

the total compiler

by eamon byrne

The idea of an infinite textual universe occurs in many places in the works of Jorge Luis Borges. The contexts and permutations of language, which others had held to be perhaps infinite (allowing themselves to use such an imprecise term), that fabulist Argentine extended to include the works of language also, waiting somewhere with infinite patience for the world to discover or imagine them. Borges' magnificent conception was confined to metaphors of arcane texts bound in leather, but had he written mainly five decades later he might have said that to use *any* words in combination would be to inevitably run the risk of such discovery, since by then it would have come to pass that the fate of language would be for its meaning to become secondary, something to be teased out after the fact, something which could be changed at any time by the click of a key, the passing of a mouse pointer over a toolbar item called '*italics*'. Saved, indexed, searchable, language would be no longer the total library of some erudite poet, but rather the data on remote RAID clusters of Unix- and Windows-land. The poet would have discarded his pen, his coloured pencils, his reams of linen paper and sides of octo and verso. A cursor would be blinking seductively. Borges' fabled library would have truly come to pass: linguacode in all its totality. Your browser loves you. Log on and you will be served. From basic algorithms, multiple *for* and *while* loops, *if* and *switch* statements, and non-compilable comment lines, *see*, a built-up edifice across your networked nodes. Point. Click. A theme will emerge: you will depend on it.

