Androguè

Jorge Luis Borges

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In that bewildering night no one need fear
That I may lose my way among the dark
Flowerbeds that weave their system in the park
Propitious to nostalgic love affairs,

Or idle evenings when a bird entunes
In deep leaves its invariable song,
The summer arbor and the curving pond,
The hazy statuary and dubious ruins.

The coach house, hollow in the hollow shade,
Marks (I well know) the wavering boundary lines
Of this dim world of dust and jasmine vines,
So pleasing to Herrera and Verlaine.

The shade is redolent of eucalyptus—
Ancient and medicinal, its fragrance,
Piercing through time and vagaries of language,
Denotes for me the era of the *quintas*.

My step feels forward for and finds the expected
Threshold. The level roof defines its shadow,
And I can hear from the chessboard patio
The periodic dripping of a spigot.

On the other side of the closed doors lie sleeping
Those who by virtue of their dreaming work
Are masters in the visionary dark
Of boundless yesterday and all dead things.
In this old building each thing is familiar:
I recognize even the mica flakes
In the grey granite that reduplicates
Itself incessantly in the smudgy mirror;

Biting an iron ring, the lion's head;
And by the door, the colored lozenges
That offer treasures to a child's gaze,—
A world of green, another world of red.

Even beyond the range of death and chance
These things endure, each has its history,
But it all happens in a kind of trance,
A fourth dimension, which is memory.

The patios and gardens still live on,
But there alone, preserved there by time past
In that forbidden circle that has embraced
At the same moment the evening and the dawn.

How could I ever lose the plain, precise
Order of these beloved things of ours,
Today as irretrievable as the flowers
That the first Adam knew in Paradise?

The ancient wonder of the elegy
Overwhelms me when I think about that place
And I do not understand how time can pass,
I, who am time and blood and agony.

translated from the Spanish
by Robert Mezey and Richard Barnes