

BETWEEN BORGES AND BARTHES: A TEXT AND BOOK CONUNDRUM

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Received: 05 Jul 2018

Accepted: 11 Jul 2018

Published: 16 Jul 2018

ABSTRACT

In his story The Book of Sand, Borges defines the book as 'infinite' with no beginning and no end. In almost the same way when Barthes discusses his notion of text, in contrast to work, he defines text as 'infinite deferment of the signified.' Critically speaking Jorge Luis Borges' short story The Book Of Sand and the kind of novel offered in the story The Garden of Forking Paths draw a clear resemblance and constantly comment on the Barthesian distinction between a 'Work' and a 'Text'. This paper concerns itself with discussing Borges' notion of 'Book' and proceeds to develop a contrast with the Roland Barthes conception of Work and Text.

KEYWORDS: *Work, Text, Borges, Barthes, Derrida, Blanchot, Author, Signified*

A book no longer belongs to a genre; every book pertains to literature alone.

Maurice Blanchot¹

Literature is not exhaustible, for the sufficient and simple reason that a single book is not. A book is not an isolated entity: it is a narration, an axis of innumerable narrations. One literature differs from another, either before or after it, not so much because of the text as for the manner in which it is read.

Jorge Luis Borges²

Literature is the question minus the answer.

Roland Barthes³

¹Maurice Blanchot, "The Disappearance of Literature." *The Blanchot Reader*. Ed. Michael Holland (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1995) 141.

²Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, Ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964) 203.

³Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972) 202.