**The Literature of Exhaustion**

In 1967, John Barth published a controversial essay in *The Atlantic* which amounts to a manifesto of postmodernism. The essay was called "The Literature of Exhaustion" and in it Barth proposed that the conventional modes of literary representation had been "used up," their possibilities consumed through over use. In the sixties, as today, the great preponderance of literature belongs, technically speaking, to the nineteenth century; the formal advances of [modernism](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0255.html) are all too often ignored.

Barth's essay has been vilified as an over hasty death notice for literature, one that seemed hypocritical from a man who is, after all, a novelist, but this is to miss its point. "The Literature of Exhaustion" is principally concerned with the ways art has been kept alive in the age of "final solutions" and "felt ultimacies," from the death of God to [the death of the author](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0226.html). Barth holds up the figure of Jorge Luis Borges as an exemplar of an artist who "doesn't merely exemplify an ultimacy; he employs it" (31).

Barth, like many postmodernists, is particularly enamoured of a Borges' story entitled, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," in which a turn-of-the-century French Symbolist produces, not copies or imitates, but actually composes several chapters of Cervante's novel. Borges thus broaches issues as diverse as the death of the author, intellectual property rights, and the historical specificity of aesthetic and cognitive modes. What impresses Barth is that Borges thus (re)uses Cervantes' novel in order to produce a "remarkable and original work of literature, the theme of which is the difficulty, perhaps the unnecessity, of writing original works of literature. His artistic victory, if you like, is that he confronts an intellectual dead end and employs it against itself to accomplish new human work" (31).

There seems to me to be no better formulation for the task facing the authors of hypertext fiction: the necessity of making language and its increasingly outdated technical modes live again. This will be achieved not simply through new technology, but through the re-imagining of the "ultimacies" in which we live. No amount of [RAM](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0114.html) will, in itself, make a work succeed, but, as [Marshall McLuhan](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0232.html) reminds us, the medium is the message. Changing the medium may help us find new messages, or at least new ways of re-using the old ones. Certainly it offers new ways to re-conceive the legacy of cultural traditions.

The Outline Story:

John Barth is an American novelist. He was born on 27 May 19390. He is a short story writer. He is known as " Postmodern and met fictional. The Literature of Exhaustion is John Barth's great literary creation. It was first published in 1967 in Atlantic. In a Peters Rushton Seminar that was held at the university of Virginia John Barth first delivered "The Literature of Exhaustion" After it the book is reprinting again and again. The Literature of Exhaustion has three main themes- First it is an influential. Second it is some kind of controversial. Third it describes true realism. The Literature of Exhaustion describes the society as it is. It describes the culture, people way of living, customs and culture of the society in their true way. John Barth says in this book that in our history in a particular time a particular trend was passing through and people were spending their life according to this trend.