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The library of babel
by **Jorge Luis Borges**
p.112 to p.118

1. Topic

- 1.1. The library of babel. p.112 (l.1)
- 1.2. By this art you may contemplate the variation of the 23 letters. p.112 (l.2)
- 1.3. The Library has existed aeternitate. p.113 (l.19)
- 1.4. There are twenty-five orthographic symbols. p.113 (l.29)
- 1.5. The universe was justified. p.115 (l.19)
- 1.6. The world is infinite. p.118 (l.22)

2. Facts

- 2.1. From any hexagon one can see the floors above and below-one after another, endlessly. p.112 (l.3-4)
- 2.2. The arrangement of the galleries is always the same: Twenty bookshelves, five to each side, line four of the hexagon's six sides; the height of the bookshelves, floor to ceiling, is hardly greater than the height of a normal librarian. p.112 (l.4-7)
- 2.3. One of the [.....] faithfully duplicates appearances. p.112 (l.7-14)
- 2.4. Idealists argue that the hexagonal rooms are the necessary shape of absolute space, or at least of our perception of space. They argue that a triangular or pentagonal chamber is inconceivable. p.113 (l.1-3)
- 2.5. The Library is a sphere whose exact center is any hexagon and whose circumference is unattainable. p.113 (l.8-9)
- 2.6. Each wall of [.....] eighty black letters. p.113 (l.10-13)
- 2.7. The Library has existed aeternitate. p.113 (l.19)
- 2.8. There are twenty-five orthographic symbols. p.113 (l.29)
- 2.9. This much is known: For every rational line or forthright statement there are leagues of senseless cacophony, verbal nonsense, and incoherency. p.114 (l.2-3)
- 2.10. It is true [.....] it becomes incomprehensible. p.114 (l.12-15)
- 2.11. Within the century [.....] endlessly repeating variations. p.114 (l.27-30)
- 2.12. Thousands of greedy [.....] Vindications do exist. p.115 (l.23-29)
- 2.13. I have seen [.....] or dishonorable words. p.116 (l.2-6)
- 2.14. The sect disappeared [.....] the divine disorder. p.116 (l.15-17)
- 2.15. They would invade the hexagons, show credentials that were not always false, leaf disgustedly through a volume, and condemn entire walls of books. p.116 (l.19-21)
- 2.16. One, that the [.....] or a comma. p.116 (l.24-28)
- 2.17. On some shelf [.....] to a god. p.116 (l.35-38)
- 2.18. I know districts [.....] frequent every year. p.118 (l.11-15)

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3. Argument

3.1. If it were, what need would there be for that illusory replication? I prefer to dream that burnished surfaces are a figuration and promise of the infinite. p.112 (l.15-17)

3.2. I declare that the brary is endless. p.113 (l.1)

3.3. But their testimony is suspect, their words obscure. That cyclical book is God. p.113 (l.6-7)

3.4. There are also letters on the front cover of each book; those letters neither indicate nor prefigure what the pages inside will say. I am aware that that lack of correspondence once struck men as mysterious. p.113 (l.13-15)

3.5. Man, the imperfect librarian, may be the work of chance or of malevolent demiurges; the universe, with its elegant appointments--its bookshelves, its enigmatic books, its indefatigable staircases for the traveler, and its water closets for the seated librarian--can only be the handiwork of a god. p.113 (l.21-24)

3.6. From those incontrovertible premises, the librarian deduced that the Library is "total"--perfect, complete, and whole. p.115 (l.1-3)

3.7. That is, all that is able to be expressed, in every language. p.115 (l.5-6)

3.8. But those who went in quest of them failed to recall that the chance of a man's finding his own Vindication, or some perfidious version of his

own, can be calculated to be zero. p.115 (l.31-33)

3.9. If the language of the philosophers is not sufficient, then the multiform Library must surely have produced the extraordinary language that is required, together with the words and grammar of that language. p.115 (l.37-39)

3.10. It is to their hygienic, ascetic rage that we lay the senseless loss of millions of volumes. p.116 (l.21-22)

3.11. Despite general opinion, I daresay that the consequences of the depredations committed by the Purifiers have been exaggerated by the horror those same fanatics inspired. p.116 (l.28-33)

3.12. In the language of this zone there are still vestiges of the sect that worshiped that distant librarian. p.116 (l.38-39)

3.13. How was one to locate the idolized secret hexagon that sheltered Him? p.117 (l.2-3)

3.14. I cannot think it unlikely that there is such a total book³ on some shelf in the universe. p.117 (l.6-7)

3.15. If the honor [.....] find its justification. p.117 (l.9-13)

3.16. Those words [.....] piece of nonsense. p.117 (l.19-24)

3.17. There is no syllable one can speak that is not filled with tenderness and terror, that is not, in one of those languages, the mighty name of a god. p.117 (l.33-35)

3.18. In some of [.....] have other definitions. p.118 (l.3-7)

3.19. Methodical composition

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distracts me from the present condition of humanity. p.118 (l.9-10)
3.20. I am perhaps [.....] will endure. p.118 (l.15-19)
3.21. I hereby state that it is not illogical to think that the world is infinite. p.118 (l.21-22)
3.22. I will be bold enough to suggest this solution to the ancient problem: The Library is

unlimited but periodic.
p.118 (l.24-26)
3.23. If an eternal traveler should journey in any direction, he would find after untold centuries that the same volumes are repeated in the same disorder-which, repeated, becomes order: the Order.
p.118 (l.26-29)

4. Quotation

4.1. He also posited a fact which all travelers have since confirmed: *In all the Library, there are no two identical books.* p.115 (l.1)
4.2. "The feverish Library, whose random volumes

constantly threaten to transmogrify into others, so that they affirm all things, deny all things, and confound and confuse all things, like some mad and hallucinating deity." p.117 (16-19)

Viewpoint

In “The Library of Babel”, the Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges (1998) conceived an infinite disordered universe and called it the ‘Library’. In this Library, books comprise every possible permutation or combination of 25 symbols: 22 letters, the comma and full stop, and the space. People try to justify their past and foresee their future from the Library, but it is disorderly, infinite and unpredictable.

Borges named the Library “Babel”, as he himself said: “Like all the men of the Library, in my younger days I traveled; I have journeyed in quest of a book, perhaps the catalog of catalogs”(112). He undoubtedly wanted to realize his dream - and probably the dream of the whole human race - in this Library, which is so huge that it is impossible to measure the size of space: to talk to God, on the day when he finds the “catalog of catalogs”. It may seem as if Borges was endorsing the idea that humans can build a library that encompasses all the books in the world, but in fact, this is not possible. Because the most basic, there is no way for man to really master all knowledge, and secondly, man is an animal controlled by emotions, constantly fluctuating and changing emotions, which in turn reduce the efficiency of man’s reading, while giving rise to new books.

And so Borges describes the various ugliness of humans in this pursuit: greedy, opportunistic, selfish. So what Borges actually recognizes is the disordered and vast number of books, because the people who create them are always in a constant state of intense psychology, and eventually reach order with a kind of reincarnation - a beauty that conforms to the order of the universe, the kind of beauty that he imagines only libraries have. For the blind Borges, the darkness before him instead gave him the possibility of exploring infinite worlds. As the line at the end of “The Library of Babel” says: “My solitude is cheered by that elegant hope”(118).

Overall, in “The Library of Babel”, Borges speaks as if to someone, and as if he were muttering to himself. In his view, the books in the Library have exhausted so the possible combinations of spelling symbols that the only need is to decipher them. Perhaps the Library is still too large, and again he attributes the essence of the world to a circular book - all-encompassing, without beginning or end. And the spaces of the Library are arranged in a seamless order, with no end but a cycle. He felt that all books are mysterious, like the human mind. I think that Borges’ philosophical ideas inspired me too.

I began to question myself as to why I was always confined to one way, one reality, not very open-minded? Why do I ignore the infinite permutations of things? Why do I divide things neatly to prevent them from mixing together to create new ideas, new combinations? In the world of Borges' illusory Library, I began to understand the true meaning of boundlessness.

Reference

Borges, J. L. (1998). The library of Babel. Collected fictions. pp. 112-118.