

*Mark Axelrod*

**BORGES TRAVEL**



One only needs to read such magnificent short stories as “*Tlön Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*” or “*Death and the Compass*” or even “*Utopia of a Tired Man*” to realize that Borges would eventually expand those artistic interests in travel into something less metaphysical and more lucrative. That’s clear from a 1973 chat Borges had with fellow Argentine writer Julio Cortázar at the Café Tortoni in Buenos Aires. It was at that time that Borges told Cortázar, “Let us admit it. Selling short stories is not going to help our retirement. As for me, I have always been fascinated by travel, especially to exotic lands and I can think of no better kind of vocation than to become a travel agent.” (*Tortoni Chats* 1973) Knowing of Cortázar’s interest in music, Borges recommended that the younger writer look for a rock band which would make him some “retirement money.” Cortázar took Borges’ advice and after writing the short story “*The Axolotl*” founded a pop group with a similar name. But it was soon after the Tortoni interview that Borges opened his travel agency. Originally he called it “*Averroë’s Search*,” but changed

it to Borges Travel when too many people confused the name with a lost-and-found service. The business flourished and actually helped pay for a number of publications of Borges' short stories including "The Garden of the Forking Paths" and "The Circular Ruins" both of which have travel components to their textual apparatus. In keeping with his passion for visiting foreign places, the agency booked a plot for Borges in La Recoleta cemetery in Buenos Aires, but Borges, always a plot innovator, opted instead to be buried in Geneva because those among him were better travelers. The agency remains in Tustin, California.

## VERLAINE SHOES



Freud once said it was Verlaine's poetry that actually prompted him to write his seminal paper on "fetishism" in the *Three Essays* (1905). It was, in fact, Verlaine's poem "Les chasseurs et la femme" (1867) [from the lesbian collection of sonnets titled *Les Amies*] that prompted Freud to write as a follow up to his study on da Vinci, "When now I announce that the fetish is a substitute for the penis, I shall certainly create disappointment; so I hasten to add that it is not a substitute for