

THE UNIVERSE (WHICH OTHERS CALL THE LIBRARY) IS COMPOSED OF AN INDEFINITE AND PERHAPS INFINITE NUMBER OF HEXAGONAL GALLERIES, WITH VAST AIR SHAFTS BETWEEN, SURROUNDED BY VERY LOW RAILINGS. FROM ANY OF THE HEXAGONS ONE CAN SEE, INTERMINABLY, THE UPPER AND LOWER FLOORS. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE GALLERIES IS INVARIABLE TWENTY SHELVES, FIVE LONG SHELVES PER SIDE, COVER ALL THE SIDES EXCEPT TWO; THEIR HEIGHT, WHICH IS THE DISTANCE FROM FLOOR TO CEILING, SCARCELY EXCEEDS THAT OF A NORMAL LIBRARIAN. ONE OF THE FREE SIDES LEADS TO A NARROW HALLWAY WHICH OPENS ONTO ANOTHER GALLERY, IDENTICAL TO THE FIRST AND TO ALL THE REST. TO THE LEFT AND RIGHT OF THE HALLWAY THERE ARE TWO VERY SMALL CLOSETS. IN THE FIRST, ONE MAY SLEEP STANDING UP; IN THE OTHER, SATISFY ONE'S FECAL NECESSITIES. ALSO THROUGH HERE PASSES A SPIRAL STAIRWAY, WHICH SINKS ABYSSALLY AND SOARS UPWARDS TO REMOTE DISTANCES. IN THE HALLWAY THERE IS A MIRROR WHICH FAITHFULLY REPRODUCES ALL APPEARANCES. MEN USUALLY INFER FROM THIS MIRROR THAT THE LIBRARY IS NOT INFINITE (IF IT WERE, WHY THIS ILLUSORY DUPLICATION?); I PREFER TO DREAM THAT THE LIBRARY IS INFINITE. LIGHT IS PROVIDED BY SOME SPHERICAL FRUIT WHICH BEAR THE NAME OF LAMPS. THERE ARE TWO, TRANSVERSALLY

LIKE ALL MEN OF THE LIBRARY, I HAVE TRAVELED IN MY YOUTH; I HAVE WANDERED IN THE DISTANT CORRIDORS OF THE LIBRARY. I WRITE, I AM PREPARING TO DIE JUST A FEW LEAGUES FROM THE HEXAGON IN WHICH I AM WRITING. MY GRAVE WILL BE THE FATHOMLESS AIR; MY BODY WILL SINK ENDLESSLY AND DECAY IN THE UNENDING. THE IDEALISTS ARGUE THAT THE HEXAGONAL ROOMS ARE A NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE OF THE PENTAGONAL ROOM IS INCONCEIVABLE. (THE MYSTICS CLAIM THAT THE HALLWAY WHICH FOLLOWS THE COMPLETE CIRCLE OF THE WALLS; BUT THEIR THEORY IS A CLASSIC DICTUM: THE LIBRARY IS A SPHERE WHOSE EXACT CENTER IS THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.)

THERE ARE FIVE SHELVES FOR EACH OF THE HEXAGON'S SIDES; EACH SHELF HAS FORTY LINES, EACH LINE, OF SOME EIGHTY LETTERS WHICH I KNOW WILL SAY. I KNOW THAT THIS INCOHERENCE AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER (PERHAPS THE CAPITAL FACT IN HISTORY) I WISH TO RECALL A FEW

FIRST: THE LIBRARY EXISTS AB AETerno. THIS TRUTH, WHOSE IMMUTABILITY IS THE ETERNITY OF THE WORLD, CANNOT BE PLACED IN DOUBT BY ANY REASONABLE MIND. MAN, THE IMPERFECT LIBRARIAN, MAY BE THE PRODUCT OF CHANCE OR OF NECESSITY. THE UNIVERSE, WITH ITS ELEGANT ENDOWMENT OF SHELVES, OF ENIGMATICAL VOLUMES, OF INEXHAUSTIBLE STAIRWAYS FOR THE TRAVELER AND LATRINES FOR THE SEATED LIBRARIAN, CAN ONLY BE THE WORK OF A GOD. TO PERCEIVE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN, IT IS ENOUGH TO COMPARE THESE CRUDE WAVING SYMBOLS WHICH MY FALLIBLE HAND SCRAWLS ON THE COVER OF A BOOK, WITH THE ORGANIC LETTERS INSIDE: PUNCTUAL, DELICATE, PERFECTLY BLACK, INIMITABLY SYMMETRICAL.

CONCEPT

Created during the Fall 2017 semester as part of the Mixed-Media/Print Media 3 class. This project began with students reading and discussing

the short story, *The Library of Babel* by Jorge Luis Borges. Working collaboratively students created a variety of mock-ups addressing the

unique space for the mural. Inspired by this story students generated ideas about the space and aesthetics of library, systems of knowledge,

cataloging, and assemblage. Students worked in groups, combining digital photography, computer graphic manipulations, and large digital

printouts with acrylic paint and mediums on PVC panel.

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WHICH THE DIVINE LIBRARY HAS NOT FORESEEN AND WHICH IN ONE OF ITS SECRET TONGUES DO NOT CONTAIN A TERRIBLE MEANING, NO ONE CAN ARTICULATE A SYLLABLE WHICH IS NOT FILLED WITH TENDERNESS AND FEAR, WHICH IS NOT, IN ONE OF THESE LANGUAGES, THE POWERFUL NAME OF A GOD. TO SPEAK IS TO FALL INTO VENTRILQUAMY. THIS WORDY AND USELESS SPIRIT ALREADY EXISTS IN ONE OF THE THIRTY VOLUMES OF THE FIVE SHELVES OF ONE OF THE INNUMERABLE HEXAGONS—AND ITS REPUTATION AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE LANGUAGES USE THE SAME VOCABULARY. IN SOME OF THEM, THE SYMBOL LIBRARY ALLOWS THE CORRECT DEFINITION UBIQUITOUS AND LASTING SYSTEM OF HEXAGONAL GALLERIES, BUT LIBRARY IS BREAD OR PYRAMID OR ANYTHING ELSE, AND THESE SEVEN WORDS WHICH DEFINE IT HAVE ANOTHER VALUE. YOU WHO READ ME, ARE YOU SURE OF UNDERSTANDING MY LANGUAGE?

THE METHODICAL TASK OF WRITING DISTRACTS ME FROM THE PRESENT STATE OF MEN. THE CERTITUDE THAT EVERYTHING HAS BEEN WRITTEN NEGATES US OR TURNS US INTO PHANTOMS. I KNOW OF DISTRICTS IN WHICH THE YOUNG MEN PROSTRATE THEMSELVES BEFORE BOOKS AND KISS THEIR PAGES IN A BARBAROUS MANNER, BUT THEY DO NOT KNOW HOW TO DECIPHER A SINGLE LETTER. EPIDEMICS, HERETICAL PEREGRINATIONS WHICH INEVITABLY DEGENERATE INTO BARRIERS, HAVE DECIMATED THE POPULATION. I BELIEVE I HAVE MENTIONED MORE AND MORE FREQUENT WITH THE YEARS THAT MY OLD AGE AND FEARFULNESS DECEIVE ME, BUT I BELIEVE THAT THE HUMAN SPECIES—THE UNIQUE SPECIES—IS ABOUT TO BE BLESSED. BUT THE LIBRARY WILL ENDURE: ILLUMINATED, SOLITARY, INFINITE, PERFECTLY MOTIONLESS, EQUIPPED WITH INEXHAUSTIBLE VOLUMES, USELESS, INCORRUPTIBLE, SECRET.

I HAVE JUST WRITTEN THESE WORDS. I HAVE NOT INTERPOLATED THIS BUT I HAVE ONLY SAID THAT IT IS NOT ILLOGICAL TO THINK THAT THE LIBRARY IS INFINITE. THOSE WHO JUDGE IT TO BE ILLOGICAL TO BELIEVE THAT IN REMOTE PLACES THE CORRIDORS AND STAIRWAYS AND HEXAGONS CAN, INCONCEIVABLY, COME TO AN END WHICH IS ABSOLUTE. THOSE WHO IMAGINE IT TO BE WITHOUT LIMIT, FORGET THAT THE POSSIBLE NUMBER OF BOOKS DOES HAVE SUCH A LIMIT. I VENTURE TO SUGGEST THIS SOLUTION TO THE ANCIENT PROBLEM: THE LIBRARY IS UNLIMITED AND CYCLICAL. THE ETERNAL TRAVELER WERE TO CROSS IT IN ANY DIRECTION, AFTER CENTURIES HE WOULD SEE THAT THE SAME VOLUMES WERE REPEATED IN THE SAME DISORDER (WHICH, THUS REPEATED, WOULD BE AN ORDER: THE ORDER). MY SOLITUDE IS GLADDENED BY THIS ELEGANT HOPE.

Fragments from the Library of Babel