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Verlaine Shoes

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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

any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in childhood but had later been lost. That is to say, it should normally have been given up, but the fetish is precisely designed to preserve it from extinction. To put it more plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and—for reasons familiar to us—does not want to give up." Freud goes on to write after reading Verlaine's poem, "Thus the foot or shoe owes its preference as a fetish to the circumstance that the inquisitive boy peered at the woman's genitals from below, from her legs up; fur and velvet—as has long been suspected—are a fixation of the sight of pubic hair, which should have been followed by the longed-for-sight of the female member." It's certainly clear from such poems as "A Une Femme" or "Ballade Sappho" or "Beauté des femmes, leur faiblesse" or "La Belle au Bois dormant" and from Verlaine's erotic poetry that Verlaine's decision to open a woman's shoe store based on this fetish of his was inevitable. Not only is that seen in the poem "Les chasseurs et la femme," but in correspondence with Rimbaud. In a letter dated as early as August 1873 (while Verlaine was incarcerated for shooting Rimbaud), Rimbaud mentions to Verlaine that he "might be better off opening a women's shoe store. Somewhere on the Champs (sic)" (*Rimbaud Correspondence* 175). Almost twenty years later (1890), when Rimbaud was looking for business opportunities in which to invest some of the money he made from the sale of guns in Abyssinia, the idea had not diminished. Not only did Rimbaud invest in Verlaine's shoe store, but he actually opened his own shoe store in Marseilles some years later. Actually, Verlaine became so absorbed with things women, he had once considered a sex change operation as late as 1894. Dissuaded by Rimbaud to undertake the surgery, he took up cross-dressing instead and was buried in the same skirt and heels he had designed for Coco Chanel. The store, located next to a thriving McDonald's on the Champs Elysées, is still one of the most fashionable in Paris.