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The Library and the Labyrinth

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in voce **a.Borges**

Abstract

Jorge Luis Borges's labyrinths and libraries as thought experiments on the limits of world models—infinity, redundancy, and the 1:1 map.

I. Libraries without floors

Borges's Library of Babel is a reductio of the fantasy of **total catalogs**: if every book exists, navigation collapses into despair or miracle. The fable compresses a truth about world models: explosion of state space without structure is not knowledge but noise. The labyrinth, meanwhile, figures **search under partial information**—turnings that look alike, goals that recede.

II. The 1:1 map

“The Cartographers” who chart an empire at scale 1:1 dissolve the difference between map and territory in a different way than Whitehead: here the map **dies of its own success**, useless because coextensive. For Volume 3, the joke is a warning about data practices that aspire to capture everything yet explain nothing.

III. Literary cognition as modeling

Borges treats fiction as a machine for **testing epistemic virtues**: memory, suspicion, hope. Readers run internal models of narrators and worlds; the short form forces rapid updates when a twist rewrites the state space.

IV. Limits

Borgesian skepticism can slide into cynicism if not paired with constructive accounts of how communities **stabilize** reference. The essay names that boundary: play with infinity is not license to abandon care for evidence.

V. Conclusion

Libraries and labyrinths are twin emblems of Volume 3: the hunger for maps vast enough to live inside, and the courage to admit when the map must shrink to remain useful.

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