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A Provocative Analysis of "The House of Asterion"

The incredible story of Asterion in "The House of Asterion" by Jorge Luis Borges provides a thought-provoking take on how perception changes when telling a story from a different angle. It begins with Asterion, a person who lives in an unusual house. This house has no doors, no windows, and no furniture. He lives there alone until he shows another Asterion (like a dual personality) around the house. He pretends that the other Asterion is real, saying it's his favorite game to play. Asterion loves to play these games to help him subdue his increasing boredom. His house also repeats infinitely; there are unlimited numbers of rooms that repeat an infinite amount of times and is structured like a maze. Nine men come to Asterion's house every nine years to be relinquished from evil; one day, a man dying on the ground said with his last breath that Asterion's redeemer would come for him. Asterion, excited by the news, wasn't lonely anymore, for his redeemer was nearby. After this, we only read of Asterion's death and understand that he was the minotaur from the Greek story.

The third paragraph is the most significant part of the story as it persists throughout this tale, acting similarly to a backbone providing a cohesion to the story. The paragraph is fundamentally about Asterion's loneliness and his perpetual boredom. It talks about Asterion running around, pretending to be followed, falling off roofs until

bloody, pretending to sleep with his eyes open, and imagining another Asterion that he shows around the house. All these games are to take his mind off the desolation that he is constantly battling. This causes him to be in a constant state of melancholy, it may not be outwardly shown but it is nonetheless present. Asterion, whether he knows it or not, doesn't want to live in the house anymore. This is exemplified in the first paragraph when he talks about leaving to go to a town. When getting there, the people were frightened of him; this surely gave him the feeling of abasement. He mentions that his home isn't a prison, but as we can clearly read, he only stays because he thinks it's safe there. Asterion has built a wall around himself and doesn't intend to ever leave these confines. In the last section, he says how delighted he is for his redeemer to come and that his loneliness has faded. Is it happiness, or gratitude or is he simply ready for everything to come to an end?

The character of Asterion is similar to an innocent child in some ways and sophisticated in others. In Asterion's actions, he is childish; the games he plays and the underdeveloped way he thinks of the world all point toward childish aspects of Asterion's character. In the first paragraph, when he talks about the house not being a prison, he sounds defensive and frustrated like he is tired of people asking about it. This is further shown when he talks about his house and flaunts its beauty, giving us a tour of everything he adores. Asterion also reveals a mature side as he is the story's narrator. The phrases Asterion uses and the complex way he presents himself allude to Asterion being very smart. In the second paragraph, he refers to himself as comparable to a philosopher. This shows that Asterion is far more complex.

There is plenty of symbolism throughout “The House of Asterion” story, but how Jorge Luis Borges used symbolism to keep Asterion's true identity mysterious is dramatic. Never once did we think that Asterion was anything else but a lonely person. Those final few lines explain it all, what this story was truly about. It was strange how Asterion described his house, why the people were terrified of him, and why his house was a maze. Those situations can all be explained away, but when Asterion talks about being a bull-man, the story suddenly clicks. Everything comes together, revealing that we were reading from the minotaur's perspective all along. Jorge Luis Borges incorporates a type of storytelling that makes us sympathize with a disliked character before giving us the whole truth.

The story “The House of Asterion” by Jorge Luis Borges is exemplary at complex storytelling. Jorge Luis Borges' way of writing delves deeper into older stories revealing that characters can have another side to them; characters are not just in black and white. Jorge Luis Borges made something extraordinary, a story unlike any other, which I intend to remember.

Work Cited

Borges, Jorge Luis. “The House of Asterion.” *Story Collection Labyrinths*, 1962, pp. 138–140.