

*Arts & Letters***THE GOLD OF THE TIGERS: Selected Later Poems**

by Jorge Luis Borges
Dutton, 1977, 95 pp.
\$3.95 paper, \$8.95 cloth
L of C 77-7479
ISBN 0-525-11458-0
ISBN 0-525-03465-X pbk

THE BOOK OF SAND

by Jorge Luis Borges
Dutton, 1977, 125 pp. \$7.95
L of C 77-8418
ISBN 0-525-06992-5

Alastair Reid (translator of the poems) has written that "it does a great disservice to Borges to isolate any one branch of his writing from any other, for they are all parts of a vertiginous whole." Thus the two volumes here, along with the great Argentine writer's previous works, should best be read as companions. The poems serve almost as notes for the stories, and the stories (translated by Norman Thomas Di Giovanni) amplify the poems. Borges's familiar themes recur: Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon literature play a part in "Ulrike" in *The Book of Sand*—a story about a meeting between a mythical Norwegian girl and a literary Colombian bachelor in England. Whitman-like "list" poems in *The Gold of the Tigers* call up Bede, Shakespeare, Berkeley's God. Borges, now in his 70s and blind, moves easily from form to form, always inhabiting the same poetic world, whose center is the paradox of language. It is a world where all things exist at once, on occasionally converging planes, as in the Japanese-sounding "It Is Raining" (one of "Fifteen Coins"): *In what yesterday, in what patios of Carthage/does this rain also fall?*

CAUGHT IN THE WEB OF WORDS: James A. H. Murray and the Oxford English Dictionary

by K. M. Elisabeth Murray
Yale, 1977, 386 pp. \$15
L of C 77-76309
ISBN 0-300-02131-3

At age two, in 1838, James Murray took a primer into the nursery "to show little brudder [a new baby in the family] round O and crooked S." The roundness and crookedness of the English tongue was to occupy the maker of the great *Oxford English Dictionary* almost all his days. An extraordinarily eclectic Scotsman (he taught the young Alexander Graham Bell about electricity), Murray took on the dictionary task in 1879. He started with a mildewed, rat-gnawed mass of haphazard notes dating back to 1857. Practically without funds, depending on erratic but dedicated volunteers (including many Americans), fighting the criticism of Oxford scholars who scorned his lack of formal academic training, Murray doggedly set the pattern for the *OED* and pursued it against all