LITERARY ENCYCLOPEDIA: A USER'S MANUAL

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> The book is well suited to linear discourse but is just as accommodating toward nonlinear discourse, as an encyclopedia or a forking-path story.
> - Espen Aarseth

Dictionaries and encyclopedias have been frequently discussed in fiction from Flaubert to Borges and Danilo Kiš. Borges's work is crowded with imaginary encyclopedias: the encyclopedia of Tlön makes people forget earthly books and languages; a one-volume *vade mecum* with its infinite number of pages can even replace the library of Babel. In Georges Perec's *Life A User's Manual* (1978) a man named Cinoc compiles "a great dictionary of forgotten words." We get to read 30 of its 8000 entries "which contain, obscurely, the trace of a story it has now become almost impossible to hand on" (289–90). In Danilo Kiš's short story "The Encyclopedia of the Dead" (1989) the narrator gets to read "a majestic monument to diversity" in the Royal Library in Stockholm. The monument is an encyclopedia, which records "everything that can be recorded concerning those who have completed their earthly journey" on the condition that "no one whose name is recorded here may appear in any other encyclopedia" (43).

These works tell us about possible reference books and sometimes even cite them, but are there literary works that *implement* or *perform* the ideas of these unheard-of works? Literary works that, in themselves, *are* dictionaries or encyclopedias?

The questions contain many ambiguous and vague terms and need to be specified. Across the centuries the term *encyclopedia* has referred to the system of sciences, to the knowledge concerning the system of sciences, and finally to works that "claim to provide in orderly arrangement the essence

of 'all that is known'," generally or in a particular field of knowledge, and, in the wake of the Enlightenment, using popular-scientific language.[1] According to Michel Foucault, the classical encyclopedia expresses faith in the universal ability of language to represent and gather together the totality of the world. However, it should be noted that Foucault sees this faith shaken precisely along with the birth of *literature*. What could a literary encyclopedia then be – other than a contradiction in terms?[2]

In literary studies the terms *encyclopedic* and *encyclopedism* have been used to refer, for example, to a large use of scientific knowledge in fiction or to speculation on the order of the world and on the possibilities of its total representation. In these wide senses many kinds of literary texts can be labeled encyclopedic.[3] Here, however, to begin with, I want to narrow the focus down to texts, which imitate structures and devices of existing reference books or invent new ones. In this material I include Novalis's *Allgemeine Brouillon* (1798/99), Flaubert's *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* (1850–80), the *Critical Dictionary* edited by Georges Bataille, *Encyclopedia Da Costa* (1947–48), *Devil's Dictionary* (1911) by Ambrose Bierce, surrealist games of definition and the Oulipian definitional and semo-definitional literature, Hervé Le Tellier's *Encyclopaedia Inutilis* (2002), *The Meaning of Liff* (1983) by Douglas Adams and John Lloyd, Gideon Wurdz's *Foolish Dictionary* (1904) and other "strange and unusual dictionaries"; the lexicon novel *Dictionary of the Khazars* (1984) by Milorad Pavić, the hypertext encyclopedia *Neuer Physiologus* by Arno Schmidt and others, and works that imitate and transform other forms of non-fiction like cook books, manuals, travel guides or maps – recent examples of the latter are *Atlas of Experience* (2000) by Louise Van Swaaij and Jean Klare and Diana Issidores's *Landscapes of Love* (2003).

What interests me in these texts – or at least in some of them – are the exceptional ways in which they are designed to be read and used. The thing they have in common may be approached starting from the fact that they are not works of narrative fiction in the sense that a short story by Borges or Kiš still is. What strategies of reading do they, then, call for or allow?

Dictionaries are usually not read from beginning to end and in their entirety. Encyclopedias, on the other hand, can be and have been designed to be read continually, to be used mainly for fragmentary reference or both.[4] In Aarseth's terms, encyclopedias often leave their mode of cursality up to the reader; they can be "read either unicursally, straight through, or multicursally," by jumping between the table of contents, the entries,

the footnotes, and other devices.[5] Whatever the best generic terms for the above mentioned works may be, it could be worth studying how these texts incorporate different devices with which the reader can (re)combine fragments of text into larger wholes, reassemble "the circle of knowledge," or find an otherwise meaningful path through the text. As Robert Collison wrote back in 1964, "little has been written on the philosophy of the planning and construction of encyclopaedias and the theories underlying their arrangement." Still less has been written on the specific problems the reader faces using encyclopedias and related texts, that is, on the ergodics of texts somewhat misleadingly called "reference books." In the following I sketch this line of research, and, at the same time, debate specifically what motivates the literary use of devices initially designed for arranging knowledge.

Principles of order in the Encyclopédie

> What grace may be added to commonplace matters by the power of order and connection.
>   - Horace, cited on the title page of the *Encyclopédie*

The topological study of encyclopedias concentrates on the structures and images used in ordering knowledge. The name itself already suggests that encyclopedic knowledge becomes a totality somehow due to its circularity. The tree, a popular image for the logical order of knowledge in the late medieval encyclopedia, implies that phenomena can be classified and placed in hierarchical and genealogical order. Later changes in conceptions of knowledge have been traced in the images of the labyrinth, the map, the net and the rhizome.[6]

Whatever the model of knowledge, its relation to actual textual practice is never simple and no equivalence between them should be expected in advance. The tree, for example, has been translated into a unicursal order according to history, chronology, the "systematics" of knowledge, biography, alphabetics, and to various combinations of them. At the same time the sections have been connected to each other across the unicursal order with systems of reference, typographical and other devices.[7]

D'Alembert and Diderot, the editors of *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751–1771), began their

project with the classical idea of an enchained totality of nature as precondition of the unity of human knowledge. This unity was represented with the images of the genealogical tree and the world-map of knowledge.[8] To this classical model Diderot added his ideas of using the encyclopedia as a subversive "war machine," a critical tool for overcoming dogmas and prejudices, and the more moderate idea of "conversation" between texts and disciplines. Yet it is well known that the text, the total of its 71,818 articles, did not satisfy either of its editors. In reading the *Encyclopédie* one may wonder if and how the differing conceptions of the aim of encyclopedias could be translated into one work.

For the use as reference, the articles in the *Encyclopédie* are in alphabetical order. This order has been criticized as arbitrary, because it fragments or "dismembers"[9] the principles, concepts and terms of each science along the series of volumes and rearranges them according to the accident of initial letters. Diderot noted the comical effects alphabetical order produces when it puts on the same page in sequence and side by side words and things that should have nothing in common.[10] The classical "non-literary" encyclopedist – author or reader – sees thus created metonymies only as unfortunate accidents.

The systems of reference (taxonomical location; cross-references) can be seen as devices to counter the defects of alphabetical organization. They help in restating the interdependence of the fragments of knowledge, "bind the branch to the trunk", to use Diderot's words. Yet in the *Encyclopédie* the references have other functions too: they "counter notions; bring principles into contrast; covertly attack, unsettle, or overturn some ridiculous opinions", and at the same time disturb the ordered construction of knowledge. Here are some examples how this is done:

1. The placing of an entry in the tree of knowledge is sometimes imperfect or misleading. The system of hierarchization changed during the process of editing, but, in some cases, the misnaming is clearly intentional: the "grammatical" article *naître* discusses the question of the origins of life from a materialistic point of view; again, the "grammatical" article *privilège,* which condemns all privileges as injust, is followed by a conservative article on the political meanings of the concept.

2. The name of the entry can be misleading or only a starting point of an essay in a Baylean fashion: the article on taxation, *vingtième*, turns to discuss people's right to legislative power.

3. Entries combine terms in violation of the alphabetical order as if suggesting their unity of meaning, but then the meanings are separated syntactically. In the article *adorer, honorer, révérer adoration* of the real God is defined using one's own reason, whereas *honoring* the saints and *revering* their images and their relics decline towards idolatry.

4. Tensions are created between the definition of the word and the examples of its usages. After a neutral definition a common word is used in politically risqué descriptions of its functions: the "example" of the metaphorical meaning of the word *menacer* reads as follows: "On dira très bien, par exemple, lorsque le gouvernement d'un peuple se déclare contre la philosophie, c'est qu'il est mauvais; il *menace* le peuple d'une stupidité prochaine." Using this technique any word can be appropriated to critical use in a way that is beyond the reach of any index.

5. Explicit cross-references are used in unconventional ways. Time is of course an important factor in both editing and reading a multi-volume encyclopedia. For its readers and editors the *Encyclopédie* was not accessibile once and for all: the first volume was full of references to later volumes that were not yet available, and thus neither the censor nor any other reader could foresee the context an article or a phrase was finally given. The inaccessibility of later, revised editions as well as all the other ways of updating (appendices, supplementary volumes, yearbooks etc.) can of course be used in the same way. In the *Encyclopédie* one-way references (forward or backward) are used for hiding the satirical context. If we happen to read the article *antropophages* we come across references to the entries *eucharistie, communion* and *autel;* thus the satirical perspective opens up. The article *eucharistie*, however, does not refer to *anthropophages*; instead it refers to *communion, transubstantiation* and other articles dealing with differing views in Christianity (*berengariens, lutheriens*). In his *bête, animal, brute* Diderot contradicts Buffon's views on the question of the intelligence of animals paraphrased in the article *animal* – unexpectedly because there was no reference forward in the latter article. Some of the references forward in the *Encyclopédie* are not fulfilled at all; the articles planned were forgotten, censored or missing for other reasons.

6. Implicit references are used in the service of cultural relativism, that is, comparison of manners, politics and religion in different cultures. Descriptions of the ways cruel priests exploit the ignorance of masses in Congo, Mexico and Siberia are made to sound oddly familiar (see *ypaina, kraals*). Conversation on a certain topic, for example luxe, freedom,

tolerance, is scattered around in many articles without references. These uses of reference suggest that *Encyclopédie* is more than a tableau of knowledge and something different from it. It emphasizes the fact that knowledge is produced and can always be relativized by ordering and reordering the text. In doing so it lets us think the impossible in classical context, an encyclopedia without the hierarchy nature (reality)/knowledge/text.[11] This opens up space to a *poetic* reading of text, in which the reader "has to create new ideas or things, to speculate, out of the material of the disparate articles" (Anderson, 924). Diderot hints at this direction when he writes about "references of genius", which "by juxtaposing certain relationships in the sciences, analogous qualities in natural substances, or similar operations in the arts, (--) lead either to new, speculative truths, or to the perfecting of the known arts, or to the invention of new ones".

Novalis's *Allgemeine Brouillon* takes further and more self-conscious steps in this direction. Instead of a total sum of existing knowledge we have here a project and a performance of a *future encyclopedia*. In Novalis's sense *Encyklopaedisirung* is experimental production of new sciences and combined disciplines, such as chemical mechanics, poetical physiology, physiological stylistics, pathological philosophy, and psychological futurology. *Encyklopaedisirung* coincides with *poiesis* as an experimental practice in which disciplines and discourses are translated into each other.[12] The result is, at the same time, a poetic encyclopedia and encyclopedic poetry. The future encyclopedia can only be read in fragments and as fragments; it is necessarily a work that is still to come.

Fragments of a future language: Encyclopaedia Da Costa

The infamous *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* divides animals into strange categories, for example animals "belonging to the Emperor", "included in the present classification", and "drawn with a very fine camelhair brush."[13] According to Foucault, the classification is *heteroclitical*, it does not seem to arrange its objects according to a common denominator, and *heterotopical* because the space shared by the classified objects is not defined by a (one) law. Heterotopia is a paradoxical space which comes into being through language and syntax but at the same time disturbs their normal functioning – their ability to connect words and things

to each other. A heterotopical text both invites the reader to think of the interconnectedness of the things listed and deconstructs the systematics of classification.[14]

"Heteroclitical" was a word Georges Bataille used in describing his own contribution to the interdisciplinary magazine *Documents* (1929–). The word referred among other things to a strategy of writing that would disturb the classificatory logic of traditional encyclopedism. According to Dominique Lecoq, *Documents* was at its best an anti-encyclopedic work; its success was that "of a way of writing capable of overturning the code of branches of knowledge without constituting in itself a closed, complete body of knowledge" (*Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, 11). In the following, I debate shortly what this anti-encyclopedism could be in the practice of *Critical Dictionary* and *Encyclopaedia Da Costa*.[15]

Furthering the path opened by Novalis, *Critical Dictionary* imagines and performs a future dictionary. In the entry *factory chimney* Bataille writes that the only reason for writing a dictionary is to demonstrate the error of definitions which replace the "childish or untutored way of seeing" "by a knowing vision which allows one to take a factory chimney for a stone construction forming a pipe for the evacuation of smoke high into the air – which is to say, for an abstraction." A critical dictionary would not give correct meanings and appropriate uses of words, technical definitions, or scientific knowledge. Instead it would create a non-hierarchized and formless work showing how the words guide thinking, how they too get old and die, and confront the challenge this presents to the strategy of writing.

Critical Dictionary encourages uni- and multicursal reading in subtle ways. The alphabetical order is not an unfortunate accident but instead it is usable in suggesting connections between words and things. In the entry *formless* form is described as a "frock coat" and contrasted with a conception of the universe as "a gob of spittle." The entry is followed by the entry *hygiene*, which discusses the purity rituals of modern man; next comes *ju-ju*, which discusses European word-magic, which tries to control things by giving one and the same name to heterogeneous things. The fragments can be read as producing a meaningful succession: the dictionary form is metonymically linked with mental hygiene and magical thinking.

The entries in *Critical Dictionary* do not follow a logical structure of definition in a classical sense[16] and they have no explicit cross-references. Instead they are chained by concepts that define and contextualize each

other. The spittle mentioned in the article *formless* is further discussed in an entry of its own: "spittle is finally, through its inconsistency, its indefinite contours, the relative imprecision of its colour, and its humidity, the very symbol of the formless, of the unverifiable, of the non-hierarchized."

Encyclopaedia Da Costa (1947–48) is a collaborative work by Bataille's circle and the surrealists. In spite of its announced completeness – *Le Da Costa Encyclopédique* could also be translated "The Complete Da Costa" – it emphasizes its fragmentarity in many ways. Only the part "Fascicule VII, Volume II" of the work is available. This part "begins" in the middle of a word ("-festations") and in the middle of a sentence from an unknown entry. To crown the book's headlessness, the entry expresses uncertainty of its topic in the end by stating that "the question has in no way been clarified" (108). All the following entries begin with an *E*.

The second entry makes explicit that this is not an ordinary encyclopedia based on the hierarchy of sciences and definitions. The word *echecs*, for example, is not followed by a definition but a chess puzzle, and from the given solution one can deduce that the name of the entry, "echecs", could have been heard or understood at least in three senses, "check" (*echec*), "chess" and "failure".

The entry *encyclopédie* challenges existing encyclopedias by demanding a future language: "Encyclopaedias trouble themselves a great deal about words fallen into disuse, never about words still unknown, burning to be uttered. But just as each of us is ready to exchange everything he knows of history for a single glimpse of his own future, the study of languages to come seems to us surpass in terms of urgency the analysis of a faded idiom, which is flaking away like dead skin."

Encyclopaedia Da Costa does not want to serve as a document of past knowledge or as a *Konversationslexicon* of current knowledge; it tries to evade the logic of representation, which has the pre-existing world as its model. The reader is guided to step out of the circle of communicative learning, to the position of an exorbitant *akyklios* who has lost the familiar liaisons between words and things:[17] "To be sure, the language of the future is by definition unintelligible to us. It is by the very reason of its obscurity that we are able to recognise it; that which too rapidly becomes familiar can come only from an immediately neighbouring zone (…). But, if it seems presumptuous to dream of putting together in its entirety a language that still does not exist, it does not appear beyond realisation empirically to isolate certain terms already accessible."

The entry *encyclopédie* emphasizes its difference from the European word-magic: "if a word of traditional magic never provides any access other than to a world fallen in ruins of which it is a vestige, the future word, by raising us up towards that which is still intact, obliges us to invent, outside any precedent and (…) any etymology, the wholly new meaning that glimmers in the distance. // In the absence of any valid lexicon or of any known fairy, our interpretation cannot but be hypothetical, and we cannot claim to verify for ourselves its approximate exactitude since neither the language we are striving to speak, nor the universe in which it will be currently understood, exist. But an encyclopaedia worthy of the name cannot trouble itself with realistic considerations. It has a duty to remedy so striking a deficiency, and it is beyond any doubt that its scientific value will be measured by the number of future words and expressions to which it affords space." (124)[18] A future encyclopedia can only be a collection of fragments from an unknown land, or, more precisely, from a space that does not exist, from "a" space that is not one.

An example of the defamed realistic and communicative motivation may be found in *Atlas of Experience* (2000), which maps together realms of imagination, ideas, feelings and concrete things into a world-map of experience. The connections between regions and the movement from one place to another are here conceptual in a most familiar way: we have the Mountains of Work and the Safe Harbour of Home; airports called Escape and Freedom; we can follow the Stream of Ideas descending from the top of the highland of Creativity into the Sea of Possibilities. However, the book actually locates human experience in an odd time-space: the twelve meridians are named according to months; the Western and the Eastern ends of the continent are called Spring and Winter, respectively. This complicates the reading of geographical variables and conventions of cartography (distances, differences in altitude, location on land or in seas, breadth of a road, population of centres, etc.).

How does *Encyclopedia Da Costa* perform its idea of a future language? To put it briefly, by creating

1. new definitions for familiar words or other signs, thus producing "images in tension" in the surrealist sense: "[*exode*] *exodus*. – A kind of hymn or song intoned at the end of meals." Deaf and dumb alphabets are given new "erotic" signifieds (146).[19]

2. neologisms and new concepts in which both the word and the definition remain in need of clarification: "[*epornufler*] *to epornuflate*. – To seize a patient by the right emfle and emarcillate him in a fixed arstene while keeping the free end of his pelin a short distance from the emorfilator." *Emfle*, *emarcillate*, and *emorfilate* are not defined elsewhere in the dictionary.

3. other kinds of tension between the entry and the article or between the article and other devices. An entry is not usually followed by a definition but something else, for example, a refusal of definition ("[*estorgissement*] *estorgisation*. – We apologise for being unable to provide any definitive clarification of this term"), a dramatic scene (*elegie*), an essay (*enthousiasme*), or a narrative (the circular route *eloge-entité-erudition-etendard-euphorie-examination-exempt* narrates a tragic story of baldness). The article *emancipation* eulogizes a certain "Licence to live" which is to be taken into use in France. According to the entry, the licence is "the culmination of a long series of efforts which have had as their main object the consecration of the inalienable rights of the individual". However, the application form in the appendix says that the licence has to be renewed either monthly or daily and in advance in the place to which you are about to travel; without the licence you can be immediately executed (133).

4. pseudo-etymologies, which bring the different senses of one word together in a surprising way: "*Exposition*. Act of abandoning a child on the public thoroughfare". The definition applies also to art exhibitions: "In the same way certain individuals called artists (see entry for that word) [the entry is not available] have a custom by which they place their works before the eye of the public when these are particularly distressing or ridiculous."[20]

5. by separating "confused" meanings: "[*etat*] *state*. (…) People have chosen to confuse state, manner of being, with state, central power, and this latter term has by degrees acquired the ineluctable character of a natural necessity, which initially in no way existed."

Encyclopedia Da Costa moves quickly from a heading to a beheading, so to speak, and tries to resist the classificatory logic of definitions. Raymond Queneau's definitional literature uses a different strategy: it responds to the demand of definition to the fullest, and by so doing shows the literary potential in any dictionary. Definitional literature is a method of deriving a new text beginning from a source text with the aid of a dictionary: "Each

meaningful word in a text (verb, noun, adjective, adverb) is replaced by its dictionary definition; each word of the resulting definitions is similarly replaced; and the process is repeated as often as is desired." (*OuLiPo Compendium*, 133.) [21]

From the source text "The product of a certain period – when expressed, warm-hearted desires become indifferent – thrills through the length of time over which recollection extends" we can get "The thing produced by the effort of an inevitable full pause, when exuded, compassionate sexual urges grow to be not particularly good, is stirred by a tingling sensation of excitement in its duration, over which rallying increases in scope." The nostalgic reader may try to follow the phases of derivation backwards to the restoration of the source text.

Alphabetical order in translation: Milorad Pavić's Dictionary of the Khazars

> There can be no encyclopedia without translation. But what is translating? Is it possible to translate? Is not translating, that singular literary act, what not only enables the encyclopedic work but at the same time prevents it, threatens it? Translating, the bringing into 'work' of difference.
>   - Maurice Blanchot

In alphabetical encyclopedias translation and rearrangement of the text are inseparable. Agathon Meurman's encyclopedia (1883–90), written in Finnish, drew heavily on the Meyer's *Grosse Conversationslexikon* (1870–72). Many names that begin with the letter *c* in German are transliterated to begin with a *k* in Finnish. When Meurman was compiling the section of *k*-words he forgot to check Meyer's *c*-section again. Thus in the final version of Meurman's encyclopedia the entry *Kiina* (*China*) is missing – a massive forgetting if there ever was one. Who knows what is lost in translation when a Chinese encyclopedia is arranged in alphabetical order?

The problems and possibilities in translating and rearranging ency-clopedias is nowhere discussed as profoundly and playfully as in Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*. It may be called a narrative encyclopedia, but only if some reservations are made. [22] The work is not a single "body

of knowledge": there are two editions of *Dictionary of the Khazars,* the Male edition and the Female edition. Reader is thus guided to debate the somehow gendered differences between the editions.[23] Both the editions are by their subtitle "lexicon novel in 100.000 words." Inside this frame there is a second edition of *The Khazar Dictionary*, *Lexicon Cosri*, "a dictionary of the dictionaries on the Khazar question," originally published in 1691. The second *Lexicon Cosri* brings together three alphabetical encyclopedias, the Red Book (using Christian sources), the Green Book (with Islamic sources), and the Yellow Book (with Jewish sources). It is not a facsimile but a revised and supplemented edition.

Entries in *The Khazar Dictionary* are narrative, telling mythical, fantastical, anecdotal and historical stories of Khazars and of the scholars in the history of the people. An entry can be found in one or several books. In Aarseth's terms, the explorative function is important: explicit references guide the reader to compare the entries with the same name across the books and to discover missing pieces of the story. In addition to the explicit references there are subtle connections, analogies between characters and events in one book and across the three books. The references do help the reader in assembling the little narratives into a larger whole; yet at the same time they reveal contradictions, which the anonymous editor does not solve, and thus we have mutually exclusive versions of many key events in the story. In Diderot's words, the references in *The Khazar Dictionary* have "the double function of confirming and refuting, disrupting and reconciling." It remains disputed whether the Khazars converted into Christian, Islamic or Jewish religion, into all or none of these; when and where this assumed turning point took place; whether there was an original text containing answers to these and other questions; and if there was, in which language and alphabet it was written.

The second editions order the events "according to a single calendar" and transliterate the Greek, Arabic and Hebrew alphabet into a single language, the Serbo-Croatian. The translation retains the alphabetical order, and thus rearranges the text: "the material for this dictionary on the Khazars would inevitably have to be grouped differently in each new language and new alphabet, so that the entries would always appear somewhere else." (10)[24]

If we compare the Serbo-Croatian (with Latin alphabets), the English and the Finnish versions of the text, the three books really do differ. In the Serbo-Croatian Red Book after the entry *Cirilo* come *Hazari, Hazarska*

polemika, *Kagan* and *Lovci snova* ("dream hunters"); in English *Cyril* is followed by *Dream hunters, Kaghan, Khazars,* and *Khazar polemic*. The Finnish Red Book places the entry on Cirilo/Cyril (*Kyrillos*) after the articles on Khazars and the Khazar polemic. The book ends with the article on dream hunters (*Untenmetsästäjät*). According to the author, "the original version of *Dictionary of the Khazars*, printed in the Cyrillic alphabet, ends with a Latin quotation: 'sed venit ut illa impleam et confirmem, Mattheus'. (…) The Serbian version printed in the Latin alphabet (…) end[s] with the following sentence: 'That look wrote Koen's name in the air, lighted the wick, and lit up her way to the house'."

The translations and transliterations thus differ considerably in the order they present the fragments of narrative in the unicursal reading, but, after all, what difference does this make? In the preliminary notes the editor openly declares that the three books of *The Khazar Dictionary* "can be read in any order the reader desires"; they "can also be read diagonally, to get a cross-section of all three registres"; and the "book need never be read in its entirety; one can take half or only a part and stop there, as one often does with dictionaries"; and finally, *The Khazar Dictionary* does not claim to be a finished totality at all, but, instead, it is "an open book, and when it is shut it can be added to: just as it has its own former and present lexicographer, so it can acquire new writers, compilers, and continuers." (13–14)[25] Can we then say that "according to the alphabet of various languages, the novel ends differently"?[26] It is not so simple even in the unicursal reading, because the places of the appendices, the closing note, and the list of entries are fixed. And if we consider the explorative function, "in which the user must decide which path to take" (Aarseth, 64), can we say where *the novel* begins or ends? On the other hand, one can ask if and how the rearrangement of entries affects the levels of *story* and *plot*.

To give a few examples of the encouraged decisions reader may make: If you start reading the Red Book from the beginning in Serbo-Croatian (Latin alphabets), in English, or in Finnish, the first entry is *Ateh*, the first reference to the two other articles on Ateh. Several possible itineraries open up. If you choose to read the entry *Ateh* in the Red Book, you can for example 1. read the whole entry straight through and then continue reading the Red Book unicursally; 2. read the article on Ateh in one or both the other books; then continue to the next entry in the Red Book (*Branković, Avram*); 3. follow the references after or in the middle of reading the entry *Ateh* in the Red Book. (The references differ curiously in the versions I

consulted: in Serbo-Croatian the references are to *Khazars, Daubmannus, Khazar polemic, Cyril*; in English to *Khazars, Daubmannus, kaghan*; and in Finnish to *Khazar polemic, kaghan, Cyril.*) Then continue the unicursal reading from the entry *Branković, Avram*; 4. follow the references in the referred entries (the paths fork all over again, though in the entry *kaghan* the only reference is back to *Ateh*).

The strategy of following the explicit references inside one book excludes some of the entries. In the Red Book none of the entries refer to *Ćelarevo*, and *Ćelarevo* has the only reference to *Suk, Isaljo*. Finally, if the references are followed across the three books, the reader never gets to read the entry *Schultz, Dorota* or the Appendix II. None of the articles refer to them explicitly; they can thus only be found by unicursal reading or by accident. This is hardly a coincidence: it is in the *Schultz* entry where the difference between the male and female editions is made; the entry and the Appendix II recount the last events in the chronology; and by so doing they bring the tradition of the Khazars and dictionary making up to date, so to speak, and give clues as to the destiny of some important manuscripts and, possibly, to the identity of the editor(s) of the second edition. Thus the novel uses both the unicursal order and the system of cross-references to postpone the however open end of its story to the end of reading. The encyclopedic devices can thus be used for countering the loss of control ensued by translation and transliteration. And yet the alphabetical structure of entries does encourage the random fragmentary reading and at the same time presents the author of this kind of a narrative encyclopedia with the almost infinite challenge of "making sure every article could be read easily before and after every other one" (Pavić, Beginning and the End of the Novel).

In its claim to universality, encyclopedia may resemble the Tower of Babel, but at closer look it has always lived the time after Babel, translating heterogenous sources in multiple languages from the plurality of traditions and styles. In Maurice Blanchot's words, encyclopedias offer a "monstrous common ground" of texts and books where everything "begins" with translation, always in another language. The works discussed above share the experience of the limits of representing the world, but, at the same time, they play with the encyclopedic claim to be unified and self-contained totalities. What makes these texts literary may reside in the self-conscious play with this double gesture.

NOTES

1. "encyclopaedia" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 1. This applies also to *Encyclopedia of Ignorance* (1977; eds. Ronald Duncan & Miranda Weston-Smith) which sets out to tell everything science now knows of the unknown.

2. See Foucault, 247–248. Blanchot (68) asks if the idea of an encyclopedia means precisely the disappearance of literature: "dans la parole universelle où tout se dit, et où tout se dit en empruntant le langage qui permet seulement de tout dire, est-ce qu'il pourra y avoir jamais place pour la littérature, si celle-ci est d'abord l'affirmation ou le jeu d'une tout *autre* parole?"

3. To Northrop Frye (365) "encyclopedic form" is "a genre presenting an anagogic form of symbolism, such as sacred scripture, or its analogues in other modes. The term includes the Bible, Dante's *Commedia*, the great epics, and the works of Joyce and Proust." Pekka Kuusisto's thesis (2001) discusses "topological forms and images" in "literary encyclopedism". To him certain texts by Kafka, Borges and Beckett represent an "encyclopedic microcosm," which "in short literary form reflects what are the mostly theoretical conditions of encyclopedism" (19). On the other hand "encyclopedic macrocosm," such as *Finnegans Wake*, *Gravity's Rainbow* and *Foucault's Pendulum,* "is normally a decentered network of more or less open semiosis" (21). This line of research dominates the entry "Encyclopedic Novel" by Luc Herman in the recent *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005).

4. Cf. Queneau, 90.

5. Aarseth, 7–8: "The footnote is a typical example of a structure that can be seen as both uni- and multicursal. It creates a bivium, or choice of expansion, but should we take this path (reading the footnote), the footnote itself returns us to the main track immediately afterward. Perhaps a footnoted text can be described as multicursal on the micro level and unicursal on the macro level." See the note 7 below.

6. See Eco, 80–84. The 15th edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

(1974) gives a nonlinear interpretation on "the circle of learning": "A circle is a figure in which no point on the circumference is a beginning, none is a middle, none is an end. It is also a figure in which one can go from any point, in either direction, around the circumference; in addition, one can go across the circle from any point to any other; or, *by any number of transecting lines, starting from a given point, one can go to any number of other points on the circumference*, near or far." (6; my emphasis)

7. *Orbis sensualium pictus* (1658) by J.A. Comenius is a pictorial dictionary in which the entry is followed by a picture with numbers referring to words printed below in Latin and in German. The order of entries is systematic in the sense that the Creator is pictured first and then His creations (after natural phenomena and animals come men, "monsters", and forms of human culture). In Pierre Bayle's *Dictionaire historique et critique* (1697) entries are proper names in alphabetical order. The body text of the article is in one column and marked with a complex system of references. Footnotes in two columns take most of the page to emphasize the skeptical essay developed therein. Marginals are covered with references to sources used in body text and in footnotes. The source references include cross-references to footnotes of other articles in the work. Later editions have placed footnotes in linear succession after the article: in order to follow them, the reader has to leaf the book constantly backward and forward.

8. According to d'Alembert, knowledge may seem like a labyrinth to laymen and to specialists, but to philosophers *Encyclopédie* "show[s] the principle countries, their position and their mutual dependence, the road that leads directly from one to the other. This road is often cut by a thousand obstacles, which are known in each country only to the inhabitants or to travelers, and which cannot be represented except in individual, highly detailed maps. These individual maps will be the different articles of the Encyclopedia and the Tree or Systematic Chart will be its world map."

9. Alphabetical order in particular subjects is strongly criticized in the preface to the first edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1771) because it has amounted to "dismembering the sciences". In a similar vein S.T. Coleridge saw the alphabetic division and

the system of internal references as subordinate, auxiliary and collateral to the philosophical arrangement without which the work is "like a mirror broken on the ground, presenting, instead of one, a thousand images, but none entire" (Collison, 295).

10. "Alphabetic order would constantly cause comical contrasts; a theological article would be plunked down in the middle of the mechanical arts." (Diderot, *encyclopédie*) The phenomenon is so obvious that it may be hard to see. According to its editors, the "first picture encyclopedia", *I See All* (1928–30), "The great Picture Book" "speaks the universal language; give it to a roomful of people of all nations, speaking all languages, and they will all have a kind of understanding of these pages." Yet the pictures are in *alphabetical* order, they follow the arbitrary order of the initials of corresponding *English* words. Laid side by side on these 3–4 column pages, the "100.000 pictures of everything" produce strange combinations: in the same page we find pictures of *deaf and dumb alphabet*; *dean*; *Dearmer, Percy*; and *death*.

    Neuer Physiologus parodies this critique of alphabetism: alphabetical order is at the same time necessary and harmful, an *Unordnungsgenerator* that produces unintentionally comical metonymies, "zahllose unangemessene Wort-Nachbarschaften, denen die dinglichen so nicht entsprechen. Was hat die *Blase* neben der *Blasphemie Blasphemie* zu suchen, der *Gattenschmaus* neben dem *Gebetbuch*, die *Guillotine* neben dem *Gurgeln*? Auf *Erfinden* folgt *Erschießen*? (Selten, aber eben doch, ergeben sich aber schon logische Zusammenhänge, z. B.: *Daumen* - *Daumenschraube* - *Dazwischenkommen*)."

11. According to Blanchot, Diderot questioned the hierarchy in which the original order of nature precedes the tree of classification, its representation. This made his encyclopedia exceed the limits of a book: «Diderot ne croit pas à une nature qui serait *naturellement* divisible en tranches de savoir. Il a d'elle une idée merveilleuse (…) se remémorant l'animation universelle et la vicissitude incessante, le pouvoir prodigieux de transformation qui ne permet de la saisir que dans une forme qu'elle a déjà ruinée. Idée qui pousse en avant l'Encyclopédie comme une creation vivante, l'empêchant d'être une réalité seulement livresque» (63).

12. See Moser 12–15. «Encyclopaedistik. Meine Wissenschaftskunde wird eine Art von wissenschaftlicher

Grammatik – oder Logik – oder Generalbaß – oder Compositionslehre – mit Beyspielen.» (*Allgemeine Brouillon*, §616. See also §155.) According to Walter Moser (11), Novalis's text says "what the ideal encyclopedia ought to be; at the same time, it already partially performs what ought to be. Being ideal and real, theory of encyclopedia and encyclopedic practice all in one, the *Brouillon* is a perfect example of performative writing."

13. "Animals are divided into a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed c) tame, d) sucking pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous g) stray dogs, h) included in the present classification, i) frenzied, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, l) *et cetera,* m) having just broken the water pitcher, n) that from a long way look like flies" (Borges, "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins").

14. See Foucault, xv–xix.

15. *Critical Dictionary* is a compilation of articles from *Documents.* Page numbers in this section refer to the *Encyclopaedia Acephalica* (Atlas Press, 1995), which includes both of the works being discussed.

16. In the *Encyclopédie* the basic order of disciplines in the definition is grammar, logic, metaphysics, theology, morality, jurisprudence (etc.); using this structure, "despite the disparity of meanings, each article treated in this manner will form a whole" (Diderot, *Encyclopédie*).

17. In the pre-Hellenistic world *enkyklios paideia* meant children's way of learning letters and arithmetics in the ring of choir. *Akyklios* could thus be the name of those who could not keep the rhythm of the circular process of civilization.

18. In the same vein, Ambrose Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary* defines dictionary as **"**a malevolent literary device for cramping the growth of a language and making it hard and inelastic", only to add that "this dictionary, however, is a most useful work." The reason is that it "recogniz[es] the truth that language must grow by innovation if it grow at all, makes new words and uses the old in an unfamiliar sense" (*lexicographer*). Thus *nonsense* should mean "the objections that are urged against this excellent dictionary"; and *infancy* "the period of our lives when, according to Wordsworth, 'Heaven lies about us.' The world begins lying about us pretty soon afterward".

19. Cf. Adam's & Lloyd's *Meaning of Liff,* which transforms existing geographic proper names into common names for familiar but hitherto unnameable experiences, with a peculiar ear for onomatopoetics.

20. Etymology is used to reveal surprising significations hiding in the unity of the word and the name: see *Epictete*; *Etats-Unis*.

21. Perec's and Bénabou's semo-definitional literature (LSD) complements this practice by giving it goals: "1. that of orienting the derivation towards the style or the ideas of a particular writer or kind of writer; 2. that of demonstrating the lexical equivalence of sharply divergent statements." See *OuLiPo Compendium*, 222–223.

22. Several entries in *Dictionary of the Khazars* refer to the former dictionaries of Khazars as "dictionaries or encyclopedias". For a long time the word "dictionary" was used to refer to texts we would now call encyclopedias; however, the word "encyclopedia" has never referred to dictionaries (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1).

23. The English translation gives an additional "warning": "This is the FEMALE EDITION of the Dictionary. The MALE edition is almost identical. But NOT quite. Be warned that ONE PARAGRAPH is crucially different. The choice is yours."

24. The question of the meaning of alphabets is connected to the larger themes of the reconstruction of the body of the original book and its parallel, the reconstruction of the world, which are *mise en abyme* all over again in the anecdotes of *The Khazar Dictionary* (see Hayles). All three books stage a conflict between the dream hunters who search for the original man, Adam, and assemble fragments of his being into a bodily whole, into a Khazar dictionary, and the shaitans and demons who try to prevent Adam's incarnation. Samuel Cohen, among others, speculates on the limitations of human alphabets: "Just as each letter of the earth's alphabet corresponds with a part of human body, so each letter of the heavenly alphabet corresponds with a part of the body of Adam Cadmon" (226); yet "only the letters designating nouns and names, those that come from the devil in Gehenna, build my dictionary and are accessible to me" (229).

25. The textonic user function, which requires that "textons or traversal functions can be (permanently) added to the text"

(Aarseth, 64), is not, however, further elaborated in the text. Yet Robert Coover has placed the novel in line with "computer-driven nonsequential writing": "A new kind of coverless, interactive, expandable 'book' is now being written; there are no doubt several out there in hyperspace right now; and *Dictionary of the Khazars* could easily take its place among them as inspired hackers, imitating Mr. Pavic's Father Theoctist Nikolsky, gleeful inventor of saints' lives, add their own entries, helping to fashion Adam Cadmon's body."

26. Pavić, Beginning and the End of the Novel. On the other hand, Pavić emphasizes reader's freedom in choosing the path in text: «I have always wished to make literature, which is non reversible art, a reversible one. Therefore my novels have no beginning and no end in the classical meaning of the word.» The consequences of this relative reversibility to the story and plot seem to me, however, not as simple as the author lets us think: "I have left to them, to the readers, the decision about the choice of the plots and the development of the situations in the novel: where the reading will begin, and where it will end, even the decision about the destiny of the main characters."

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