but it is actually a review of a nonexistent novel by an Indian author of Borges's own creation, with false quotes by actual literary critics and authors. Another important work in this vein, "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*" (published as "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*"), appeared in 1939 to great acclaim, and it served as a template for the group of highly conceptual and often mysterious fictions that gained him international renown in literary circles. Many of these stories were collected in the volumes *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941; may be translated as *The Garden of Forking Paths*), *Ficciones* (1935-1944) (1944; may be translated as *Fictions* (1935-1944)), and *El Aleph* (1949; may be translated as *The Aleph*). Critics generally regard the works of this period as masterpieces of innovation.

Borges had been vocal in denouncing anti-Semitism and fascism in the 1930s, and in the 1940s he was openly critical of Argentinean leader Juan Perón. In retaliation, Perón removed him from his post at a municipal library in Buenos Aires. In 1955, when Perón's government was overthrown by a coup, Borges was named director of Argentina's national library. Two years later he was appointed professor of English at the University of Buenos Aires. By this time an inherited condition had almost completely deprived Borges of his eyesight, but he continued to write prolifically, generally dictating his works to his mother and, after her death in 1975, to a secretary. His late work explores many forms and topics, from poetry, essays, and translations to philosophy, history, and literary criticism. Borges came to world-wide attention in 1961 when he and the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett were co-recipients of the first Prix

International Formentor, a literary award that showcases the work of published authors who are not widely known outside their own countries. Borges was long considered to be a contender for the Nobel Prize in Literature, but many believe that his tacit support for repressive governments in Argentina and Chile during the 1970s may have cost him the prize. Nevertheless, he was a literary celebrity in later years, traveling widely to deliver lectures and accept awards. Shortly before his death on 14 June 1986, he married his former student and long-time companion María Kodama.

MAJOR WORKS

Borges never wrote a novel, but he experimented extensively with most other literary forms. His reputation rests primarily on a relatively small group of stories, most of which are short yet densely packed with paradoxes, parodies, and puzzles. Among the best known and most frequently anthologized of these stories are “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*,” “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” “La biblioteca de Babel” (published as “The Library of Babel”), and “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan” (published as “The Garden of Forking Paths”). These stories are included in *The Garden of Forking Paths* as well as in *Fictions*, which was translated into many languages and became one of the first internationally renowned works by a South American author.

“Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*” is written in the manner of a scholarly paper, and presents the following situation: a fictional literary critic (the unnamed narrator) is writing about a fictional French writer (Menard) and his attempts to perfectly duplicate the real work of fiction (*Don Quixote*) of an actual Spanish writer (Miguel de Cervantes). Borges cleverly caricatures the conceits and conventions of literary criticism while also inviting readers to dissolve generic boundaries and re-imagine the nature of texts. The varied themes of this intellectual comedy converge when the narrator insists that Menard’s version of the *Quixote* is identical to the original—but infinitely richer. Like many of Borges’s fictions, “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*” addresses questions about how writers and readers interactively construct meaning. In “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” Borges’s narrator relates the story of a conspiracy among intellectuals to invent a world, Tlön, which is complete with its own languages, history, and cultures. Appearing first only in scant references in obscure texts, evidence of Tlön becomes increasingly ubiquitous over time, including the discovery of artifacts from that world. In a postscript, the narrator reveals that through the efforts of a secret society, the Earth itself is slowly becoming Tlön.

Many of Borges’s stories reflect his interest in mathematics, incorporating such concepts as infinity and recursion, or a repeated process that determines a succession of elements.

“The Library of Babel” takes place in a network of hexagonal chambers—“the universe (which others call the Library)” —each of which contains shelves filled with books that are made up of randomly arranged letters and punctuation marks. Any given book is likely to be filled with nonsense, but if the Library is infinite, it must contain every possible meaningful text somewhere in its contents. The story is part memoir, reflecting Borges’s own life as a librarian; part anthropological treatise, describing the behaviors and beliefs of the library’s inhabitants; and part analytical essay, examining the logic of the library and explaining various attempts to discover or invent some system for understanding its meaning. “The Garden of Forking Paths” is set during World War I and focuses on Dr. Yu Tsun, a Chinese national and German spy who is trapped in England and given the assignment of reporting on the location of the English army. It is revealed that the Garden of Forking Paths is the life work of Dr. Tsun’s ancestor, and is an infinite labyrinth in the form of a novel that is written in such a way to account for all possible outcomes of every event.

While Borges’s fame rests mostly on the work contained in *Fictions* and *The Aleph*, these stories represent only a small fraction of a long career filled with literary accomplishments and intellectual investigations. His works are usually divided into three categories: fiction, poetry, and essays. After establishing himself as an experimental, ultramodern poet in the 1920s, Borges virtually abandoned poetry for two decades, then turned to an exploration of formal techniques—rhyme, meter, metaphor—and traditional constructions, such as sonnets and haiku. His later poems, including those collected in *El oro de los tigres* (1972; published as *The Gold of Tigers*), are considered among his best. The nonfiction prose pieces gathered in such collections as *Discusión* (1932; may be translated as *Discussion*) and *Otras inquisiciones* (1937-1952) (1952; published as *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952*) contain imaginative commentaries on literature, history, metaphysics, and many other topics. Borges’s interest and expertise in esoteric subjects, among them Kabbalistic mysticism and hermetic philosophy, brought him recognition, influenced his fictions, and often appear in his scholarly and critical writings.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Borges was an important figure in introducing imaginative fantasy into traditionally realistic South American literature, opening a path for Gabriel García Márquez and the popularization of magical realism. Since the 1950s, Borges’s literary innovations and philosophical investigations have attracted a global audience and significant critical attention. Pablo Martín Ruiz (2014) pointed out that “[o]ne of the striking facts about Borges’s reception is that he is recognized as a referent by thinkers or intellectuals who would not even read each other.” His ideas are

reflected not only in the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and other European literary theorists but also in the writings of analytical philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians. Borges himself had a lifelong fascination with mathematics, which was outlined by Floyd Merrell in *Unthinking Thinking: Jorge Luis Borges, Mathematics, and the New Physics* (1991). Michael Evans (1984; see Further Reading) discussed Borges's use of allusion and intertextuality and Patricia Novillo-Corvalán (2011) explored Borges in relation to James Joyce and Dante. Bruno Bosteels (2006) identified Borges as a serious philosopher, commenting on how his "antiphilosophy" is a philosophical system in itself with a lineage of renowned practitioners. Silvia G. Dapía (1999) compared the critiques of language found in the works of Borges and Austro-Hungarian writer Fritz Mauthner. She argued that "Borges, for his part, renders aesthetically Mauthner's position and opens a new chapter of the history of literature by incorporating in his writings epistemological issues that at that time were not intensively discussed even by philosophy." Marina Martín (2000) argued that an "overlooked" accomplishment of Borges is "his ability to detect the common doctrines that emerge from diverse philosophical positions," and that he "looks back to Ancient and Eastern philosophies in search of shared beliefs repeatedly formulated in history."

Cynthia Giles

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- Luna de enfrente* [may be translated as *The Moon across the Street*]. Buenos Aires: Proa, 1925. (Poetry)
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- El idioma de los argentinos* [may be translated as *The Language of the Argentines*]. Buenos Aires: Gleizer, 1928. (Essays and lectures)
- Cuaderno San Martín* [may be translated as *San Martín Notebook*]. Buenos Aires: Proa, 1929. (Poetry)
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- El Aleph* [may be translated as *The Aleph*]. Buenos Aires: Losada, 1949. Expanded ed. 1952. (Short stories)
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