

Reconstructing the Career of Jorge Luis Borges as a Public Speaker

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Motivation

This project deals with complicated literary and media archives, connecting Borges's notes for his talks and courses, media reports on them, and his manuscripts, to provide a unique point of access to his activities during a time of intellectual and political ferment in Argentina.

Project Description

We'll develop a database that will provide access to the variety of materials on the "oral" stage of Borges's production. This will allow a fuller integration of the materials on the notebooks and the talks on the Borges Center website and to integrate photographs, newspaper articles, manuscript materials, correspondence into the tools available for students and scholars. For this end, we'll bring together the researchers in the US and those in Argentina to plan the next stages of the joint project, focusing on finetuning of the database materials to date and discussing new lines of research and publication.

Context

•In 2015 the Mar del Plata group, in coordination with the Borges Center, began to map out the places he had spoken from 1949 to 1955.

•Due to recent advances in the studies of his manuscripts, we can now map his talks and courses, his composition strategies, the institutions that sponsored his visits, and the writers and other figures who invited him.

•These materials add depth to other studies on Borges's works, with a focus on the material conditions of his working life, and his activities in journalism and publishing.

•This initiative is in keeping with the growing interest in integrating complex literary archives into the study of the work.



This project aims to reconstruct all of the extant source materials about Borges's career as a public speaker (1949-1955)



Borges talk on Voltaire, 1949



Project Deliverables

- Borges Colloquium in Mar del Plata, Argentina, November 22-24, 2023.
- Special issue of *Variaciones Borges* on results of current project, 2024.
- Website with more complete information on the talks, courses and notebooks.
- Selections from Borges's notebooks, *Cuadernos*, to be published in 2024 by Borges Center.
- Two books to be published in Argentina by Eudeba (University of Buenos Aires) and by the National Library
- Further research on various aspects of Borges's public speaking career (dissertations by Fitzgerald, Martincic and Lizalde, co-directed by Balderston and Blanco).
- Exhibitions on Borges's career in public speaking: materials to be developed to be displayed in Argentina and the US..

Potential Impact

- This work will signify a radical expansion of Borges's total work, both in quantity and in depth. Given the polemical force of his public speaking, the talks and courses became his intervention in public debates in a fraught political moment. The talks were received with enthusiasm by large audiences in different parts of Argentina and Uruguay. Borges largely supported himself in this period with them.
- The talks were often reworked into published essays, but the precise contents of the talks can only be reconstructed now.
- Our database will give students and scholars new information about Borges's readings and about the particular uses he made of these materials, clarifying the relations between the published and the "oral" work.

Acknowledgements

- Borges Center, University of Pittsburgh.
- CONICET, Argentine national funding organization.
- Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.
- Biblioteca Nacional Mariano Moreno, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

