The essays included in this volume are the proceedings of the Cortázar Symposium sponsored by the Spanish Department of Barnard College in April, 1980 and funded by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Xerox Corporation of America.

The immediate impetus for the Symposium was generated by the appointment of Julio Cortázar as a Visiting Gildersleeve Lecturer at Barnard for the week of April 14, 1980. It seemed the opportune moment to invite noted Latin Americanists to the Barnard campus to meet with Cortázar directly as well as to provide a forum in which they could present critical studies of his work that would foster the cross-fertilization of ideas. Through the organization of the Cortázar Symposium, these various goals were fully accomplished.

In his person, his life and his work, Julio Cortázar exemplifies the situation of a large sector of Latin American writers: deracination coupled with an abiding concern with Latin American reality; the reconciliation of the individual conscience and the autonomy of art, on the one hand, with socio-political imperatives that clamor for articulation and evaluation, on the other; the shaping of a significant opus that links the language of the writer's existence with that of his historicity.

Cortázar's Gildersleeve lecture entitled "Latin American Literature in the Light of Contemporary History," reproduced here in its entirety, interweaves these divergent strands of the writer's reality with uncommon grace and offers a clear formulation of the author's most recent thoughts on the relationship of the creative artist and his society. It is followed by the presentations of 15 symposiasts who bring multifaceted perspectives to bear on the paradigm Cortázar/Argentina. Their essays move from a consideration of contextual variables, to theoretical suppositions regarding literature and society, to the analysis of particular texts. A critical commentary of the four sessions, provided by the presiding scholars of each, and some final observations have been included for the reader's benefit.

It is our belief that the comprehensive and penetrating studies of this volume, in conjunction with Cortázar's own reflections, shed important light on this compelling and singular master of Latin American fiction.

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