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The Causes

Jorge Luis Borges

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Jorge Luis Borges

The Causes

The generations and the setting suns.
The passing days, of which none was the first.
Freshness of water in the throat of Adam.
Paradise, with every leaf in place.
The eye interpreting the text of shadows.
The howls of coupling wolves in the dawn light.
The hexameter. The word. The looking glass.
The Tower of Babel and its vaunting pride.
The moon that gazes down on the Chaldees.
The Ganges and its multitudinous sands.
Chuang-tzu and the butterfly that dreams him.
The golden apples of the Hesperides.
The footpaths of the aimless labyrinth.
The endless fabric of Penelope.
The Stoics in their ever circular time.
The brass coin in the mouth of him who died.
The sword's weight as it presses down the scale.
Each drop of water in the waterclock.
The eagles, the magnificence, the legions,
And Caesar on the morning of Pharsalia.
The shadows of the crosses on the earth.
The Persian and his algebra and chessboard.
The tracks and traces of the great migrations.
The conquering of kingdoms by the sword.
The never-resting compass. The open sea.
The ticking of the clock in memory.
The king brought to the justice of the axe.
Incalculable dust that once was armies.
The pure voice of the nightingale in Denmark.
The precise line of the calligraphers.
The suicide's face reflected in the mirror.

The cardsharp's hidden ace. The greedy gold.
The strange shapes that the cloud takes in the desert.
Each arabesque of the kaleidoscope.
Every biting regret and every tear—
And all of these things had to come to pass
Before our hands could meet.

*translated from the Spanish
by Robert Mezey*