



# Brodie's Report

*Jorge Luis Borges , Andrew Hurley (Annotations)*

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**Brodie's Report** Jorge Luis Borges , Andrew Hurley (Annotations)

At the age of seventy, after a gap of twenty years, Jorge Luis Borges returned to writing short stories. In *Brodie's Report*, he returned also to the style of his earlier years with its brutal realism, nightmares, and bloodshed. Many of these stories, including Unworthy and The Other Duel, are set in the macho Argentinean underworld, and even the rivalries between artists are suffused with suppressed violence. Throughout, opposing themes of fate and free will, loyalty and betrayal, time and memory flicker in the recesses of these compelling stories, among the best Borges ever wrote.

## Brodie's Report Details

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# From Reader Review Brodie's Report for online ebook

## Fernando says

Siempre es para mí un placer leer un libro de Borges.

Este libro en particular reúne cuentos y relatos que involucra a malevos, cuchilleros, guapos y tahúres listos para el duelo por el honor o la mujer compartida. En otros nos habla de antiguas señoras de época o gauchos devenidos en soldados. Duelos, entreveros y desafíos forman parte de estas historias.

Hay dos cuentos que me sorprendieron por sus finales tan shockeantes y son "Juan Muraña" y "El Evangelio según San Marcos".

Puedo abrir cualquier libro de Borges y elegir un cuento al azar y sé que el Maestro nunca me decepcionará.

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## Asad ben Gharbya says

Il y a deux Borges: celui des labyrinthes, des miroirs, et des contes métaphysiques sur Poe et Averroes, et celui de la pampa, des poignards, des duels et des guerres sud-américaines. Je préfère le premier. Ce recueil est issu du second Borges. Lui préférerait "Le rapport de Brodie" à "Fictions", son œuvre majeure. C'est sûrement à cause de la simplicité de la prose, à une grande sobriété qu'il n'a jamais cessé de poursuivre.

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## Bill Kerwin says

In his old age, Borges--using Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills* as his model--crafted these deceptively straightforward narratives in a new laconic style. Argentinian history, the half-savage Pampas, the criminals of the Buenos Aires' slums, and duels (both actual and metaphorical) are the subjects of these tales.

They are all worthwhile, and three of them--The Interloper, The Encounter, and the Gospel According to Mark--are as good as anything he ever wrote.

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## Juan Pablo says

Knives, knives, knives...I had forgotten how important they were. In fact, I've faced life until now without one (whether it has been a life at all might be the most poignant question).

Borges is a master of realism. The clarity of his prose strikes deeper within me than most of what I have read recently; I happily lose myself in his short stories, expectant of the next word I'll read and, despite the themes common across the entire collection (knives) and the linearity of his accounts, he manages to end each with a breathtaking bang!

I can honestly state that "El Evangelio Según Marcos" (read the trans. [here](#)) changed my perspective on life: no work has ever sneaked up on me like this one and then (quite physically) transformed my conscious being. What I felt must be what people would like to refer to when they say they were 'blown away' by

something; I had to stop, breathe, let my mind travel and enjoy the most sublime encounter with art I've had in years.

I should mention the stories, although they stand by themselves quite well, are all interrelated, and I wouldn't be surprised if upon another reading of this exquisite volume I'd be able to dissect the threads running through them all. They're about Argentina, Argentinianess and Borges's interpretation and construction of the context that surrounded him, but that goes without saying. They're about those moments of immensity when, wide-eyed and tachycardic, one is able to say 'I am', knowing the next moment will determine who one, from then on, will be (somewhere between always and never, blood-letting and eternal).

Read this in spanish if you can (I don't know how these are in english, but it seems to me this prose would lend itself well for translation), the writing is elegant through its educated simplicity. By the time this volume was published it was late in Borges's career. By then, he seems to have mastered his miniaturist style, evoking poetry in his strokes, and was entirely comfortable with his stature as a writer. Borges himself is written in most of the stories, well aware of his being Borges, many times telling something someone might have told Borges and going into the layers of memory, history and identity that this narrative framework allows. It's all quite surreal and magical in its straightforward realism, meaning it's not gritty but somewhat romantic and sparked by fantasy, like the knife fights oft depicted in his stories.

Quite honestly, I can't wait to read pretty much all this man wrote.

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### **Cymru Roberts says**

In the forward JLB says he set out to write minimalist stories like Robert Louis Stevenson. I can't say if he is Stevensian or not, but I can tell you that these stories are minimalist masterpieces. How can he possibly pack so much in four-to-six pages? And he isn't cramming in a thousand modifiers into every paragraph either; instead there is a languid, almost doggedly mundane quality to a lot of the sentences, and yet still by the end it as if we have read an entire novel. There are plenty of novels numbering in the hundreds of pages where much less happens. Borges, in his old age, seemed to tire of writing fabulist tales and wanted some good old fashioned realism. Well, if realism can be like this then I say fuck fantasy!

Can we take a moment too and ask what is his bloody obsession with gingers?! He has this image in his mind – of the redheaded Latino cowboy, all dressed in black, knife in hand – that is indelible in this volume. Where did that image come from? We suspect a real life situation, but he never tells us. In any event the ginger gauchos of *Brodie's Report* engage in duels and have their souls trapped in their street instruments, and it's all still realism. How many writers can do that? The sad part is Borges' relation to all this—he watches the fights and the Red Men in Black all from a distance he can never cross; we feel the sorrowful resignation of JLB that he will always be a lonesome reader, and never a lunfardo-speaking badass. Luckily for us, JLB's disappointment is our enduring gain.

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### **Glenn Russell says**

Welcome to the many universes of Jorge Luis Borges. For those new to the author, this is an excellent book of Borges to read first, since these stories are accessible and straightforward, containing very little of the baroque complexity characteristic of his earlier collections. To share the flavor of these eleven Borges tales, I will focus on the title story. And let me tell you folks, I have read a number of books on indigenous tribes by cultural anthropologists such as Raymond Firth and Colin Turnbull, but I have never encountered a study quite like "Brodie's Report."

#### BRODIE'S REPORT

**Strange Find:** The narrator relates how he discovers a manuscript tucked inside the cover of "Thousand and One Nights," a manuscript written by one David Brodie, a Scottish missionary who preached in the jungles of Brazil, a manuscript he is now making known to the world; and, the narrator says, how he will take pains to reproduce the manuscript's colorless language verbatim. Such a mysterious find is classic Borges: the narrator is only the messenger, any actual firsthand experience of unfolding peculiar events belongs to another.

**Bare Facts:** Here are the raw facts about this bestial, wild, brutish tribe Brodie calls Yahoos: vowels are absent in their harsh language; the number of their tribe never exceeds seven hundred; they sleep wherever they find themselves at night and only a few have names; they call one another by flinging mud or throwing themselves in the dirt; their diet consists of fruits, roots, reptiles and milk from cats and bats; they hide themselves while eating but have sex out in the open; they walk about naked since clothing and tattoos are unknown to them; they prefer to huddle in swamps rather than grasslands with springs of fresh water and shade trees; they devour the raw flesh of their king, queen and witch doctors so as to imbibe their respective virtues. For an author like Borges, a highly cultivated, refined, aesthetically attuned urbane gentleman and man of letters, life among this tribe of Yahoo could be seen as his worst nightmare.

**Questionable Honor:** The tribe is ruled over by a king whose power is absolute. Each male child is closely examined to see if he possess bodily signs, both secret and sacred, revealing him as their future king. Once a child is chosen as king of the Yahoos, he is immediately castrated, blinded, and his hands and feet cut off so as he will not be distracted by the outside world, setting him free to imbibe inner wisdom. The king is then taken to a cavern where only witch doctors and a pair of female slaves are permitted entry to serve the king and smear his body with dung. By this extreme social custom, I think Borges is asking us to ponder the perennial philosophical question: is our basic, corrupt human nature improved by society and culture, a view held by such as Plato and Aristotle; or, are we, as according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, good by nature and corrupted by society? However we approach this question, one thing is for sure: no other non-human primate tribe would inflict such brutal dismemberment on their leader.

**Vision and Creativity:** The queen looks at Brodie and then, in full sight of her attendants, offers herself to him. He declines but then the queen does something unexpected – she pricks Brodie with a pin, a pin manufactured elsewhere since the Yahoos are incapable of manufacturing even the simplest objects. Pin pricking from the queen is seen by the Yahoo as an honor -the queen projects that Brodie will not feel any pain since all the Yahoos are insensitive to pain and pleasure with the exception of the pleasure they take in gorging on raw and rancid food and smelling its noxious odor. On the heels of this episode, Brodie make a startling pronouncement: lack of imagination makes them cruel. To my mind, one of the most powerful statements within the story: linking cruelty with an individual's lack of imagination and also linking cruelty with a society's lack of imagination. How far removed are we from the Yahoos in this respect, really?

**Bizarre:** Brodie reports how the Yahoo number system is unique, how they count one, two, three, four, and then immediately go to infinity. Also unique is the power the witch doctors have to transform anyone into an ant or a tortoise; as proof of this truth, the Yahoo point out red ants swarming on an anthill. Then we arrive

something truly unique: the Yahoo have virtually no memory, they barely have any recollection of past time beyond yesterday. On this topic, Brodie makes a general philosophical point: memory is no less marvelous than prophesy since the ancient happenings we easily recall (the building of the pyramids; the parting of the Red Sea) are much more distant in time than tomorrow. As we all know, our very human capacity to remember can be a mixed blessing: although our humanity is enriched, we can frequently be burdened by continually bringing to mind not only nasty and sad memories but tragic and horrific memories. Not the Yahoo - they only go back as far as yesterday.

Theology: Since Brodie is a Scottish missionary, predictably his report includes the Yahoo system of religious belief. Turns out, the Yahoo believe both heaven and hell are underground: their hell is bright, dry and inhabited by the old, the sick, the mistreated as well as Arabs, leopards and the Apemen. Yes, Brodie reports how the Yahoo have to fend off attacks by the Apemen. No further detail is given on the Apemen which makes the whole report a bit spooky. Anyway, the Yahoo heaven is dark and marsh-like and the afterlife reward for kings, queens, witch doctors along with the happy, the hardhearted and the bloodthirsty. I can just imagine what Jorge Luis Borges must have been thinking outlining such a Yahoo theology, a theology that really stretches our more conventional views of the afterlife, to say the least.

The Arts: Brodie's report includes the two Yahoo sports: organized cat fights and executions. Sound like fun? I wonder if they would sell tickets to outsiders. Then Brodie reports on how a poet is a Yahoo who can string together six or seven enigmatic words. The poet will then shriek out these mysterious words surrounded by his fellow Yahoo who consider the poet no longer a man but a god. And as a god, they have the right to kill the poet on the spot. However, if the poet can escape the circle, he can seek refuge in a desert to the north of the jungle. Again, I wonder what was going through the mind of Borges when he envisioned poetry and the Yahoo – certainly enough to make a refined aesthete's skin crawl.

Home Sweet Home: Bordie reports how now that he's home in Scotland, he still dreams of the Yahoo and how the Yahoo are not that far removed from the streets of Glasgow, since, after all, the Yahoo have institutions, a king, speak a language based on abstract concepts, believe in the divine origin of poetry and also believe the soul survives death. Lastly, let me note how Brodie reports how, based on their rather abstract language, the Yahoo are not a primitive people but a degenerative people; in other words, they are a people whose ancestors were once highly civilized, perhaps even European. A rather chilling thought.

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## **Sunny says**

I think I have come to the conclusion that I am not a fan of short stories. I'm sure Borges is a great writer but nothing apart from a bit of shock and horror came out of these short stories. A lot of them were about duels with knives and skirmishes and death which seemed to have been the norm at that time in Argentina. The final short story called Dr Brodies report was itself relatively interesting about a group of people called the Yahoos who had some very peculiar habits and customs. Some of the other interesting bits in the book were:

- You can't measure time by days the way you measure money by dollars and cents, because dollars are all the same while every day is different and maybe every hour as well.

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## **????? says**

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## Mila says

“He intentado, no sé con qué fortuna, la redacción de cuentos directos. No me atrevo a afirmar que son sencillos; no hay en la tierra una sola página, una sola palabra que lo sea, ya que todas postulan el universo, cuyo más notorio atributo es la complejidad.” - Prólogo

En estos cuentos argentinos Borges resucita el imaginario gauchesco de fines del siglo XIX y describe un mundo de malevos, cuchilleros, duelos y venganzas.

Algunos de sus temas de predilección - la verdad y el tiempo, la memoria y el olvido- afloran en forma de breves reflexiones que no afectan el carácter directo de las narraciones.

Sin embargo es el tema de la degeneración, que se manifiesta de forma indirecta e insistente, que parece regir esta recopilación.

Los Yahoos descriptos por el informe de Brodie no son una tribu primitiva sino degenerada. En "el Evangelio según Marcos", la familia del capataz Gutre, bruscos e analfabetos, son descendientes de una familia inglesa letrada de apellido Guthrie. El historiador elegido para estudiar la carta de San Martín en “Guayaquil”, es un extranjero con un español incorrecto y un rigor científico dudoso. En “la Señora mayor”, la hija del guerrero de la Independencia es simplona y vana.

La violencia extrema que se ejerce en la mayoría de los cuentos se da como consecuencia de este pasaje de la civilización a la barbarie. El recuerdo de las no tan lejanas épocas civilizadas refuerza el horror .

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## Cecily says

**“I can’t say whether the story was true; the important thing... was that it had been told and believed.”**

I have the Collected Fictions (with copious translator’s notes), but am splitting my review of that into its components, listed in publication order: Collected Fictions - all reviews. This is the seventh, published in 1970.

The Encounter is a crucial story, describing a seminal episode in JLB’s childhood, suggesting the roots of so many of his recurring themes.

## Foreword

This prepares the chronological reader for a significant change of style: these are “plain tales” that avoid unexpected endings, in the mould of Kipling. JLB asserts that he (JLB) is not “a fabulist or spinner of parables” and that his tales “are intended not to persuade readers, but to entertain and touch them.”

Most have an introductory section, explaining the (allegedly true) roots of the story, while conceding he may yield “to the literary temptation to heighten or insert the occasional small detail”.

“For many years I believed that it would be my fortune to achieve literature through variations and novelties; now that I am seventy years old I think I have found my own voice.”

I confess I was slightly disappointed; this led me to expect something closer to *A Universal History of Iniquity* than the more extraordinary pieces in between that and this. But I was heartened by the fact they are set “at some distance in both time and space” and that although they are “realistic... two of the stories... can be opened with the same fantastic key... I am decidedly monotonous.” Having finished this collection, they are deeper and more mysterious than those in *A Universal History*, but more straightforward than those in between.

For all that these are “plain”, two stories suggest the importance of imagination. In *The Other Duel*, it’s the familiarity of killing animals and the lack of imagination that makes killing people so easy, and in *Brodie’s Report*, the Yahoos’ “lack of imagination makes them cruel”.

He makes no mention here or in the stories themselves of his blindness (unlike *In Praise of Darkness*, reviewed as part of *Dreamtigers*). I suppose he was long used to it by then.

### **The Interloper**

This concerns knife fighters in harsh neighbourhoods. Familiar territory, but not really my thing. I assumed (incorrectly) that this would set the tone for all those that followed.

Fortunately, this was deeper and more complex than it seemed at first sight. Unfortunately, it was pretty grim.

Brothers (who might be deemed “white trash” in the US) are very close: “falling out with one of them was to earn yourself two enemies”. The eponymous interloper is a woman, who cleaves them (in both senses) to/from each other. (view spoiler)

They are dreadful men, who treat women appallingly. There’s no suggestion JLB approves, but it still left a nasty taste.

The notes mention a queer interpretation of this (and some of his others), which makes one see it in a whole new light. However, other sources say it’s based on a true story of friends; by switching the protagonists to be brothers, JLB seems to be ruling out a sexual triangle.

### **Unworthy**

Class, friendship, betrayal, and reformation – about a Jewish boy, but with Biblical echoes.

A respectable bookshop owner was an unlikely gang member in his teens. He was shy, red-headed, Jewish, and wanted to fit in (he changed his first name to something more Catholic). When his mother and aunt were insulted, gangster Ferrari stepped in. Young Fischbein was impressed (the women were more equivocal: “a gentleman that demands respect for ladies” or “a ruffian who won’t allow competition?”), and is taken under the wing of Ferrari.

Which of them is unworthy of the other?

At first, Fischbein denies his friendship with Ferrari for fear it would be bragging. Then things take a more



definite turn, for unspecified reasons. (view spoiler)

### **The Story from Rosendo Juarez**

This is another version of Man on Pink Corner, from A Universal History of Iniquity. Both include the line “Rosendo, I think you’re needing this” as a woman hands him his own knife, from up his sleeve.

A rough kid learns to fight, kills a man, is arrested, but “turned into a gorilla for the party” and now sees himself as a reasonable man, fully reformed.

### **The Encounter 6\***

Young JLB (unknowingly) sowing the seeds for much of his adult work: labyrinth, knives, storytelling, and a mysterious twist and a tacit lesson of being careful what you wish for.

Aged about ten, he went to stay with a cousin, but “being a boy among men”, he was lonely, so slipped out to explore the large and unfamiliar house. “A big house that one has never been in before... means more to a boy than an unexplored country to a traveller”. He gets lost, but is found by the owner, who shows him an extensive knife collection.

Some of the men, playing cards, fight. JLB “was not drunk from wine but I was drunk from adventure; I yearned for someone to be killed, so that I could tell about it later.” The honest and plausible thoughts of a ten year old, but nevertheless shocking.

(view spoiler)

“I always suspected I derived more pleasure from keeping the secret than I would from telling it.” JLB doesn’t state if that remains true.

### **Juan Murana**

A reclusive widow “confuses her man, her tiger, with that cruel object he has bequeathed to her, the weapon of his bloody deeds.”

(view spoiler)

### **The Elderly Lady**

An aged widow remembers little of the minor hero who was her father, so the celebrations pass her by. The historical notes are almost as long as the story. Too many characters and generations and too much Argentine context for me to get much from.

### **The Duel**

A knife-free duel! And female protagonists! Paintbrushes at the ready...

An ambassador’s widow decided to become an abstract artist. So begins a tacit battle with a friend, who is also an artist. “In the course of that private duel they acted with perfect loyalty to one another.”

“There were no defeats or victories, nor even so much as an open clash”, so what was the point? (view spoiler) Back to duality (a favourite Borgesian them. (view spoiler)

### **The Other Duel**

A simmering feud between two men. Duality and futility again (not that the story is futile!).

“Perhaps their only passion... was their hatred, and therefore they saved it and stored it up. Without suspecting, each of the two became the other’s slave.”

(view spoiler)

### **Guayaquil**

The title is a city in Ecuador that was important in Argentina’s battle for independence. The story is about rival interpretations of Bolivar’s role in that, and hence about truth in general.

Can you trust historical documents? Of course not. “Even if they were written by Bolivar himself... that does not mean they contain the whole truth.”

### **The Gospel According to Mark, 5\***

In his foreword to the Brodie’s Report collection, JLB describes this as “the best story of the volume”.

The protagonist is a medical student and a man of contradictions. His name is Espinosa, meaning “thorny”, which has echoes of the crown of thorns.

He spends the summer at his cousin’s ranch, but the cousin goes away to deal with floods. Espinosa is left as de facto master of the house, with a family of illiterate staff. He finds an old Bible, with the Gutres family’s genealogy at the back. They were originally Scottish, but English (and literacy) has died out in the 100 years since their forebears arrived. Evolution does not always go forwards (see Brodie’s Report, below, and The Immortal in The Aleph).

“Throughout history, humankind has told two stories: the story of a lost ship sailing the Mediterranean seas in quest of a beloved isle, and the story of a god who allows himself to be crucified on Golgotha.” Which will this be? Both, perhaps.

The student decides to read aloud from this Bible, after supper, and he picks Mark’s gospel. The family are transfixed, even though they don’t understand it. He does this each evening. There’s a similar scene in The Congress (in The Book of Sand).

(view spoiler)

### **Brodie’s Report 5\***

Gulliver’s Travels is a clear inspiration (it even features a primitive tribe called the Yahoos). A Borgesian aspect is that it purports to be the (incomplete) notes of a Scottish missionary in Brazil, found in the pages of a copy of 1001 Nights. Is the story of its finding true? What about the contents? The comic – and sometimes grisly - implausibility suggest not the latter. But it could be a fake document, genuinely found, as Tlon,

Uqbar, Orbis Tertius claims to be.

There's no particular narrative, just a string of provocative descriptions, ending with an indirect and unanswered question.

The Yahoo diet is strange, "fruits, tubers, and reptiles". Reptiles, but not mammals? They catch fish with their hands (fair enough) but also "drink cat's and bat's milk"!

Every newborn boy is examined for a specific (but secret) pattern of stigmata. If he has them, he is immediately king – and therefore "he is gelded, blinded with a fiery stick, and his hands and feet are cut off, so that the world will not distract him from wisdom", though given how primitive they are, and the fact they "smear his body with dung", I doubt such kings will survive long enough to develop much wisdom.

Their counting system is 1, 2, 3, 4, many and "the Yahoos have no memory", so if someone mentions a leopard attack, no one knows if it happened to them, their parents, or in a dream.

"Philosophically speaking, memory is no less marvellous than prophesying the future" as witch doctors can do. Does that require the assumption of one past and only one future? If we believe in multiple possible outcomes (as JLB suggests in other stories), this claim doesn't make much sense.

The lack of conversion to Christianity is original: "The phrase 'Our Father' disturbed them, since they lack any concept of paternity. They do not understand that an act performed nine months ago may somehow be related to the birth of a child... and... all women engage in carnal commerce, though not all are mothers."

Their language is strange and simultaneously simple and complex. "The intellectual power of abstraction demanded by such a language suggests to me that the Yahoos... are not a primitive people but a degenerate one" Indecipherable runes nearby seem to confirm that. Like the Gutres family in *The Gospel According to Mark*, above, and the immortals in the story of that name in *The Aleph*?

Would you die for art? In this culture, spontaneous poetry is revered – but in a perverse way. "If the poem does not excite the tribe, nothing happens, but if the words of the poet surprise or astound the listeners... he is no longer a man, but a god, and anyone may kill him."

Brodie finally lists the Yahoos' redeeming qualities, upholds an obligation to save them (from the occasional attacks by Ape-men, or from colonialism and Christianisation?) and says "I hope Her Majesty's government will not turn a deaf ear to the remedy this report has the temerity to suggest." What does it suggest? We will never know.

## Quotes

- "Literature is naught but guided dreaming."
- "We all come to resemble the image others have of us."
- "The newspapers... made him the hero that perhaps he never was, but that I had dreamed of."
- "Friendship is as mysterious as love... the only thing that holds no mystery is happiness because it is its own justification."

- “Time cannot be measured in days the way money is measured in pesos and centavos, because all pesos are equal, while very day, perhaps every hour, is different.”
- “Newspapers told loyal untruths.”
- “Sleeping... is the most secret thing we do.”
- Wearing a bow-tie and “a well-trimmed, military-style moustache; during the course of our conversation he lighted a cigar, and at that, I felt there were too many things on that face. *Trop meuble*, I said to myself.”

## M. says

İnsan'ın nesneyle olan ilişkisi Borges'in her zaman ilgilendiği konulardan birisi olmuştur. Yalnızca insan'ın nesneyle olan ilişkisi değil, nesnenin kendi varoluşu da... Borges, diğer bazı kitaplarında da sıkça bir taştan taş, bir ağacın ağaç, bir leoparın leopar olarak kalma arzusu taşıdığını dile getirir.

Bu kitapta da nesne, zamanda insandan daha uzun bir yer kapladığı için tekrar vurgu konusu olur: *"Nesneler insanlardan daha çok yaşarlar."* (s.76) nesnenin varoluşunu bir başka yaşama şekli olarak gören Borges, zamana da farklı yönden bir izafilik atfeder; ölçümümüz de izafidir: *"Bu sıkıntılar ne kadar sürdüüğünü bilmiyorum. Bir gün merhum babam paranın centavo ile ya da peso ile ölçüldüğü gibi zamanın günlerle ölçülemeyeceğini söyledi bize, çünkü peso hep ayrı pesoydu, ama her gün hatta her saat değişiyordu. Ne demek istediğini pek anlayamamıştım ama tümce kafama takılıp kalmıştı."* (s.79)

Borges, sıklıkla dile getirdiği bir metafor da; zamanı bir bakıma özetler. Adamın birisi dokuz bozuk para düştürmüştür. Sonraki gün üç tanesini, sonraki gün iki tanesini, sonraki gün de kalanını bulur. Paranın dokuza tamamlanmış olması, buldukları paraların düştükleri paralarla aynı olduysa anlamına gelir mi? İşte bir bakıma bizim zamanda yaptığımız da budur. Sayının bir sayıya tamamlanması bizim için yeterli oluyordur.

Bu kitap, duellolar kitabı. İnsan yalnızca insanla değil, insanın kendisiyle ve uzamla ve zamanla olan duelloların da güzel öykülerle anlatmış.

*"... çimlere serildi. O zaman çok alçak bir ses: 'Ne tuhaf' dedi. 'Her şey bir düğ gibi'."* (s.74)

Bu öyküler gerçekçi öyküler, ancak düğten yapılmış bir gerçeklikten bahsederek...

## Leandro says

Probablemente este sea el libro más accesible o relativamente fácil que vaya a leer de este escritor. En el mismo Borges deja un poco de lado la escritura compleja, ficcional, fantástica y laberíntica característica de la mayoría de sus libros para escribir una serie de cuentos bastante sencillos, directos y por ello fáciles de leer. La mayoría de ellos me gustaron bastante, aunque destaco sobre todo los que hacen referencia a la

temática de las cosas (en este caso puñales) y su particular vida, ellos son "El Encuentro" y "Juan Muraña", y también a los dos últimos: "El evangelio según Marcos" y "El informe de Brodie".  
Por lo demás, únicamente decir que pese a que el libro me gustó bastante, lo de Borges es claramente la ficción.

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## Biron Pa?a says

Borges'in kör olduktan sonra yazd??? (yahut yazd?rd???) öykü kitab? Brodie Raporu. Borges'in Alef'teki oyunbazl???, labirentler ören, okuyucunun üstünde güçlü hakimiyet kuran duru?u de?i?mi?, yerini daha gerçekçi, daha sakın bir üslup alm??.

Hikâyeler genel olarak düello temas?ndan ilerliyor ve çe?itli versiyonlar?n? görüyoruz. Araya Giren ve Nankör ve Markos'a Göre ?ncil hikâyelerini çok be?endim. Hikâyelerin hiçbirine de kötü diyemem ama genel olarak Borges seviyesinin alt?nda diyebilirim.

Bir ?eyler okurken elimin alt?nda bir Borges kitab?n?n bulunmas? güzel. Can?m s?k?l?nca aç?p bir öyküsünü okuyorum ve keyfim yerine geliyor.

Ama çeviriyi be?endi?imi söyleyemeyece?im. Basit göründü?ü halde baz? cümleleri be? alt? kez okudum, yine de ne anlama geldi?ini çözedim. Çok büyük engel de?il her ?eye ra?men.

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## vi macdonald says

I like to imagine that the afterlife is actually a giant labyrinthian library and that you get to spend eternity just exploring it and it's many wonderful infinite depths. This desire is partially a way of placating my eternal "oh the books I'll never get to read"-ing and partially because I'd like to think that that's where Borges got to go when he died.

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## Jim says

I am so wrapped up in the several worlds of Jorge Luis Borges that I am sometimes taken aback by the reactions of other readers. **Doctor Brodie's Report** is late Borges, and not at all in the same metaphysical vein as the stories in, say, **Ficciones**, **Labyrinths**, or **The Aleph**. It was written, in fact, after a long spell of writing virtually no fiction at all (the poetry, however, continued unabated).

**Doctor Brodie's Report** harks back to early Borges, to the works of the 1920s and 1930s he has not only disparaged but tried to actively suppress. I refer to his early stories and essays about what he calls the "suburbs" of Buenos Aires, when one-story dwellings stretched out to where the pampas began, and slaughterhouses and knife-wielding toughs abounded to process the beef that was exported to Europe. While no gangster himself, Borges was fascinated by the men who lived on the outskirts of the city -- men like Juan Murana and Evaristo Carriego. These noir heroes perhaps represented what Borges would have liked to be in

a different reality.

After all, he is the descendent of military heroes, and one of his antecedents, Manuel Isidoro Suarez, was instrumental in winning the Battle of Junin (1824) during the Peruvian war of independence. But both he and his father were bookish sorts, and during the First World War, he was educated in Switzerland. The Argentina he returned to fascinated him, and it took him many years before he found his stride with the volumes I have mentioned above.

Still, I like all of the man's work, even his fascination with knife-wielding hooligans who had their own inarticulate code of bravery. These stories are not quite so popular as "The Library of Babel" or "The Garden of the Forking Paths" or "Death and the Compass." But they are pure Borges nonetheless and well worth reading.

Would I recommend this as the first work by the author one reads? By no means. I would pick one of the more famous collections. Only when the Argentinean has firmly taken root in the reader's heart do I recommend the minor works, of which this is one.

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### **Sidharth Vardhan says**

*"I do not aspire to be Aesop. My stories, like those of the Thousand and One Nights, try to be entertaining or moving but not persuasive."*

Most of the stories reveal in their real themes in spoilers. So, won't talk about them specifically. But one thing in common in all of them is that none of them are fantastic. Except perhaps, the titular one, in which a priest discovers and tries to convert to Christianity a community that look like and is called by him Yahoos. The difference between Doctor Brodie's (no relation to Miss Jean Brodie) Yahoos and Gulliver's Yahoos is that the former aren't primitive rather, narrator speculates on the basis of their language, but rather a more advanced age who forgot how to read and write. Given the ever shortening attention span of our generation, it might be happening any time soon to rest of us.

About the king of Yahoos:

*"So that the physical world may not lead him from the paths of wisdom, he is gelded on the spot, his eyes are burned, and his hands and feet are amputated. Thereafter, he lives confined in a cavern called the Castle ("Qzr"), into which only the four witch doctors and the two slave women who attend him and anoint him with dung are permitted entrance. Should war arise, the witch doctors remove him from his cavern, display him to the tribe to excite their courage, and bear him, lifted onto their shoulders after the manner of a flag or a talisman, to the thick of the fight. In such cases, he dies almost immediately under the hail of stones flung at him by the Ape-men."*

On the way they count:

*"I shall speak now of the witch doctors. I have already recorded that they are four, this number being the largest that their arithmetic spans. On their fingers they count thus: one, two, three, four, many. Infinity begins at the thumb."*

Yahoo can see into future but no longer than 15 minutes which makes Brodie reflect:

*"Knowing that past, present, and future already exist, detail upon detail, in God's prophetic memory, in His Eternity, what baffles me is that men, while they can look indefinitely backward, are not allowed to look one whit forward."*

And why did they loose all the civilisation they might have gained in past? No idea. But I think it might be they started prosecuting freedom of speech and arts:

*"Another of the tribe's customs is the discovery of poets. Six or seven words, generally enigmatic, may come to a man's mind. He cannot contain himself and shouts them out, standing in the center of a circle formed by the witch doctors and the common people, who are stretched out on the ground. If the poem does not stir them, nothing comes to pass, but if the poet's words strike them they all draw away from him, without a sound, under the command of a holy dread. Feeling then that the spirit has touched him, nobody, not even his own mother, will either speak to him or cast a glance at him. Now he is a man no longer but a god, and anyone has license to kill him."*

Most of the rest of the stories are about rivalries, knives, gangsters etc. Often stories though realistic, are such that an alternative interpretation suggested by author becomes possible. Sometimes objects seem to have personalities of their own, sometimes the events of a story are suspiciously similar to those that occurred in past though with a decline in settings and people.

Even prefaces written by Borges are awesome.

#### **From the story about a really old woaman:**

*"Now all my dreams are of dead people" was one of the last things she was heard to say."*

*"No one had ever thought of her as a fool, but as far as I know she had never enjoyed the pleasures of the mind; the last pleasures left her would be those of memory and, later on, of forgetfulness."*

#### **More quotes:**

*"I prefer the Platonic idea of the Muse to that of Poe, who reasoned, or feigned to reason, that the writing of a poem is an act of the intelligence. It never fails to amaze me that the classics hold a romantic theory of poetry, and a romantic poet a classical theory."*

*"Maybe their poor and monotonous lives held nothing else for them than their hatred, and that was why they nursed it. In the long run, without suspecting it, each of the two became a slave to the other."*

*"Cardoso drew the Red's official cutthroat, a man from Corrientes well along in years, who, to comfort a condemned man, would pat him on the shoulder and tell him, "Take heart, friend. Women go through far worse when they give birth."*

*"In tough neighborhoods a man never admits to anyone—not even to himself—that a woman matters beyond lust and possession, but the two brothers were in love. This, in some way, made them feel ashamed."*

*"I felt (in the words of the poet Lugones) the fear of what is suddenly too late"*

*"I do not know how long it lasted; there are events that fall outside the common measure of time."*

*"I often considered revealing the story to some friend, but always I felt that there was a greater pleasure in being the keeper of a secret than in telling it."*

*"Certain devices of a literary nature and one or two longish sentences led me to suspect that this was not the first time he had told the story."*

"Sleeping, as we all know, is the most secret of our acts. We devote a third of our lives to it, and yet do not understand it."

"Two men met face to face at Guayaquil; if one of them was master, it was because of his stronger will, not because of the weight of arguments."

"Words, words, words. Shakespeare, insuperable master of words, held them in scorn."

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## **Gauss74 says**

Borges è uno scrittore di cui riconosco senza fatica la grandezza, ma faccio davvero molta fatica a capirlo. I suoi racconti (penso a "Finzioni" su tutti) sono bellissime costruzioni dell'immaginazione che hanno un certo fascino (soprattutto perchè riescono ad essere paradossali mantenendo una certa coerenza interna) ma dai quali è molto difficile recepire un messaggio, una tridimensionalità, qualcosa di materico.

Come ha potuto uno scrittore sudamericano di quel periodo arrivare a tanto aereo onirismo (che potrebbe fare il paio senza sminuirsi col miglior Murakami) è un dubbio che trova risposta proprio in questo "Il manoscritto di Brodie".

E' una piccola raccolta di racconti, che però gronda carnalità da ogni singola parola. Leggendo queste pagine si può veramente cogliere il rovente sole della Pampa argentina, il suono accorato e triste del bandoneon che accompagna i duelli mortali scatenati dal vino e dalla sanguigna passione di quella terra. E' l'Argentina come tutti noi sempre l'abbiamo pensata e vista, ma non sembra essere Jorge Luis Borges.

O almeno così potrebbe sembrare ad una primissima impressione, perchè questo ritorno al realismo dopo i viaggi di Finzioni è solo apparente: anzi è strumentale ad una miglior resa del messaggio fantastico, restituisce una realtà trasfigurata dalle ossessioni, dai dubbi, dalle superstizioni del feroce mondo contadino della pampa.

E' una sorta di realismo magico, ma assai più diretto, immediato ed efficace per esempio di quello di Gabriel Garcia Marquez in "Cent'anni di solitudine".

In questo mondo psicologizzato e popolato di incubi assolutamente autentici nella loro matericità, prendono vita e coscienza di sé gli oggetti inanimati, i pensieri più astratti generano in modo imprevisto le più concrete conseguenze...

Nonostante quest'opera sia tutto sommato poco conosciuta, secondo me questo è un grande Borges ed è il suo libro che più ho apprezzato finora. Perchè è in grado allo stesso tempo di restituire l'uomo della Pampa Argentina in tutta la sua concretezza, ed allo stesso tempo di avvolgerlo in quella sfuggente tenebra che è uno dei punti forti di Borges.

Sono le fortune di andare alla pesca nelle bancarelle, un hobby al quale un lettore dovrebbe sempre trovare il tempo di dedicare qualche ora.

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## **Teresa Proença says**

Os onze contos incluídos neste livro, são dos últimos publicados por Jorge Luis Borges e, ao contrário dos anteriores, são de leitura directa, ou seja, focam-se na realidade e não na fantasia. Alguns contos têm finais surpreendentes e muito cruéis.

Títulos, tópicos e o quanto gostei de cada um:

### **A intrusa (5\*)**

dois irmãos apaixonados pela mesma mulher.

### **O indigno (4\*)**

amizade, confiança e traição.

### **História de Rosendo Juárez (2\*)**

para que este conto tenha sentido é necessário ler *O homem da esquina rosada*, incluído em *A História Universal da Infâmia* (eu fui reler mas ainda assim não lhe achei qualquer interesse).

### **O encontro (3\*)**

jogo, bebedeira e duelo de punhais.

### **Juan Muraña (4\*)**

amor, assassinio, loucura e vingança.

### **A velha senhora (3\*)**

uma festa de arromba para comemorar o centenário de uma senhora que "*possivelmente, já não sabia quem era.*"

### **O duelo (3\*)**

amizade, competição e dependência entre duas pintoras.

### **O outro duelo (5\*)**

uma disputa entre vizinhos.

### **Guayaquil (1\*)**

não sei... chato...

### **O Evangelho segundo Marcos (5\*)**

isolado por uma tempestade na fazenda de um amigo, um estudante entretém-se a ensinar a Bíblia ao caseiro e aos dois filhos, que não sabiam ler e pouco falavam e entendiam. Asneira...

### **O Relatório de Brodie (5\*)**

um explorador encontra, nas regiões selvagens do Brasil, a tribo Yahoo, "*talvez o povo mais bárbaro do mundo*", com uma cultura fascinante.

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**Mohamad says**

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**Derian says**

Esta serie de cuentos son como los de un Borges residual, viejo y mañoso. Tiene los motivos y las pasiones de los primeros años: los orilleros, peleas entre malevos, personajes históricos. No están mal, pero la mayoría repite no solo el tema, sino también la forma de contar: alguien le refiere al narrador una historia. Sin dudas, el cuento que da título al libro es el mejor, saca a relucir el Borges de los años 40, el que te hacía creer, como en este caso, que era posible encontrar el manuscrito de un cronista de indias entre las páginas de un libro de su biblioteca que habla de una extrañísima lengua aborígen.

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