

bosques, pero omisos en plantear una salida no solo ecológica sino económica en sociedades que dependían de las actividades primarias (117-125).

El capítulo 6 del libro es clave, una bisagra que une dos dinámicas temporales. El acápite trata de la ecología política de los asentamientos de trabajadores o, más ampliamente, de los pobres de la ciudad. Estamos ante otra manera de encarar la historia ecológica de la ciudad, y ante un dispositivo fundamental: la ley de expropiación cardenista de noviembre de 1936, que permitió reordenar el espacio urbano ya ocupado, tomar providencias sobre lo que venía e indirectamente, con la ley de contribuciones del gobierno de la ciudad, hacer de los ocupantes del suelo partícipes fiscales de la dotación de servicio (164 ss). La ley colocó a la autoridad nacional como el demiurgo de las decisiones sobre los usos del suelo, incluso a costa del reparto ejidal y comunal. La ley no fue una panacea pero sí un ordenador fundamental que permitió cierto rango de previsión y la paulatina decantación de una tecnoburocracia urbanística que debió razonar en un modelo tridimensional luego de 1940: la ocupación del suelo (en especial por los pobres), la industrialización acelerada de la Cuenca y los recursos naturales disponibles.

El libro de Matthew Vitz es una investigación rigurosa que no se deja atrapar por las facilidades de vocabularios de algunos discursos ambientalistas. El autor ha sabido colocar a la ciudad y su entorno alrededor del asunto que hace posible un conocimiento más amplio y flexible de la experiencia urbana, el gran contrato social (fluctuante y desgarrado por contradicciones) que da pie a una ciudad moderna.

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ARIEL DE LA FUENTE, *Borges, Desire, and Sex*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018.

In recent years, the question of Borges's sexuality has agitated scholars devoted to the work of the great Argentine writer. Ariel de la Fuente's new book, *Borges, Desire, and Sex*, continues this trend. An Associate Professor of History and Latin American Studies at Purdue University, de la Fuente argues that "contrary to what criticism has generally assumed, desire and sex have occupied a significant place in Borges's oeuvre and literary experience" (5).

De la Fuente's book offers an Introduction and a Conclusion, plus nine closely argued chapters: 1. On Borges's Sexuality; 2. Biography in Literature and the Reading of Desire and Sex; 3. Borges's Erotic Library: The Poetry Shelf; 4. Sir Richard Burton's Orientalist Erotica: *The Thousand Nights and a*

Night and The Perfumed Garden; 5. Schopenhauer and Montaigne, Philosophy and Sex; 6. Desire and Sex in Buenos Aires: Borges's Poetry on the *Arrabal*; 7. Stoicism and Borges's Writing of Women; 8. "Emma Zunz": Sex, Virtue, and Punishment; 9. "La intrusa": Incest and Gay Readings.

Chapter 1 is devoted to an overview of what is known about "Borges's personality and sexuality" and to how these manifest themselves in his writing (17). De la Fuente lays out his position clearly: "Borges suffered, as has been well documented, from sexual impotence" (22). The source of this problem, in de la Fuente's estimation, is that Borges felt that his "sexual initiation," which was orchestrated by his father, involved a female prostitute who, at the same time, was also having sex with his father (29). This arrangement, regarded by some psychologists as a form of incest, seems to have deeply disturbed the youthful son (29-30). From this point on, the author speaks of Borges's "sexual impotence" with consistency and confidence (22; 24; 26; 27; 32; et al.).

But what, precisely, does the term "sexual impotence" mean? The author himself grapples with this key question. Quoting Estela Canto, who "engaged in a close relationship with Borges," de la Fuente writes that "se excitaba como cualquier hombre normal" ("he would become aroused like any normal man"; trans. mine) but that "la realización sexual era aterradora para él" ("sexual consummation was terrifying for him"; trans. mine). From this quote, de la Fuente concludes that although Borges could become sexually aroused, the "sexual act itself" was "terrifying, which prevented him from having sexual intercourse and, thus, from consummating sex" (22).

But, as de la Fuente also notes, there are at least two slightly conflicting "testimonies" about what transpired in this early but "traumatic" sexual experience (one comes from Canto, the other from Borges scholar Donald Yates): "while one says that Borges was unable to have sex," which would seem to correspond to the standard definition of "impotence," the other states that the sexual act in itself was an "experiencia irresistible" (23). Later, however (in chapter 2), de la Fuente writes that "in spite of his troubles, during his youth, Borges engaged in casual sex," in brothels, at least, and that "he had found ways to enjoy sex" (28). Regardless, de la Fuente argues convincingly that, however one wishes to understand the elusive term "impotence," sex was, for Borges, a deeply conflicted affair, one that, moreover, manifests itself in several of his essays, poems, and narratives, most pointedly, perhaps, in "Edgar Allen Poe," "Villa Urquiza," "La secta del Fénix," and "La intrusa."

In chapter 2, de la Fuente pushes this question further, considering "whether it is possible to read" Borges's "sexuality into his literature" and proposing imaginative "forms of finding and reading desire and sex" in a creative writer as "modest and reticent" as Borges (17).

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are devoted to an examination of Borges “as a reader of erotic literature, a subject that has not been systematically explored before” (17). While we have long known that Borges was a voracious and wide-ranging reader, we have not known about his interest in sexually charged texts. These chapters thus constitute a major new contribution to Borges scholarship.

In chapter 6, de la Fuente focuses not on Borges’s *ficciones*, or fictions, but on his lesser known poetry, especially that of the *arrabales*, the working-class neighborhoods that surrounded Buenos Aires in Borges’s time. The argument advanced here is that the young Borges would have been impressed, positively and negatively, by the sex-for-pay industry that flourished there and that his interaction with it, both real and imagined, would have allowed him to confront “his own troubled sexuality” (17). While I did not find this argument as convincing as the others, it is plausible, especially since it is formulated as part of this new interpretation of Borges’s work.

As chapters 7 and 8 both address how Borges dealt with the flesh-and-blood women in his life and with his female characters, they are closely intertwined. More theoretical in nature, chapter 7 centers on the importance of Stoicism to Borges, as a philosophical system, while chapter 8 concentrates on an analysis of Emma Zunz, “his best-known female character” (173). In the same vein, chapter 9 has de la Fuente proposing “a biographical exploration of ‘La intrusa’” and, in the process, a slight revision of “the influential trend of gay readings” that have emerged surrounding this still controversial short story (18). For de la Fuente, the tendency today to read “La intrusa” as an exclusively gay text does not rule out other readings (198; 203).

De la Fuente makes a compelling argument not merely for the importance of sexuality in Borges’s work, but for its extent. The author marshals his evidence and presents it clearly. The early sexual experiences one has affect one’s future relationships, as do the books one reads as a young person. Of this, there can be no doubt. In the case of Jorge Luis Borges, a writer long regarded as asexual, the importance of these factors looms large, larger than we have hitherto thought. *Borges, Desire, and Sex* makes a major contribution to our better, more complete understanding of the man and his work. I recommend it highly.

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