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On Listening to
Jorge Luis Borges

EDWARD L. HART*

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

*Dr. Hart, professor of English at Brigham Young University, has published widely in scholarly and creative journals.
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.