

THE DRAWBRIDGE

First love

Edmund White
nearly drowns in the
steam of young D.



Page 3

Mario Vargas Llosa
adds lipstick to a
mouth full of blood



Page 14

Umberto Eco
sets parameters to
our infinite dreams

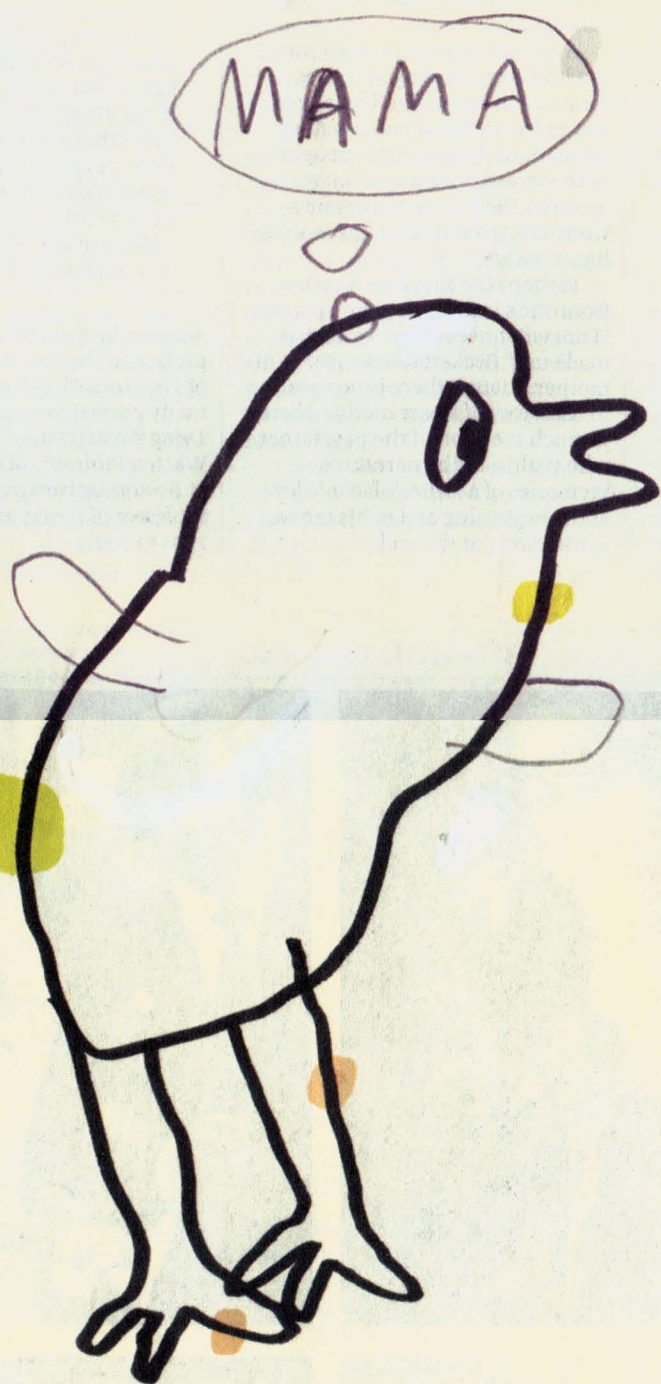


Page 19

Adolfo Bioy Casares
misses out on the
sister and the cars



Page 22



Paul Davis

No.15/Winter 2009/£2.90/€4.00



9 771752 735014

15

First love: she is a favourite drug, mother of all kicks, unleashing her whip in measured cycles, striking you down just to lift you back up. Shown her limits, given enough time, she may slowly grow true.

Veronica assured me, is never innocent, nor is it reasonable to think it should be. So in order to keep on seeing Juan without creating a scandal, particularly for the children's sake, she rented an apartment.

"It's on Juncal, the 3000 block. Whenever you want I can show it to you; I think it was fixed up quite nicely. What I can't understand is people's reactions, though. Berta was so furious that she wouldn't talk to me. One day she questioned me: 'Are you two out on the streets, or did you already get tired of the poor boy?' I practically had to assure her that I was seeing him elsewhere. With Juan, things were wonderful right from the first day, but I did have one concern: the automobile. If people who knew me happened to be passing by on Juncal and saw the Minerva parked at the door, they would ask themselves: What brings Veronica to this part of town? Even worse would be if they wondered: What brings Veronica to this part of town every afternoon? Then I got the bright idea that Juan should leave the car in a garage. At first he wasn't long in getting back, but every day he returned a little bit later, until finally, one day, he didn't come back at all."

"He didn't come back?" I asked.

"When he did, I wasn't there. I got tired of waiting," Veronica replied.

"Between the garage and the apartment," I persisted, "was the distance pretty far?"

"Four or five blocks, more or less. I waited an hour, and then I left."

"Did you see him again afterward?"

"Of course."

"Was he always late?"

"No, some afternoons he came back right away."

"And the other times?"

"The other times I followed him, in a rented car."

"Don't tell me he was picking up women."

"No."

"Or did he visit women in other apartments in the building?"

"No."

"I got it. He went to Arcos Street to entertain himself with those rare and curious books."

"No. Nor did he go back to take Berta into his arms. Your mind is as depraved as mine, but we're hopeless; we're from another generation, incapable of understanding today's youth. What I found out was..."

"What did you find out?" I asked, lowering my voice and my eyes.

"It's hard for me to tell you. It's so horrible, so devastating to my own self-image. I discovered that Juan was slipping off to drive the car. Just to drive the car, that's all."

I looked up with relief, certain I would encounter a smile on Veronica's face, but she looked very sad. I was on the verge of exclaiming, "These machine-crazy kids today!" but for a moment I had doubts about its originality, so I said nothing.

The room had become stuffy.

"Let's go out," I said.

"It's too late for the theatre, and there's nothing playing at the movies."

I announced: "Tonight is the opening of the Automobile Show."

Veronica looked at me enigmatically and replied in a rather peevish tone: "We'll go wherever you say."

Translated by Suzanne Jill Levine.
Published as "Men Are All the Same"
in Bioy's *Selected Stories* (Green
Integer, 2010).

South Downs Way, West Sussex, 8th October 2007 and River Thames, Oxford, 28th June 2008, from the series 'We English' **Simon Roberts**

