

Visible Words

by *Jess H. Brewer*

January 9, 2022

1 Excerpt from Borges

On the **burning** February morning Beatriz Viterbo died, after braving an agony that never for a **single** moment gave way to self-pity or fear, I noticed that the sidewalk billboards around **Constitution Plaza** were advertising some **new** brand or other of **American** cigarettes. The fact pained **me**, for I realized that the **wide** and **ceaseless** universe was **already** slipping away from **her** and that this **slight** change was the first of an **endless** series. The universe may change but not **me**, I thought with a **certain sad** vanity. I knew that at times **my fruitless** devotion had annoyed **her**; now that **she was dead**, I could devote **myself** to **her** memory, without hope but also without humiliation. I recalled that the thirtieth of **April** was **her** birthday; on that day to visit **her** house on **Garay Street** and pay **my** respects to **her** father and to **Carlos Argentino Daneri**, **her first** cousin, would be an **irreproachable** and **perhaps unavoidable** act of politeness. Once again I would wait in the twilight of the **small, cluttered** drawing room, once again I would study the details of **her many** photographs: **Beatriz Viterbo** in profile and in **full colour**; **Beatriz** wearing a mask, during the **Carnival of 1921**; **Beatriz** at **her** First Communion; **Beatriz** on the day of her wedding to **Roberto Alessandri**; **Beatriz** soon after **her** divorce, at a luncheon at the **Turf Club**; **Beatriz** at a **seaside** resort in **Quilmes** with **Dalia San Marco Porcel** and **Carlos Argentino**; **Beatriz** with the **Pekingese** lapdog given **her** by **Villegas Haedo**; **Beatriz**, **front** and **three-quarter** views, **smiling**, hand on **her** chin. . . I would not be forced, as in the past, to justify **my** presence with **modest** offerings of books — books whose pages I finally learned to cut **beforehand**, so as not to find out, months **later**, that **they** lay around **unopened**.

2 “The Second Coming” – W.B. Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Excerpt from Hemingway

“Forget your personal tragedy. We are all bitched from the start and you especially have to hurt like hell before you can write seriously. But when you get the damned hurt use it — don’t cheat with it. Be as faithful to it as a scientist — but don’t think anything is of any importance because it happens to you or anyone belonging to you.”

— *Letter to Scott Fitzgerald, dated 28 May 1934.*