



## **Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin**

### **Copyright statement**

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

### **Liability statement**

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

### **Access Agreement**

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

**From Ways of Seeing to Ways of Being: A Study of  
the Phenomenological and Ontological Dynamics of  
Vision in the Fiction of Julio Cortázar**

Thesis submitted to the University of Dublin for the degree of  
Doctor in Philosophy

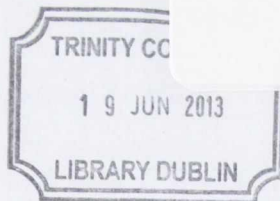
2013

Selena Mary Harty

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this, or any other university, and that it is entirely my own work.

I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository, or allow the library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement. I agree that the Library may lend or copy this thesis upon request.



Thesis 10134

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the assistance of many in the completion of this thesis. First of all, to my supervisor, Dr Ciaran Cosgrove, for his enthusiasm in introducing me to the work of Julio Cortázar during my undergraduate degree, and for inspiring me to pursue doctoral research. I am extremely grateful for his efforts in watching over the progress of this project; in particular, for his prompt and practical advice, for his unique insight, and for his welcome words of encouragement. Thanks are also due to Dr Grace Magnier, Dr Susana Bayó, and Mary Costello, for helping to make the Department of Hispanic Studies at Trinity College Dublin such a congenial place which frequently tempered the more solitary aspects of the research process.

To Dublin City Council I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude for the financial assistance which they provided. I would also like to thank the University of Dublin and the Department of Education for a series of employment opportunities during the course of my graduate studies.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family and friends for their steadfast support and understanding. To Perri, my constant companion during many long hours of research and writing, thank you for always remaining at my side. I sincerely thank my aunt, Angela O'Neill, without whose help this thesis could not have been completed. To my parents, thank you for your love, for believing in me, and for continuing to encourage me in all of my endeavours. To Declan, my husband, for giving me love and happiness, for opening a way through every doubt or difficulty, for bolstering my resolve, and for keeping me sane, thank you.

## Summary

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the dynamics of vision in the fiction of Julio Cortázar can be successfully analysed as paradigmatic of phenomenological ontology. A close and comprehensive reading of Cortázar's *oeuvre* reveals that his models of visual perception are consistently framed by questions of being. Although reference is made throughout to a broad range of studies which treat perception and ontological concerns, the theoretical basis of this thesis is predominantly drawn from the work of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Edmund Husserl (1858-1938), and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

This thesis identifies and examines three major paradigms of seeing in the fiction of Julio Cortázar. Chapter one demonstrates that Cortázar frequently portrays the power of the gaze to define ontological relations between individuals. My investigation of this figure is rooted in Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of being-for-others, as expounded in his seminal philosophical treatise, *Being and Nothingness*. Chapter two explores Cortázar's rejection of traditional modes of perception as a path towards richer ways of being. The concepts of the 'natural attitude' and the phenomenological *epoché*, as developed by Edmund Husserl, provide the context for my analysis of this manifestation of Cortazarian dynamics of vision. Representations of the contemplation of art are so extensive in Julio Cortázar's fiction that it was necessary to devote two chapters to an explication of this particular paradigm. Chapter three considers Cortázar's portrayal of the ontological dangers of modern aesthetics. The focus of chapter four is the viewer-artwork figure as potentially revelatory of the nature of being. Martin Heidegger's philosophy of art, elaborated in essays such as "The Origin of the Work of Art," underlies the exegeses offered in both chapters. In the interest of tracing ways of seeing as an enduring theme in Cortázar's fiction, this thesis has adopted a broad approach; each of the four chapters treats a cross-section of his work, from novels such as *Rayuela* and *Divertimento*, to short stories from a variety of collections.

## Abbreviations

<b>AC</b>	<i>Los aeronautas de la cosmopista o un viaje atemporal París-Marsella</i> , by Julio Cortázar
<b>BN</b>	<i>Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology</i> , by Jean-Paul Sartre
<b>CC1</b>	<i>Cuentos completos 1</i> , by Julio Cortázar
<b>CC2</b>	<i>Cuentos completos 2</i> , by Julio Cortázar
<b>CL</b>	<i>Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography</i> , by Roland Barthes
<b>D</b>	<i>Divertimento</i> , by Julio Cortázar
<b>DP</b>	<i>Discipline &amp; Punish: The Birth of the Prison</i> , by Michel Foucault
<b>DPHH</b>	<i>The Doors of Perception</i> , and <i>Heaven &amp; Hell</i> , by Aldous Huxley
<b>PI</b>	<i>Papeles inesperados</i> , by Julio Cortázar
<b>PLT</b>	<i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> , by Martin Heidegger
<b>R</b>	<i>Rayuela</i> , by Julio Cortázar
<b>VDOM</b>	<i>La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos</i> , by Julio Cortázar
<b>WAAMR</b>	<i>The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction</i> , by Walter Benjamin
<b>62</b>	<i>62. Modelo para armar</i> , by Julio Cortázar

## Table of Contents

	Page no.
<b>Introduction</b> Dynamics of Vision	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> Being-for-Others: A Sartrean Reading of the Figure of the Gaze in Cortázar's Fiction	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b> Husserl's Phenomenological <i>Epoché: Rayuela</i> and the Rejection of Traditional Modes of Perception as a Path Towards New Ways of Being	<b>69</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b> Ontological Stagnation: Heidegger, Modern Aesthetics, and the Danger of 'Enframing' in Cortázar's Work	<b>141</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b> The Truth of Beings: The Heideggerian Concepts of 'Earth' and 'World' in Cortázar's Viewer-Artwork Paradigm	<b>191</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> From Ways of Seeing to Ways of Being	<b>255</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>260</b>

## Introduction: Dynamics of Vision

A fascination with ways of seeing is evident throughout Julio Cortázar's literary production. The act of looking is at the centre of a significant number of his fictional texts, and his 'collage' works are calculated to exploit the dynamics of vision.<sup>1</sup> Undeniably, visual art is an integral aspect of Cortázar's *oeuvre*; its role has been well-documented by current scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Cortázar's texts abound with references to artists and their works, stretching from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. In *Understanding Julio Cortázar*, a comprehensive overview of the author's output, Peter Standish remarks that the influence of the visual arts on Cortázar, and of painting in particular, should not be underestimated (*Understanding Julio Cortázar* 53-59). Paintings constitute the genesis of a number of Cortázar's stories, and Standish offers compelling analyses of their integration in texts such as "Reunión con un círculo rojo" and "Siestas" (*Understanding Julio Cortázar* 53).<sup>3</sup> An admirable investigation into the interplay between visual art and text in Cortázar's 'collage' works, in the form of *Desembarcos en el papel: La imagen en la literatura de Julio Cortázar* by María de Lourdes Dávila, has also been undertaken.

Nonetheless, there has been a general failure to link Cortázar's devotion to visual art with his broader interest in the powerful dynamics of vision. Lois Parkinson Zamora is undoubtedly accurate when she comments that "Cortázar's fiction is oriented by an optic aesthetic" ("Movement and Stasis" 159). Yet, the gaze has not been duly identified as an enduring, fundamental figure in Cortázar's fiction, and extant criticism still lacks a

---

<sup>1</sup> From the 1960s onwards Cortázar increasingly entered into collaborative relationships with artists, and created a number of works which juxtapose his writing with various visual media. Throughout this thesis, those of Cortázar's works in which photographs or paintings are integrated, such as *Último round*, *Prosa del observatorio*, *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*, and *Territorios*, will be referred to collectively as 'collage' texts.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the essays by María Amparo Ibáñez Moltó, Marcy E. Schwartz and Antonio Urrutia, and the book by Peter Standish.

<sup>3</sup> "Reunión con un círculo rojo" is inspired by a painting of the same name by the Venezuelan artist, Jacobo Borges. The story originally appeared in a catalogue for an exhibition of Jacobo Borges's work; it was later published in Cortázar's collection, *Alguien que anda por ahí* (1977). For an insightful interpretation of the role played by the art of Belgian surrealist painter, Paul Delvaux, in "Siestas," see Peter Standish's article "Delvaux and Cortázar".



thorough study of the representation of questions of seeing in his work. A partial exception to this critical lacuna can be found in Peter Fröhlicher's *La mirada recíproca: Estudios sobre los últimos cuentos de Julio Cortázar*. Fröhlicher identifies the symbolism of the mutual gaze as a key element of Cortázar's fiction. Unfortunately, the scope of Fröhlicher's study is narrow, both in terms of his definition of the gaze, and his application of the structure to Cortázar's work. *La mirada recíproca* contends that the concept of the reciprocal gaze is intimately linked with the theme of writing and questions of narrative structure in the short stories of *Deshoras*, Cortázar's final collection. In the concluding chapter of his book, however, Fröhlicher identifies further avenues for investigation by arguing that a survey of Cortázar's entire *oeuvre* reveals the prominence of visual symbolism therein. He notes that the power of the gaze in Cortázar's fiction has not received the critical attention which it merits: "un detenido estudio de la semiótica de la mirada queda aún por hacer" (224). The aim of my doctoral thesis is to correct this omission.

An exhaustive study of the Cortazarian canon has revealed three principal trends in the writer's portrayal of the dynamics of vision, and these will form the subject matter of the current thesis. Firstly, Cortázar's fascination with the sheer power of the gaze to shape relationships between individuals is evident in many of his short stories. In its broader treatment of perception, Cortázar's fiction consistently champions the rejection of habit. The last and most extensive element of this triad is Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure. The act of looking at art so frequently structures his narratives, that it has been judged necessary to devote two chapters to an investigation of this theme. Although inspired by the same basic figure, these two sections of the thesis treat contrasting sides of Cortázar's depiction of the contemplation of art. The first of these will explore his distaste for the strictures of modern aesthetics, while the second demonstrates how the viewer-artwork paradigm is also used to indicate a path to an authentic state of being.

Indeed, I argue that each of the three manifestations of Cortázar's concern with ways of seeing, as outlined above, are intimately connected with questions of being. It is widely acknowledged that Cortázar had a keen interest in some of the key philosophical movements of the twentieth

century. Surrealism and existentialism, for example, have long been recognised by Cortázar scholarship as major influences on his work.<sup>4</sup> The current thesis contends that there are also philosophical parallels between Cortázar's fiction and phenomenological ontology. This new theoretical approach to Cortázar's writing is inspired by the manner in which he consistently frames seeing with ontological concerns. I have chosen to underpin my analysis of the dynamics of vision in Cortázar's fiction using the work of a number of key phenomenologists.

The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, was inspired to develop a branch of philosophy that would aim to uncover the essence of phenomena. One of his disciples, Martin Heidegger, recognised that access to phenomena is determined by the fundamental nature of human existence as being-in-the-world (*Inderweltsein*). Consequently, any approach to phenomena must first take account of the essence of concepts such as perception. In his seminal text, *Phenomenology of Perception*, the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues for the primacy of perception in phenomenology by emphasising that perception is the basic unit of our direct experience of the world. Jean-Paul Sartre, in particular, has studied the impact of perception on human modes of being. Yet, the phenomenological theories of each of the aforementioned philosophers touch on issues of ontology, and I borrow from the work of all four in my examination of the dynamics of vision in Cortázar's fiction.

At this point, it is important to briefly address the question of Cortázar's familiarity with the philosophical models discussed herein. It is entirely possible that Cortázar read the philosophical texts that I use to analyse his work. His personal library certainly suggests that he was acquainted with some of the philosophers whose work forms the theoretical basis of this thesis; it includes, for example, Sartre's *L'Être et le néant*, a copy of Heidegger's "¿Qué es la metafísica?", and a French translation of the German philosopher's lecture series on Heraclitus.<sup>5</sup> Harris has also noted that,

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the books by Genover and Picon Garfield, the essays by García Canclini, Castro-Klarén, Harris, and Do Carmo, plus chapter three of the text by Hicks.

<sup>5</sup> See the full list of books contained in Cortázar's personal library at "Fundación Juan March: Biblioteca de Julio Cortázar."

in 1951, Cortázar produced a Spanish translation of *The Existential Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, by Alfred Stern (5). However, a thorough investigation regarding the extent of Cortázar's knowledge of Sartre, Husserl, and Heidegger, is beyond the remit of this thesis. The purpose of the current study is simply to establish that parallels exist between Cortázar's treatment of ways of seeing and phenomenological ontology; whether such parallels are the result of coincidence or design is a question to be answered by future research.

The first chapter of the current thesis explores Cortázar's portrayal of the gaze as a significant formative element in relationships between individuals. For the purposes of this analysis, I draw on a key aspect of Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological ontology as expounded in *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Sartre defines one of the fundamental modes of human existence as being-for-others; it is an ontological state wherein the presence of the Other impacts on the essence of the Self. According to Sartre, being-for-others is provoked by what he describes as 'the look.' It is evident from a selection of Cortázar's shorter fiction that he is fascinated by the role of the gaze in the construction of, and interplay between, the categories of Self and Other. I demonstrate that, in stories such as "Ómnibus" and "Final del juego," the gaze of the Other impinges upon the concept of the Self held by the protagonists in a manner that recalls Sartre's being-for-others.

"Axolotl" extends this theme to the point where, as the result of becoming the object of the gaze, the central character suffers a type of engulfment. I use this term in the ontological sense given it by R. D. Laing in his work, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. Laing concludes that schizoid individuals<sup>6</sup> are characterised by insecurity in being; a feeling of incompleteness or the lack of a firm identity. Consequently, the ontologically insecure individual dreads relations with others; the being of the Other threatens to engulf the already precarious identity of the Self.

---

<sup>6</sup> Laing defines a schizoid as "an individual the totality of whose experience is split in two main ways: in the first place, there is a rent in his relation with the world, and, in the second, there is a disruption of his relation with himself. Such a person is not able to experience himself 'together with' others or 'at home in' the world, but, on the contrary, he experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isolation" (17).

Significantly, for my analysis of Cortázar's texts, and my application of Sartre's phenomenological ontology to the same, Laing observes a direct correlation between the fear of engulfment and being the object of someone's gaze:

The individual experiences himself as a man who is only saving himself from drowning by the most constant, strenuous, desperate activity. Engulfment is felt as a risk in being understood (thus grasped, comprehended), in being loved, or even simply in *being seen*. (emphasis added, 44)

The opening chapter of the current thesis also examines the short story, "Después del almuerzo," through the lens of theories developed by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, which designate the gaze as a powerful weapon of control and normalisation. Finally, I offer a reading of Cortázar's "Orientación de los gatos" and "Las caras de la medalla" based on the Sartrean definition of the two possible responses to being-for-others. Sartre maintains that, on apprehending 'the look,' I either work to assimilate the view that the Other has of my Self, or, I endeavour to make an object of the Other. According to *Being and Nothingness*, the first attitude characterises love, while the second can be witnessed in the manifestation of desire. Chapter one of my thesis applies these distinctive Sartrean concepts of love and desire to the relationships at the centre of Cortázar's texts, paying particular attention to the role of the gaze therein.

Chapter two considers how the fiction of Julio Cortázar consistently frames ways of seeing with questions of habit and transgression. A thorough survey of texts such as *Los aeronautas de la cosmopista* and "Instrucciones para subir una escalera" reveals that Cortázar valued the search for alternative modes of perception. However, the majority of this chapter is devoted to a fresh interpretation of the search undertaken by the protagonist in Cortázar's most famous novel, *Rayuela*. I establish that, by means of a series of key metaphors, Cortázar portrays the goal of the protagonist of *Rayuela* as access to a new way of seeing. The novel suggests that the attainment of this altered form of perception would provoke a new and richer state of being. The first step in this quest is to divest vision of the solace of habit and preconception.

I contend that this central theme of *Rayuela* shares a number of interesting parallels with the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. According to Husserl, mankind has adopted a manner of seeing and, by extension, of being, that is utterly circumscribed by reason and science. He calls this the 'natural attitude.' Husserl argues that, in order to truly reconnect with the phenomena of the world, it will be necessary to suspend the 'natural attitude.' This suspension of our customary modes of perception is known as the phenomenological *epoché*. The second chapter of this thesis demonstrates that the protagonist of *Rayuela* searches for new ways of seeing by attempting to purge himself of the tenacious 'natural attitude.' His quest is mirrored, on the aesthetic plane, by the struggles of the writer, Morelli, to cleanse his work of inherited concepts and formulae. Only the character of la Maga is free from the 'natural attitude'; she enjoys the pure form of vision and the authentic state of being that the protagonist so fervently seeks.

Chapter three is the first of two devoted to an exploration of Cortázar's recurring viewer-artwork figure. My research has revealed that the depiction of the contemplation of art in Cortázar's fiction assumes two distinct forms. In texts such as *62. Modelo para armar* and "Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas," Cortázar ridicules prevailing attitudes towards art as both symptomatic of, and contributing to, a general ontological stagnation. On the other hand, the protagonists of a significant number of Cortázar's stories attain a new understanding of being by looking at works of art. I claim that these contrasting sides of Cortázar's viewer-artwork paradigm both bear comparison with aspects of Heidegger's philosophy of art. For this reason, chapter three of the current thesis provides a summary of the ideas expounded by the eminent German philosopher in "The Origin of the Work of Art." I then proceed to an investigation of examples of Cortázar's negative portrayal of the contemplation of art, drawing parallels with Heidegger's criticism of modern aesthetics. This chapter also includes an application of Heidegger's concept of 'enframing,' developed in his essay "The Question Concerning Technology," to Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure as it appears in "Queremos tanto a Glenda."

Chapter four studies how Cortázar often represents the act of looking at an artwork as a potential path towards the truth of beings. According to Martin Heidegger, the great work of art is characterised by a tension between the opening up of a 'world' and the closing in of the 'earth'. In the most basic sense, the former concept refers to the creation of a space of intelligibility, while the latter denotes a momentum towards ambiguity. Heidegger argues that this inherent struggle in the artwork provokes a revelation of the truth of beings; art is a happening of truth. Working from a selection of novels and short stories, I show that Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure is repeatedly framed by the dynamics of aperture and contraction, of disclosure and concealment. Moreover, in looking at works of art, the protagonists of these texts often experience an ontological epiphany. Here, my analysis of a broad range of Cortázar's fiction demonstrates that this truth of beings can assume a variety of forms, from the personal to the universal, from the historical to the primordial. In closing I argue that, with this insistent emphasis on the ontologically transformative power of the contemplation of art, Cortázar offers one possible solution to what he considers the current, vital need for a new way of seeing and a more authentic way of being.

## Chapter 1

### Being-for-Others: A Sartrean Reading of the Figure of the Gaze in Cortázar's Fiction

The power of the gaze as a significant theme in Cortázar's fiction is already apparent in a number of his earliest stories. "Ómnibus,"<sup>7</sup> originally included in the 1951 collection *Bestiario*, recounts the experiences of the protagonist on a bus journey during which she realises that all of the other passengers are staring at her. In the title piece of Cortázar's *Final del juego*, published five years later, three young girls play by a railway track. The sole purpose of their game is to garner the visual attention and approbation of those who pass by on the train. However, the young protagonists are insufficiently prepared for the consequences of their audience's gaze. The narrator of "Después del almuerzo" details his discomfiture as provoked by the attention of the public towards his unidentified travelling companion, and reciprocal visual contact precipitates a radical transformation in "Axolotl."<sup>8</sup> The core of each of these texts is a confrontation between two beings-for-themselves,<sup>9</sup> or groups thereof, and Cortázar consistently portrays the gaze as the sole, insidious weapon that defines these conflicts. In the current chapter, I argue that this recurring motif in Cortázar's early stories has a philosophical forebear in part of Jean-Paul Sartre's 1943 treatise, *Being and Nothingness*. Specifically, I will demonstrate that the uneasy encounters narrated in texts such as "Ómnibus," "Final del juego," and "Axolotl," are paradigms of Sartre's being-for-others.

Sartre's ontology differentiates three modes of being: being-in-itself (*être-en-soi*), being-for-itself (*être-pour-soi*), and being-for-others (*être-pour-*

---

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, it has been decided, where possible, to use the 2004 editions of Cortázar's short stories published by Alfaguara in *Cuentos completos* volumes 1 & 2. All quotations from these texts will be directly followed by the abbreviation CC1 or CC2, and the page number, in parenthesis.

<sup>8</sup> Both of these stories were originally published in the 1956 collection *Final del juego*.

<sup>9</sup> The central theory underpinning my analysis of Cortázar's stories in this chapter is borrowed from Jean-Paul Sartre's seminal philosophical text, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. All quotations are from Hazel E. Barnes's 1977 translation of Sartre's essay, and will be followed by the abbreviation BN in parenthesis.

*autrui*). In the most rudimentary definition of these categories, the first can be said to designate all non-conscious being; that is, the majority of phenomena existing in the world, including animals. The In-itself<sup>10</sup> lacks self-awareness and the capacity to change. Strictly speaking, all we can say of the In-itself, is that it *is*. In contrast, the being-for-itself is a conscious being that is conscious of its own consciousness. Sartre restricts this group to humans. It should be noted that Sartre draws a distinction between the For-itself (a human individual confronting the world) and consciousness (the individual's awareness of the world confronted); although he maintains that consciousness and being-for-itself are inseparable. Sartre argues that, in the case of the For-itself, all consciousness is consciousness of something (positional or direct), and, at the same time, self-consciousness (non-positional or indirect). This is made possible by nothingness, which the For-itself brings into the world. According to Sartre, nothingness is the defining characteristic of the For-itself. He explains that the being-for-itself nihilates the In-itself: a nothingness arises between consciousness and the object of which it is consciousness, thereby permitting a simultaneous consciousness of itself. However, Sartre emphasises that the awareness that the For-itself has of its own consciousness is without content. There is no "I" in this aspect of consciousness, only the bare fact of self-awareness. For Sartre, this is the true Self; pre-personal and indistinguishable from the self-knowing-this-object. The "I" originates in reflective consciousness, which is when awareness of one's own consciousness is the direct object of reflection.

The third mode of being described in Sartre's text is exclusive to the For-itself, and is called being-for-others. *Being and Nothingness* claims that the For-itself becomes separated from its Self by three ekstases.<sup>11</sup> The three ekstases are: temporality, which is subdivided into the three temporal ekstases of past, present and future; reflection; and being-for-others. In the third ekstasis, the For-itself discovers the Other (i.e. another For-itself), and recognises that it has a self for-the-other. This Self is alienated from the For-itself, which, despite striving to do so, will never fully know or attain it. By means of the body, this Self simply exists outside as an object for others. The

---

<sup>10</sup> Sartre frequently uses the abbreviated forms In-itself, For-itself, and For-others, when discussing the nature of being; the current study will follow suit.

<sup>11</sup> Sartre uses the word ekstasis in the original Greek sense of "standing out from."



existence of the Other is revealed to the For-itself by means of 'the look' (*le regard*), and the attendant feeling of shame. Sartre states that when two beings-for-themselves confront one another through 'the look,' a struggle for freedom<sup>12</sup> ensues. Thus, we respond to our state of being-for-others in one of two ways. Either, we deny our object-ness and make an object out of the Other, or, we appropriate the Other's freedom without altering its character, and, thereby, become the foundation of our own being-in-itself. As shall be explored more fully later in this chapter, his definition of being-for-others leads Sartre to conclude that the core of all human relationships, including love, is conflict.<sup>13</sup>

Sartre devotes approximately one third of his extensive text to elaborating the concept of being-for-others. In the simplest terms, it describes a mode of being in which the defining factor is the recognition of the existence of others. This state is thus the preserve of beings-for-themselves; it occurs only when a being-for-itself becomes aware of the presence of another being-for-itself. Or, in lay terms, being-for-others constitutes a psychological confrontation between two humans. The Cortázar stories examined in this chapter depict human encounters in a manner which is clearly analogous to Sartre's universal theory.<sup>14</sup> In particular, the function of the gaze in Cortázar's texts is deeply reminiscent of Sartre's concept of 'the look' (*le regard*). The narrative of each of the stories under discussion operates through a conspicuous polarisation of the Self and the Other; the gaze is paramount in the construction of, and interplay between, these two entities.<sup>15</sup> According to

---

<sup>12</sup> When examining the conflict which arises in being-for-others between the Self and the Other, Sartre variously describes the consciousness of the being-for-itself as the subject, the freedom, or the transcendence. He argues that when two beings-for-themselves come into contact in this way, one will transcend the other.

<sup>13</sup> For a selection of Sartre's writings on all aspects of his philosophy see Stephen Priest's book. These extracts are prefaced by helpful explanatory notes. See the book edited by Christina Howells for an excellent collection of essays on Sartre's work. And for an extremely accessible companion to *Being and Nothingness*, see Joseph S. Catalano.

<sup>14</sup> With the notable exception of "Axolotl," all of the stories discussed in this chapter concern human encounters. However, I will endeavour to demonstrate that "Axolotl" also fits the being-for-others paradigm through the narrator's anthropomorphising of the axolotls, and his insistence that they have a highly developed consciousness.

<sup>15</sup> Throughout this study, the reader will be mindful that being-for-others indicates a confrontation between two beings-for-themselves. However, referring to both beings with the term For-itself would make for an unintelligible discussion. It has, therefore, been judged necessary to follow Sartre in differentiating between the two elements of

Sartre, the For-itself discovers the existence of the Other through 'the look.' The Self immediately recognises the Other as a subject, as someone who sees as I see. Through the inalienable presence of my body, which Sartre describes as the context of our concrete relations with others, I am forced to accept that I exist as an object-for-the-Other. Sartre refers to this as the dimension of "the unrevealed" (BN 268), or, the aspect of "being-seen" (BN 257). He declares that "'Being-seen-by-the-Other' is the *truth* of 'seeing-the-Other'" (BN 257). Here, I argue that the protagonists of Cortázar's stories frequently respond to 'being seen' by scrutinising, and reflecting on, their own bodies.

However, being-for-others is more complex than the recognition of one's body as an object-for-the-Other; it is the realisation that my *Self* exists outside as an object for others. The body is simply the In-itself of the For-itself (BN 352). By observing my actions, the Other makes value judgements and develops a concept of my Self. Thus, there arises a new dimension of my being,<sup>16</sup> in which I recognise that there is some truth in the Self that I am for the Other; Sartre identifies this recognition as shame. On the other hand, I am utterly separated from this Self, since it is the construct of a freedom which I am incapable of knowing. Sartre describes the Self that I am for-the-Other thus:

We are dealing with my being as it is written in and by the Other's freedom. Everything takes place as if I had a dimension of being from which I was separated by a radical nothingness: and this nothingness is the Other's freedom. The Other has to make my being-for-him *be* in so far as he has to be his being. Thus each of my free conducts engages me in a new environment where the very stuff of my being is the unpredictable freedom of another. (BN 262)

---

the encounter as the Self and the Other. In Cortázar's texts, this division is plain. The narrator/protagonist is the Self pitted against the Other; the latter assumes both individual and collective forms.

<sup>16</sup> This is my being-for-others. Sartre emphasises that we are not dealing here with an image of my Self in the eyes of the Other. Rather, it signifies an actual dimension of my being, which, although given coherence by the Other, is based on the *fact* of my body and its actions.

Therefore, I am unsure both, of the appraisals by which the Other constitutes my Self as an object among others, and, of the world in which the Other situates me as object.<sup>17</sup>

Adrift in this unpredictable state of being, which the For-itself inhabits under the gaze of the Other, the Self experiences fear and a sense of enslavement. According to Sartre, fear is the feeling of being in danger before the Other's freedom; it is the acknowledgment of my vulnerability. By denying my freedom and constituting me as an object, the Other has made me an instrument of his intentions.<sup>18</sup> I am in danger because I know not the possibilities of the Other. This leads Sartre to conclude that danger is "the permanent structure of my being-for-others" (BN 268). Consequently, fear is one of the most common emotions that 'the look' of the Other inspires in the being-for-itself. Closely allied to this fear is the sense of enslavement which I experience in my being-for-others. When 'the look' makes of me an object-for-the-Other, I become a slave. Sartre explains that my freedom is transcended<sup>19</sup> through 'the look' of the Other, and I am thereby alienated from my possibilities. Furthermore, I am enslaved because the Other qualifies me using criteria that I cannot know, and I cannot struggle against what is unknowable by me. This aspect of being-for-others primarily manifests itself as an awareness of being trapped. However, in response to this feeling of enslavement, the being-for-itself may also show signs of anger and frustration.

---

<sup>17</sup> Sartre argues that, through 'the look,' the being-for-itself organises the world around it. Every For-itself brings its own appraisals to the phenomena which it encounters, both other beings-for-themselves and beings-in-themselves. It even gives a new temporal and spatial dimension to these phenomena, by situating them according to its own concepts of time and space.

<sup>18</sup> Here, I use 'intention' as a synonym of Sartre's 'possible'. For Sartre, this does not denote the abstract idea of possibility. Rather, it signifies a real action to be carried out in the concrete world. One of the central arguments of *Being and Nothingness* is that the being-for-itself chooses its 'possibles' and projects itself towards them. The English translation of *Being and Nothingness* that I use for this study alternates between the noun 'possibility' and the adjectival 'possible'. Likewise, I will employ both terms throughout, but they will be understood as sharing Sartre's limited meaning.

<sup>19</sup> As mentioned in note 12 above, Sartre uses the term 'transcendence' to describe the being-for-itself. However, transcendence in Sartre's text also refers to a process whereby the being-for-itself goes beyond (transcends) a given situation in a further project of itself. When a being-for-itself becomes an object under 'the look' of the Other, it loses this capacity for transcendence because it becomes alienated from its possibilities. Sartre, therefore, often refers to this enslaved being-for-itself as a transcendence-transcended.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that Sartre's concept of being-for-others, as outlined above, offers a suitable framework for reassessing a selection of Cortázar's earliest fiction. It is my belief that this approach will generate intriguing new readings of some of his most studied texts. Firstly, it will be necessary to recognise that "Final del juego," "Axolotl," "Después del almuerzo," and "Ómnibus," each depict a confrontation between two beings, or groups thereof, that Sartre would categorise as beings-for-themselves. For the majority of texts under discussion, this poses no issue; Sartre limits this mode of being to humans, and these are the primary focus of Cortázar's narratives. The only exception occurs in "Axolotl," where the narrator encounters a mysterious creature. Yet, Cortázar thoroughly anthropomorphises the axolotls; he divests them of any animalistic qualities and endows them with a highly developed consciousness. In this way, Cortázar brings the axolotl in line with Sartre's definition of the being-for-itself. Moreover, I will show that the encounter narrated in "Axolotl" corresponds to Sartre's being-for-others in every other particular, from the emphasis on the Other's gaze, to the various responses of 'the unrevealed.'

Secondly, it should be noted that, in each of the aforementioned stories, Cortázar cultivates distinct categories of the Self and the Other. Appropriately, for our application of Sartre's model, it is the gaze that consistently produces, and then intensifies, this polarisation. For the purposes of this study, the Self will necessarily be identified with the narrator/protagonist of each text,<sup>20</sup> whilst the being(s) that they encounter constitute the Other. Or, to put it another way, Cortázar represents the Self as *one-who-is-looked-at*, and the Other as *one-who-looks*. Technically, this is an

---

<sup>20</sup> In each of the texts under discussion, the form of narration chosen by Cortázar generally gives the reader access to the thought processes of the protagonist. "Axolotl," "Después del almuerzo," and "Final del juego," are all narrated in the first person by the object of the Other's gaze. In the last story, the narrator is one of three central characters, all of whom experience being-for-others. However, it could be argued that Leticia, and not the narrator, is the focal character who feels the ramifications of 'the look' most acutely. In my analysis of "Final del juego," I will apply Sartre's theory to all three characters; it seems to me that the narrator is close enough to the other two to provide an account of their reactions to the Other's gaze. The narrative mode of "Ómnibus" is a subjective third person that is limited to Clara, the protagonist and object of the Other's gaze. Thus, the access that the reader has to each of these characters, on a psychological level, develops the Self/Other division and facilitates the application of Sartre's being-for-others paradigm.

oversimplification, both of Sartre's philosophy and of Cortázar's fiction. It will become apparent in our discussion of Cortázar's stories that the gaze is often, to varying degrees, reciprocal. For his part, Sartre emphasises that when I encounter the Other through 'the look,' he likewise encounters me. There follows a simultaneous struggle, in which each being-for-itself attempts to transcend the freedom of the other:

Everything which may be said of me in my relations with the Other applies to him as well. While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me. We are by no means dealing with unilateral relations with an object-in-itself, but with reciprocal and moving relations ... Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others. (BN 364)

Through the narrator, Cortázar's readers are only privy to one side of this struggle.<sup>21</sup>

Using Sartre's concept of 'the look' as a theoretical framework, this chapter will offer a close analysis of the function of the gaze as represented in a selection of Cortázar's fiction. For the most part, this exegesis will be structured around the various elements of being-for-others as outlined in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre states that the existence of the Other is revealed through 'the look.' I will endeavour to demonstrate, not only that the protagonists of Cortázar's stories become conscious of the Other through 'the look,' but that this event institutes a transformation in their perception of themselves. Indeed, at the conclusion of these narratives, several of the central characters are considerably altered because they have become aware of the existence of their Self-for-the-Other. Here, it is perhaps pertinent to recall Priest's concise definition of being-for-others: "By being-for-others Sartre means my mode of being, my overall state of experience when I take myself to be as others perceive me, or when I make myself be as others perceive me, or both" (Priest 222).

---

<sup>21</sup> According to Sartre, in every human encounter one party always psychologically dominates the other. He argues that if two strangers pass on the street, 'the look' of one will make the other feel subservient, or, at least, uncomfortable (Priest 223).

On becoming aware of the Other's look, Cortázar's protagonists experience being-for-others; they accept their object-state and re-define themselves by reference to the Other. Whether these definitions are based on something as fundamental as gender, which is the case in "Final del juego," or, on the arbitrary gesture of carrying a bunch of flowers in "Ómnibus," 'the look' is consistently the medium by which they arise and become consolidated. I argue that a key concern for Cortázar's protagonists is the disparity between their awareness of the Other as a conscious being, and their ignorance of the content of that consciousness. For Sartre, this is an elemental aspect of being-for-others, and it precipitates a number of responses in the object of the gaze. These include shame, a heightened consciousness of one's body, fear, a feeling of vulnerability and enslavement, anger and frustration. As we shall see presently, each of these reactions becomes manifest in Cortázar's protagonists as they endure the gaze of the Other. Whilst it is hoped that the foregoing summary of Sartrean theory broadly explains the analytical approach of this chapter, more detailed discussion will be necessary at the appropriate juncture in our reading of Cortázar's texts. Despite their appearance in this study, and indeed in Cortázar's texts, it should be remembered that Sartre represents the various elements of being-for-others as basically simultaneous.

The section of *Being and Nothingness* which unveils Sartre's concept of 'the look' (252-302) opens by attempting an explanation of what happens when a man<sup>22</sup> appears in my perceptive field. Sartre argues that my perception of an object as *probably* a man involves a fundamental relation between my consciousness and his. Using the example of the man in the park, Sartre attempts to make his ideas more accessible to the reader. The text of *Being and Nothingness* invites me to imagine that I am sitting in a park, surrounded by trees, grass, and benches. Suddenly, I see a man. Sartre explains that when I see an object such as a tree, I organise it by establishing a simple positional relationship between it and the other elements in my

---

<sup>22</sup> The examples set forward by Sartre in this section of *Being and Nothingness* use the term 'man' to refer to a being-for-itself that enters my field of vision. In this instance, therefore, 'man' can be taken to signify the Other. Whilst the current study intends to follow Sartre's lead, the reader will be mindful that, despite the terminology, the For-itself is a human of any gender or age.

perceptive field. As an unchallenged transcendence, everything is synthesised from my point of view. However, a radical change occurs when I perceive an object which can be categorised as man; I register a re-organisation of the things in my universe around the man as privileged object. The world which I perceive is now extremely precarious. Whilst I can still identify a connection between the object-grass and the object-man to the extent that I can say: The man is walking on the grass, the fundamental bond between the two entirely escapes me. Sartre says that the relation between the man and the grass reaches towards the man as the centre; in so doing, it signals the destruction of the lines which I have established between the objects in my universe.

Sartre emphasises that this change is also qualitative. Using the colour of the grass as an example, he indicates that I cannot experience the green of the grass as it appears to the Other. Even the very quality of each object in the universe now has a direct relation to the Other which escapes me. For this reason, Sartre declares that “the appearance among the objects of my universe of an element of *disintegration* in that universe is what I mean by the appearance of a man in my universe” (emphasis added, *BN* 255). Prior to the appearance of another being-for-itself, all objects are grouped towards me. From the moment I perceive the man, there is what Sartre calls a “permanent flight” (*BN* 255) away from the Self, and towards the Other. My space is appropriated by the Other, and the subsequent reordering of this space creates of me a frustrating paradox; I am included as an element in the Other’s universe, but I am utterly excluded from the code by which that universe is structured. All meaning now flows towards the Other. Sartre sums up the arrival of the Other in the following manner:

Thus suddenly an object has appeared which has stolen the world from me. Everything is in place; everything still exists for me; but everything is traversed by an invisible flight and fixed in the direction of a new object. The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralisation of the world which undermines the centralisation which I am simultaneously effecting. (*BN* 255)

The appearance of the Other, therefore, effects a dislocation in the structure of my world. In several stories by Cortázar, the encounter with the Other precipitates a comparable decentralisation of the protagonists' universe. The denouement of these texts shows the protagonist looking at the world in a completely different light; their perception of the world has certainly been disturbed by the presence of the Other. "Final del juego" is a tale about the irretrievable loss of a child's perspective. Three young girls have invented a game in which they pose as statues. In order that the train passengers may appreciate their efforts, the game takes place beside a railway track that runs past the back of their house. One of the players, Leticia, suffers from an unidentified physical condition which greatly limits her range of movement, but which is not noticeable when she is still. One day, a young man named Ariel trespasses on their game by throwing them a note from the passing train. In a later communication, he singles out Leticia as his favourite. Ariel's incursion into the world of the three girls assumes a physical dimension with his announcement that he will alight from the train to pay them a visit. Aware that she would be unable to conceal her paralysis, and fearful of Ariel's reaction, Leticia absents herself from the meeting. However, she entrusts a letter to the other girls, with instructions to give it to Ariel; the content of the letter is not disclosed to the reader. The day after the visit, Leticia presents her final and most consummate statue, which Ariel observes intently from the train. Whilst Leticia remains in bed on the following day, the other girls go to the railway track at the usual time and discover that the window where Ariel always sat is empty. They never play the game again.

Ariel is indisputably the Other in "Final del juego," and his arrival destabilises the universe<sup>23</sup> of the three girls. In Cortázar's text, as in Sartre's theory, there is a new centralisation in which meaning flows towards the Other. Here, Cortázar depicts this transition using questions of gender and the insular nature of the home. The defining factor of Ariel's otherness is his sex.<sup>24</sup> The girls are excited about having a male acquaintance who is not a

---

<sup>23</sup> Note that the girls refer to the area where they play their game as "nuestro reino" (CC1 394).

<sup>24</sup> Gender is a recurring motif in Cortázar's treatment of ontological issues. In his fiction, the struggle to transcend the Other is often played out as a confrontation between members of the opposite sex. In particular, he explores how the gaze and



member of the family, and much attention is paid to his physical appearance. This male intrusion into an environment entirely governed by females upsets the prevailing harmony. Suddenly, every action committed by each of the girls takes on new symbolic value by virtue of Ariel's presence. Whilst they still draw lots to decide who plays the statue, there is now an underlying desire to be the one on whom Ariel's attention is focused. Whereas previously the two girls who were not acting out the statue hid themselves in the shade, they now emerge into the light to see Ariel, and to be seen by him. They no longer play the game for the benefit of all the passengers; their attempts to impress are directed solely at Ariel. Consequently, he alone can give meaning to their endeavours.

The male gaze, represented by Ariel, fashions the young girls into objects of visual consumption. When Ariel declares, in one of his notes, that Leticia is "la más linda" (CC1 397), the erstwhile dynamic of the group of friends is utterly transformed; that evening, the girls neither speak to, nor play with, one another. Holanda and the narrator become jealous of Leticia, and less inclined to cede to her suggestions. However, the girls are aware that their value is now entirely dependent on the judgement of the Other. Thus, on the following day, although the narrator wins the toss, she relinquishes her turn to Leticia, reasoning: "Ya que el otro la prefería, que la mirara hasta cansarse" (CC1 397). Whilst Leticia, Holanda, and the narrator, willingly accept their role as objects of male desire, they are insufficiently prepared for the permanency of this transformation. In "Final del juego," the appearance of the Other triggers a shift from childhood into the adult world. For Cortázar, this transition is provoked by the gaze of the Other as directed towards the body. As well as recognising their bodies as objects whose value is defined by the male gaze, the girls in Cortázar's text must also confront a broader, non-gendered corporal judgement.

---

sexual attraction impact on the question of being-for-others. In texts such as "Final del juego" and "Ómnibus," the male gaze is clearly associated with power. However, the traditional male gaze is thwarted by the female protagonists in the ontological conflicts of "Orientación de los gatos" and "Las caras de la medalla." I have touched briefly on these themes throughout the thesis, but the role played by gender in Cortázar's depiction of being-for-others is a significant one that deserves more detailed investigation. Unfortunately, the prolonged analysis necessary to explore this theme fully is beyond the remit of the current thesis.

Although the narrator acknowledges Leticia's physical disability, she underlines the advantages that it begets, such as being served special food and not having to do chores. Within the confines of the home, the narrator does not consider Leticia's condition an unmitigated affliction. The narrator also demonstrates that, at least in Leticia's presence, the household entertains a conscious ignorance of her paralysis: "en una casa donde hay alguien con algún defecto físico y mucho orgullo, todos juegan a ignorarlo empezando por el enfermo, o más bien se hacen los que no saben que el otro sabe" (CC1 397). However, when Ariel announces his visit, the protagonists are forced to face Leticia's condition. Leticia predicts that Ariel's admiration for her beauty will be destroyed by his recognition of her disability. The narrator attempts to console Leticia, "poniéndole como ejemplo que el verdadero cariño no conoce barreras y otras ideas preciosas que habíamos aprendido en El Tesoro de la Juventud" (CC1 399). It is significant that a children's encyclopaedia forms the basis of the narrator's assertion that Ariel will accept and love Leticia as she is. In fact, the narrator and Leticia already understand that the Other's gaze is a judgement; they are objects, and they must acknowledge the truth of the meaning which the Other bestows on them. Thus, Leticia enters the adult world by confronting the judgement of her physical condition that will be a permanent aspect of her dealings with the Other outside the home. Although the content of the letter she writes to Ariel is not disclosed, his subsequent absence from the window of the train seems to confirm Leticia's prediction.

In this way, the consequences of the arrival of the Other in the universe of the protagonists of "Final del juego" conform to those outlined in Sartre's theory. Firstly, Ariel's presence unbalances the world of the young girls. As with Sartre's example of the man in the park, the protagonists realise that they are no longer sovereign in their evaluation of themselves, and their environment. Now, all meaning flows towards the Other. In Cortázar's text, by virtue of the game which the girls play, this new meaning focuses on the body. The gaze of Ariel provides a new perspective on the bodies of the girls. They recognise that the male Other passes judgement on their desirability, and that there is an element of truth to their object-state. For Leticia, in particular, the arrival of the Other is a double-edged sword; her body is both the object of Ariel's admiration, and the source of his rejection. The arrival of

Ariel brings Leticia's disability into sharp relief for all three of the girls; they realise that the judgement of the Other operates on many levels. Sartre describes the appearance of the Other as "an element of disintegration" (BN 255) in my universe; from the moment Ariel makes contact with the protagonists of "Final del juego," their kingdom begins to crumble. Initially, the jealousy provoked by Ariel's favouritism towards Leticia causes discord, but it is the question of his reaction to her paralysis that ultimately destroys their world. Forced to accept the validity of the meaning bestowed upon them by the Other, the young girls abandon childhood and enter the adult world. This loss of innocence is symbolised by the permanent termination of their game, as anticipated by the title of the text.

In "Axolotl," the narrator's encounter with the Other precipitates a similar transition, which, though more fantastic in character, is equally comparable to the example offered by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. However, before we can analyse this text in the light of Sartre's ideas, it will be necessary to clarify the representation of the Other therein. As explained above, Sartre's concept of being-for-others is of a phenomenon in which beings-for-themselves are the sole players; it is the state of being inhabited by man when he encounters another man. Here, "Axolotl" poses a minor problem for our thesis, because the Other of this text is not human; it is a mysterious creature which the narrator discovers in the aquarium at the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris. Yet, intriguingly, Cortázar deliberately anthropomorphises these creatures throughout the story. The narrator refers to the human-like hands of the axolotls, and, in attempting to isolate the source of the deep connection he feels with them, he states: "Yo creo que era la cabeza de los axolotl, esa forma triangular rosada con los ojillos de oro. Eso miraba y sabía. Eso reclamaba. No eran *animales*" (CC1 383). The narrator is also convinced that the axolotls have a highly developed consciousness, equal, if not superior, to that of any human:

Empecé viendo en los axolotl una metamorphosis que no conseguía anular una misteriosa humanidad. Los imaginé conscientes, esclavos de su cuerpo, infinitamente condenados a un silencio abisal, a una reflexion desesperada. (CC1 383)

Sartre restricts the being-for-itself to humans on the basis that they have the most complex consciousness of all creatures. For him, man does not typically experience the third ekstasis in the presence of an animal. However, the central condition of being-for-others is that the Other is possessed of a consciousness comparable to man's. It is evident that Cortázar has taken pains to demonstrate that the creatures of his text fulfil this requirement. We must also remember that, since Sartre's philosophy was constructed by reference to the world in which we live, its application to Cortázar's often uncanny fiction calls for a certain amount of flexibility. Moreover, as we shall see presently, Cortázar's emphasis on the human qualities of the axolotls sets the scene for the narrator to experience a state of being which is thoroughly analogous to Sartre's being-for-others.

From the moment that the narrator encounters the axolotls, his entire universe becomes directed towards them. He says of his first visit to the aquarium, "Me quedé una hora mirándolos y salí, *incapaz de otra cosa*" (emphasis added, CC1 381). His former life is abandoned. He visits the aquarium daily, sometimes twice, and spends hours watching the axolotls. When he is not in their presence, he imagines that they are with him: "Lejos del acuario no hacía más que pensar en ellos, era como si me influyeran a distancia" (CC1 383). Like the arrival of the Other in Sartre's park, the narrator's encounter with the axolotls marks the disintegration of his world. Confronted by what he considers an omnipotent consciousness, all meaning flows towards the axolotls. As the narrator becomes increasingly obsessed by the mystery of these creatures, his own consciousness appears to sacrifice itself to theirs. It is as though the Self is being diluted by the presence of the Other. Ultimately, the narrator is consumed by the axolotls; he speaks of "un canibalismo" (CC1 383). The narrator's dramatic transformation, announced in the opening lines of "Axolotl," can be considered a hyperbolic representation of the culmination of Sartre's being-for-others:

[No] hubo nada de extraño en lo que ocurrió. Mi cara estaba pegada al vidrio del acuario, mis ojos trataban una vez más de penetrar el misterio de esos ojos sin iris y sin pupila. Veía muy de cerca la cara de un axolotl inmóvil junto al vidrio. Sin transición, sin sorpresa, vi mi

cara contra el vidrio, en vez del axolotl vi mi cara contra el vidrio, la vi fuera del acuario, la vi del otro lado del vidrio. Entonces mi cara se apartó y yo comprendí. (CC1 384)

It is pertinent to our application of Sartre's model, that Cortázar here emphasises both the consciousness and the gaze of the Other. Having endured the decentralisation of his universe and the flowing of all meaning towards the Other, the narrator gives himself utterly to the axolotls. Unable to assuage his ontological angst by any other means, Cortázar's protagonist becomes an axolotl. He projects his consciousness into the body of the Other, and, in so doing, recovers the centralisation of the Self.

"Ómnibus" follows a woman named Clara as she undertakes a double journey. The bus ride suggested by the story's title is merely the agent by which she crosses from one mode of being to another. "Ómnibus," in fact, traces Clara's entry into being-for-others. Here, as in "Axolotl" and "Final del juego," an encounter with the Other precipitates a distortion of the protagonist's universe. While on the bus, Clara becomes aware that all of the other passengers are staring at her, and that she is the only one who is not holding a bunch of flowers. Arbitrary though this detail may be, it becomes the defining factor in the subsequent struggle between the Self and the Other. The meaning of the flowers flows towards the Other, and, although Clara is ignorant of their significance, she intuits that, in the world of the Other, her empty hands constitute a transgression.

Clara's attendant sense of isolation, exacerbated by the persistent gaze of the other passengers, reveals the decentralisation of her world. She experiences the fear which Sartre describes as the necessary result of this dislocation, "le venían ganas de bajarse (pero esa calle, a esa altura, y total por nada, por no tener un ramo)" (CC1 128). Although Cortázar's protagonist attempts to dismiss her fear as irrational, it is telling that she recognises the crucial role played by the bouquets. Later in the text, a young man boards the bus. Like Clara, he is not carrying a bunch of flowers. As the others turn their visual attention towards him and he begins to feel perturbed, Clara sympathises, "«Y el pobre con las manos vacías», pensó absurdamente" (CC1 129). At this point in the text, although the meaning imposed on the world by

the Other is gaining ground, the protagonist is struggling to maintain some element of her own perspective. However, towards the end of "Ómnibus," the reader encounters the following exchange between Clara and the young man:

-Tengo miedo –dijo, sencillamente-. Si por lo menos me hubiera puesto unas violetas en la blusa.

Él la miró, miró la blusa lisa.

-A mí a veces me gusta llevar un jazmín del país en la solapa –dijo-. Hoy salí apurado y ni me fijé. (CC1 131)

It is as though Cortázar's protagonist and the young man have accepted the bizarre distortion of the universe wrought by their clash with the Other on the bus. The final scene, in which these two characters go their separate ways, each carrying a bunch of flowers purchased by the young man, would seem to support this reading. It is plain that the new synthesis, which according to Sartrean theory results from the appearance of the Other, is complete.

From the foregoing preliminary analyses, it will have become clear that the gaze plays a central role in the encounter between Cortázar's protagonists and the Other. Sartre declares that 'the look' of the Other must form the basis of any theory concerning relations between beings-for-themselves (*BN* 257). In other words, 'the look' is the cornerstone of being-for-others. Sartre demonstrates how the Other is revealed through 'the look' with his, now famous, example of a man staring through, and listening at, a keyhole (*BN* 259-261). According to Sartre, a being-for-itself engaged in such an activity is on the level of a non-thetic self-consciousness.<sup>25</sup> The man looking through the keyhole is only indirectly aware of himself as performing this action. Rather, his consciousness is entirely focused on the action itself:

---

<sup>25</sup> For Sartre, the non-thetic consciousness is the true Self. It is pre-personal and indistinguishable from the Self-knowing-this-object, i.e. whilst being directly aware of an object, we are indirectly aware of a Self. Sartre also calls this translucent awareness the pre-reflective cogito and unreflective/non-positional self-consciousness.

"My consciousness ... *is* my acts; and my acts are commanded only by the ends to be attained and by the instruments to be employed" (BN 259). This state is shattered the moment the man hears footsteps behind him in the hallway. The man at the keyhole immediately apprehends the Other's look, he is aware of being seen:

[M]y apprehension of the Other in the world as *probably being* a man refers to my permanent possibility of being-seen-by-him, that is, to the permanent possibility that a subject who sees me may be substituted for the object seen by me. "Being-seen-by-the-Other" is the *truth* of "seeing-the-Other". (BN 257)

This awareness that I am seen is, simultaneously, the acknowledgement of my vulnerability. Sartre's dimension of 'the unrevealed' is the various responses, such as shame and fear, to my recognition of the Self-as-object-for-the-Other. However, Sartre cautions that we are still dealing with the pre-reflective cogito here; this awareness of the Self is not a product of reflection. The being-for-itself responds to 'the look' of the Other with the automatic recognition of the Self as an object in the world. Sartre maintains that this is not knowledge; it is the form of being which he calls being-for-others.

It is now time to examine the function of 'the look' in a number of Cortázar's texts. There is a discernible pattern in some of his early stories whereby, subsequent to experiencing 'being-seen,' the central character enters a state comparable to Sartre's being-for-others. In tales such as "Ómnibus," "Axolotl," and "Final del juego," the gaze of the Other patently forces the protagonists to acknowledge their object-state. In "Axolotl," Cortázar frames the narrator's transformation in terms of seeing and being seen. Firstly, the story unfolds in the aquarium of the *Jardin des Plantes*, a building whose very *raison d'être* is observation. At the beginning of the text, the narrator fulfils his role as spectator, watching the various creatures of the aquarium across the glass which separates the observer from the observed. However, Cortázar indicates that the axolotls differ from the other animals in that they return the gaze of the visitors: "Me apoyaba en la barra de hierro

que bordea los acuarios y me ponía a mirarlos ... Había nueve ejemplares, y la mayoría apoyaba la cabeza contra el cristal, mirando con sus ojos de oro a los que se acercaban" (CC1 381). Under the penetrating gaze of the axolotls, the narrator experiences Sartre's dimension of 'the unrevealed' and enters the third ekstasis of the being-for-itself. In the latter half of Cortázar's story, the spectator and the observed appear to occupy the wrong sides of the glass partition. It is as though the very foundation of the aquarium, the hegemonic gaze, has become inverted.

The narrator's apprehension of the Other's look, and subsequent recognition of his object-state, is signalled by his intensifying obsession with the eyes of the axolotls:<sup>26</sup>

Sus ojos, sobre todo, me obsesionaban. Al lado de ellos, en los restantes acuarios, diversos peces me mostraban la simple estupidez de sus hermosos ojos semejantes a los nuestros. Los ojos de los axolotl me decían de la presencia de una vida diferente, de otra manera de mirar. Pegando mi cara al vidrio (a veces el guardián tosía, inquieto) buscaba ver mejor los diminutos puntos áureos, esa entrada al mundo infinitamente lento y remoto de las criaturas rosadas. Era inútil golpear con el dedo en el cristal, delante de sus caras; jamás se advertía la menor reacción. Los ojos de oro seguían ardiendo con su dulce, terrible luz; seguían mirándome desde una profundidad insondable que me daba vértigo. (CC1 382-83)

The sense of vertigo, of instability, which the narrator experiences when being watched by the axolotls, is a typical symptom of being-for-others. Sartre maintains that, in the third ekstasis, the being-for-itself is indeterminate by virtue of the fact that it is dependent on the Other's freedom. He describes my being-for-the-Other as "a shadow which is projected on a moving and unpredictable material such that no table of reference can be produced for calculating the distortions resulting from these movements" (BN 262).

---

<sup>26</sup> In an interview with Omar Prego, Cortázar describes how "Axolotl" was inspired by a strange experience he had in the *Jardin des Plantes*. Notably, as with the narrator in his text, Cortázar's fear of the axolotls in real life focused on their eyes: "Vos sentís que no hay comunicación, pero al mismo tiempo es como si te estuvieran suplicando algo. Si te miran es que te ven, y si te ven, qué es lo que ven" (emphasis added, Prego 59).



Transcended in this way by the freedom of the Other, the object of the gaze feels trapped and frightened. In "Axolotl," the narrator's rejection of his previous life and his compulsion to visit the aquarium several times per day certainly implies a mysterious enslavement. Of course, the conclusion of the story sees the narrator definitively trapped in the body of an axolotl, alienated from his possibilities as a human subject.

Cortázar eloquently portrays the crippling fear which the gaze of the axolotls inspires in his protagonist:

Les temía. Creo que de no haber sentido la proximidad de otros visitantes y del guardián, no me hubiese atrevido a quedarme solo con ellos. «Usted se los come con los ojos», me decía riendo el guardián, que debía suponerme un poco desequilibrado. No se daba cuenta de que eran ellos los que me devoraban lentamente por los ojos, en un canibalismo de oro. (CC1 383)

Sartrean theory states that man experiences fear on entering the state of being-for-others. Fear is the apprehension of one's vulnerability before the Other, it is the recognition that the freedom of the Other is a potential source of danger to the Self. In "Axolotl," the narrator's fear is ultimately realised. In the section of text quoted above, Cortázar's narrator establishes a direct link between the eyes of the axolotls and his own destruction. In Sartre's concept of being-for-others, 'the look' of the Other gives rise to the disintegration of the Self. Of particular note here is the narrator's reference to being devoured. Under the gaze of the Other, the being-for-itself suffers a form of ontological cannibalism in which its subjectivity is consumed by a sudden awareness of its object-state.

Another indication that Cortázar's narrator enters being-for-others is the shame which he experiences. On noting that the axolotls gaze at those who approach their enclosure, the narrator reacts thus: "Turbado, casi avergonzado, sentí como una impudicia asomarme a esas figuras silenciosas e inmóviles" (CC1 381-82). In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre identifies shame as one of the first responses to the apprehension of 'the look' of the Other. Shame is the realisation that the Self exists as an object for the Other:

Pure shame is not a feeling of being this or that guilty object but in general of being *an* object; that is, of *recognising myself* in this degraded, fixed, and dependent being which I am for the Other. (BN 288)

The narrator of "Axolotl" feels as though the gaze of these mysterious creatures penetrates his very being. As their golden eyes fix on him with ever greater intensity, he experiences a sense of unworthiness in their presence: "Los axolotl eran como testigos de algo, y a veces como horribles jueces. Me sentía innoble frente a ellos; había una pureza tan espantosa en esos ojos transparentes" (CC1 383). This is a sign of the narrator's deference to the freedom of the Other, and an acknowledgement of his object-state. He is, in Sartre's words, a transcendence-transcended. It is also interesting that, in the above quotation from Cortázar's story, the protagonist compares the axolotls to 'witnesses' and 'judges'. This alliance between the gaze and judgement echoes Sartre's description of shame. *Being and Nothingness* argues that 'the look' of the Other is a judgement. Becoming aware of this, the being-for-itself likewise directs its critical faculty inwards. In so doing, it recognises the object that it is for-the-Other, and consequently experiences shame:

I am ashamed of myself as I *appear* to the Other. By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself as on an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other. (BN 222)

As demonstrated above, the concept of judgement as a function of the Other's look is a central theme in "Final del juego." Under the gaze of Ariel, the three young protagonists experience Sartre's dimension of 'the unrevealed.' They acknowledge their object-state and the concomitant evaluation of their bodies, which, as we have seen, focuses on questions of female desirability and physical normality. This experience prompts the definitive termination of their game, and propels them into adulthood. In this way, "Final del juego" traces the journey of the three girls into the third ekstasis of the being-for-itself. Adulthood, in Cortázar's text, is symbolic of

being-for-others. The entry into both states of being signifies an irrevocable loss. Sartre declares:

He who has once been for-others is contaminated in his being for the rest of his days even if the other should be entirely suppressed; he will never cease to apprehend his dimension of being-for-others as a permanent possibility of his being. (*BN* 412)

For the young girls of Cortázar's story, the easy sovereignty of childhood is replaced by the acute awareness of others that pervades adult life. Cortázar underlines this transition with reference to the gaze. At the beginning of the text, the narrator tellingly refers to the space where the girls play as their kingdom. She also describes the rituals which herald the game, and the reverent contemplation of their kingdom is a prominent aspect of these ceremonies.

Whilst the gaze of the girls is highlighted on more than one occasion at this point in the story, the following example is perhaps the most revealing: "Entonces corríamos buscando impulso para trepar de un envión al breve talud del ferrocarril, y encaramadas sobre el mundo contemplábamos silenciosas nuestro reino" (*CC1* 394). The elevated position of these characters as they survey the area around the railway tracks bespeaks a certain sense of ownership, of supremacy. They are archetypes of Sartre's being-for-itself; ordering the world from their own viewpoint, as yet, unchallenged by the Other. It seems reasonable to suppose that Cortázar opens "Final del juego" with this portrayal of his protagonists' gaze in order to underline their subsequent transformation. Here, as in "Axolotl," the observer promptly becomes the observed. It is noteworthy that as "Final del juego" unfolds, Cortázar's protagonists become increasingly obsessed with Ariel's eyes. The narrator comments that following his visit, "no hicimos más que pensar en sus ojos grises" (*CC1* 400).

Clearly, this transition is anticipated by the nature and location of the game which the girls play. Following his initial depiction of the girls, Cortázar is careful to trace a gradual movement towards their becoming objects of the

gaze. Firstly, he stresses the exposed position of their play area; it is overlooked by both their house and that of the neighbours (CC1 394 & 400-01). Whilst the narrator states that they cannot linger too long at the tracks in case someone is watching from the houses above, she also describes the possibility of being seen as exciting and “la satisfacción más profunda” (CC1 395). This indication that the young girls court the gaze of the Other is confirmed by the narrator’s account of the purpose of their game:

Por supuesto que las actitudes y las estatuas no eran para nosotras mismas, porque nos hubiéramos cansado en seguida. El juego marcaba que la elegida debía colocarse al pie del talud, saliendo de la sombra de los sauces, y esperar el tren de las dos y ocho que venía del Tigre. A esa altura de Palermo los trenes pasan bastante rápido, y no nos daba vergüenza hacer la estatua o la actitud. Casi no veíamos a la gente de las ventanillas, pero con el tiempo llegamos a tener práctica y sabíamos que algunos pasajeros esperaban vernos ... En realidad la estatua o la actitud no veía nada, por el esfuerzo de mantenerse inmóvil, pero las otras dos bajo los sauces analizaban con gran detalle el buen éxito o la indiferencia producidos. (CC1 395-96)

In seeking the gaze of the Other, the protagonists of “Final del juego” embrace their object-state. By making their bodies into aesthetic figures in the centre of a natural amphitheatre, the girls explicitly invite their audience to critique their efforts. Of particular note here is the relish with which Cortázar’s protagonists read the responses of the train passengers. This is reminiscent of Sartre’s concept of pride as one of the fundamental reactions to ‘the look’ of the Other:

In vanity I attempt in my capacity as object to act upon the Other. I take this beauty or this strength or this intelligence which he confers on me – in so far as he constitutes me as an object – and I attempt to make use of it in a return shock so as to effect him passively with a feeling of admiration or love. But at the same time I demand that this feeling as the sanction of my being-as-object should be entertained by the Other in his capacity as subject i.e. as a freedom. (BN 290-91)

This ontological contradiction is at the basis of the entire narrative structure of "Final del juego." Exploiting their object-state, but unwilling to accept its full ramifications, the girls attempt to elicit feelings of admiration from the Other. Yet, their careful analysis of the reactions to the statues shows that they acknowledge the autonomy of the Other, and even desire a form of approbation which is freely bestowed.

Ariel's gaze brings this inherent contradiction of the game to the forefront of Cortázar's text. His look differs from that of the others. By proclaiming Leticia's beauty, Ariel overlooks the statues which the girls create, and instead focuses his gaze directly on their bodies. Whilst for the other passengers, the statues are cause for approval or rejection, for Ariel, it is the girls who are the objects of his visual appraisal. Cortázar's protagonists are unprepared for this response; they were offering up figures, not themselves, as objects-for-the-Other. Consequently, with Ariel's arrival, the girls truly enter the dimension of 'the unrevealed' and experience being-for-others. In pride, all three seek to attract Ariel. However, they recognise his sovereignty, and desire that his admiration for them be freely given. This accounts for the frustration which the narrator and Holanda suffer. It will be recalled that the narrator instinctively surrenders her turn in the game to Leticia. As an object of the gaze, the narrator cannot condition the Other's response toward her, neither positively or negatively. It is ironic that, later in the text, Leticia comes to face the same impasse. Whereas her physical appearance initially finds favour with Ariel, Leticia fears how he will react on discovering her paralysis. Critically, Leticia realises that she is powerless to influence his opinion. Indeed, she will never even fully comprehend his judgement of her. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre emphasises that the Other's look as an appraisal inspires the object with a sense of enslavement:

I am a slave to the degree that my being is dependent at the centre of a freedom which is not mine and which is the very condition of my being. In so far as I am the object of values which come to qualify me without my being able to act on this qualification or even to know it, I am enslaved. (BN 267)

In this way, Ariel's gaze leaves Leticia feeling trapped. Leticia chooses to spend the day before Ariel's visit in the solitary confinement of her bedroom. Moreover, when the narrator enters the room in an attempt to convince her to meet Ariel, she finds Leticia wistfully watching a trapped bee: "Se veía que estaba mal, pero se puso a reír y me contó de una abeja que no encontraba la salida" (CC1 399).

Naturally, the body is a central component in Sartre's concept of being-for-others and his account of the function of the gaze therein. Sartrean theory describes the body as the 'facticity' of the For-itself; it is the external aspect of the Self which forges a connection with the world and with its own past (BN 352). 'The look' of the Other, directed towards the body, causes the For-itself to enter the third ekstasis. This structure is at the heart of Cortázar's "Final del juego." According to Sartre, in being-for-others "I exist for myself as a body known by the Other" (BN 351). He calls this the third ontological dimension of the body;<sup>27</sup> it is experienced by the For-itself as a form of possession and alienation. Sartre states that:

If we start with the first revelation of the Other as a *look*, we must recognise that we experience our inapprehensible being-for-others in the form of a *possession*. I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculpts it, produces it as it *is*, sees it as I shall never see it. (BN 364)

The object of the gaze is alienated from its own body; it recognises that it can never grasp what it is for-the-Other. Yet, the For-itself remains conscious of its body-as-object (Sartre describes this as the aspect of 'being-there') and, consequently, feels a sense of frustrated responsibility towards it (BN 351). This confusion is at the centre of Leticia's dilemma in "Final del juego." Given her physical problems, she is stunned to discover Ariel's attraction towards her; his apparent admiration is at odds with Leticia's own concept of her body.

---

<sup>27</sup> In the first ontological dimension of the body, "I exist my body." In the second ontological dimension of the body, "my body is utilised and known by the Other." What differentiates the third ontological dimension of the body is my *awareness* of my body as known by the Other; 'the look' of the Other as directed at my body is the revelation of my being-as-object (BN 351).

Sartre argues that the object of the gaze experiences this alienation of the body through affective structures such as shyness (*BN* 353). In this regard, the first statue which Leticia chooses to present, subsequent to Ariel's declaration of admiration, is extremely significant:

[E]lla inventó una especie de princesa china, con aire vergonzoso, mirando al suelo y juntando las manos como hacen las princesas chinas ... vi que Ariel no tenía ojos más que para Leticia. La siguió mirando hasta que el tren se perdió en la curva. (*CC1* 398)

This image definitively represents Leticia as an object. The active nature of Ariel's gaze, coupled with the downcast position of Leticia's eyes, bespeak a relationship of dominance and subjection. It is noteworthy that, during his visit, Ariel comments that the oriental statue was his favourite, and directs his gaze towards the white door of the house as though willing Leticia to appear.

As mentioned above, Sartre identifies shame as one of the primary characteristics of being-for-others. On being seen by the Other, the being-for-itself experiences shame by way of the pre-reflective cogito. Sartre argues that shame is the recognition, on behalf of the object of the gaze, that there is truth in the way it appears to the Other. "Shame is by nature recognition. I recognise that I *am* as the Other sees me" (*BN* 222). In Cortázar's text, Leticia certainly experiences shame as the object of Ariel's fixed gaze. As demonstrated above, the statues which she chooses to present to Ariel are symbolic of shame. However, Leticia's sense of shame as a being-for-others is most pronounced in her refusal to meet Ariel in person. She recognises that the figures which Ariel so admires are a truthful representation of her being. Whilst her statues showcase Leticia's beauty, the rigidity which makes them so graceful is, at once, the revelation and the concealment of her paralysis: "La parálisis no se notaba estando quieta, y ella era capaz de gestos de una enorme nobleza" (*CC1* 396). The essence of this bittersweet paradox can be seen in the final and most accomplished figure which she creates for Ariel:

Levantó los brazos como si en vez de una estatua fuera a hacer una actitud, y con las manos señaló el cielo mientras echaba la cabeza hacia atrás (que era lo único que podía hacer, pobre) y doblaba el cuerpo hasta darnos miedo. Nos pareció maravillosa, la estatua más regia que había hecho nunca, y entonces vimos a Ariel que la miraba, salido de la ventanilla la miraba solamente a ella, girando la cabeza y mirándola sin vernos a nosotras hasta que el tren se lo llevó de golpe. (CC1 401)

Here, Leticia reveals her physical condition to her admirer by exploiting it to fashion an exquisite statue. In this closing scene of "Final del juego," Cortázar again underlines Leticia's role as object of the gaze, and Ariel as 'the look' which provokes being-for-others. Not only does Leticia create an aesthetic object for Ariel's visual consumption, but she does so "con los ojos cerrados" (CC1 401). This contrasts sharply with the assured gaze exhibited by the young girls at the beginning of the text. With these words, Cortázar signals the completion of the transformation at the centre of "Final del juego": the immutable entry into the state of being-for-others which is the adult world. The following day marks the end of the game. When the narrator and Holanda realise that Ariel is no longer sitting at the window of the train, they imagine him "viajando del otro lado del coche, quieto en su asiento, *mirando* hacia el río *con sus ojos grises*" (emphasis added, CC1 401). It is not a matter of simple accident that "Final del juego" closes with these words.

In a manner which echoes the narrative structure of "Axolotl" and "Final del juego," Cortázar underlines Clara's transformation in "Ómnibus" by contrasting the nature of her gaze before and after her experience on the bus. The text opens by emphasising the dominant nature of the protagonist's gaze. Whilst preparing to leave the house, Clara "recorría la habitación con una mirada precisa" (CC1 126). In this opening paragraph, Clara is represented as a subject, as a freedom that fixes all objects around herself as the central axis. Although three other people are mentioned in this paragraph, it should be noted that they are included simply as elements of Clara's checklist. Moreover, they are classified according to what Sartre would call their function; there is an invalid, a child, and a servant.



Sartre argues that it is possible to build my subjectivity upon the collapse of the Other's, and the subjectivity of the Other can be thwarted by treating him/her as an object in the world with a particular function. Sartre calls this attitude "indifference toward others," and he describes it as a type of "determined blindness."<sup>28</sup> In this way, Clara maintains señora Roberta, the young girl, and the maid, in their object-state, and thereby prevents them from impinging on her freedom. At this point in the story, Cortázar's protagonist has not yet entered the third ekstasis of the For-itself. However, Clara's movement towards being-for-others is foreshadowed by her encounter with Don Luis at the bus stop: "Pasó don Luis, el relojero, y la saludó apreciativo, como si alabara su figura prolija, los zapatos que la hacían más esbelta, su cuellito blanco sobre la blusa crema" (CC1 126). Here, the use of the verb 'saludar' and the conjunction 'como si' cloak the watchmaker's gaze, yet the emphasis on Clara's body bespeaks a certain objectivisation.<sup>29</sup> Moments later, Clara boards the bus where she definitively experiences her being as an object-for-the-Other.

From the moment that Clara becomes aware of 'the look' of the Other, there is a transformation in the way she looks at the world, and at herself. Under the double gaze of the ticket inspector and the driver, she responds thus: "«Par de estúpidos», pensó Clara entre halagada y nerviosa" (CC1 127). Cortázar could not have rendered more concisely the confusion which the For-itself experiences on becoming an object-for-the-Other. Clara feels momentarily flattered because she assumes that this gaze is gender specific; it suggests continuity with her earlier experience at the bus stop. This response essentially involves the recognition of herself as an object; it is the pride identified by Sartre as the initial acceptance of being-for-others:

---

<sup>28</sup> Sartre identifies indifference as one of the basic responses in our concrete relations with others; it falls under the second attitude towards others in which we attempt to make an object of the Other (BN 380).

<sup>29</sup> Clearly, the central element in this episode is the contrasting gender of the two participants; Don Luis is the archetypal male gaze directed at the female body. As stated in footnote 24 above, gender plays an important role in Cortázar's representation of the gaze as instrument of power in ontological relations. At a later stage of the current chapter, I explore this theme further with the application of Sartre's concept of desire to the role of the gaze in "Las caras de la medalla." Unfortunately, a thorough examination of this extensive theme is outside the remit of the current thesis, but it suggests fruitful avenues for future research.

In pride I recognise the Other as the subject through whom my being gets its object-state, but I recognise as well that I myself am also responsible for my object-ness ... In one sense therefore pride is at first resignation; in order to be proud of *being that*, I must of necessity first resign myself to *being only that*. (BN 290)

Likewise, the anger and disquiet which Clara exhibits whilst under the gaze are characteristic elements of being-for-others. Sartre argues that 'the look' inspires fear in the being-for-itself because the recognition of the Other-as-subject necessarily implies the recognition of the Self-as-object; this is an acknowledgement of one's vulnerability. Clara is uneasy because her object-state has been revealed through the gaze of the driver and the ticket inspector; as an object, she is at the mercy of the unpredictable aims of the Other. Sartre refers to this epiphany as "the origin of all fear" (BN 288).

The irritation demonstrated by Clara's mental response to the Other's gaze is also a symptom of her being-for-others. Clara's acceptance of her object-state is accompanied by the impression of being trapped; she uses anger as an outlet for this sense of subjection. Sartre describes this aspect of being-for-others in terms of slavery (BN 267). He argues that being-for-others is a form of enslavement because it is utterly dependent on the freedom of the Other. I am alienated from the being that I am for the Other because it is a construct based on judgements, and projected towards a future, both of which are incomprehensible to me:

To be looked at is to apprehend oneself as the unknown object of unknowable appraisals – in particular, of value judgments ... A judgment is the transcendental act of a free being. Thus being-seen constitutes me as a defenceless being for a freedom which is not my freedom. It is in this sense that we can consider ourselves as "slaves" in so far as we appear to the Other. (BN 267)

This surge in Clara, of two of the most salient symptoms of being-for-others, is by no means an isolated incident at the beginning of the text. On the contrary, as the gaze of the Other becomes more concentrated on the protagonist, her fear and sense of confinement escalate. Towards the end of

the story, the reader learns that “Clara quería llorar” (CC1 130). The terror experienced by Clara and the young man reaches such extremes that she adopts a semi-foetal position in her seat, and he clenches his trembling fists:

Clara sentía subírsele las rodillas hasta el pecho, y las manos de su compañero la desertaron bruscamente y se cubrieron de huesos salientes, de venas rígidas. Clara no había visto jamás el paso viril de la mano al puño, contempló esos objetos macizos con una humilde confianza casi perdida bajo el terror. (CC1 132)

The narrative of “Ómnibus” is imbued with palpable tension. Cortázar generates this atmosphere by punctuating an unremitting focus on the gaze of the Other with intense vignettes of the protagonist’s changing psychological state. As soon as Clara takes her seat on the bus,<sup>30</sup> a glut of eyes turns towards her. Within moments, she manifests signs of deep anxiety:

Súbitamente inquieta, dejó resbalar un poco el cuerpo, fijó los ojos en el estropeado respaldo delantero, examinando la palanca de la puerta de emergencia y su inscripción Para abrir la puerta TIRE LA MANIJA hacia adentro y levántese, considerando las letras una a una sin alcanzar a reunir las en palabras. Lograba así una zona de seguridad, una tregua donde pensar. (CC1 127)

The fact that Clara studies the emergency exit suggests the desire to escape. This indicates that her obvious fear is compounded by a feeling of being trapped. Later, Clara again exhibits the characteristic of being-for-others which Sartre calls enslavement, by her desire to get off the bus (CC1 128), and her request that the young man open the window (CC1 131). However, we can see from the section quoted above that Clara has already assumed the

---

<sup>30</sup> It is noteworthy that Clara, presumably unconsciously, has chosen to sit beside the emergency exit door.

state of being-for-others at this early point in the text. Here, she is losing her subjectivity and accepting her object-ness.<sup>31</sup>

Aware of her body as an object-for-the-Other, Clara attempts as far as possible to conceal it from view. Sartre states that this is a response to the alienation of the body which the For-itself experiences under the gaze of the Other. The only remedy is to attempt to suppress my body-for-the-Other, to make invisible this “inapprehensible dimension of the body-alienated” (BN 353). By hiding, Clara hopes to re-establish her freedom. However, if not actually under the gaze of the Other, the *possibility* of being seen still remains, and, as Sartre has pointed out, this is sufficient to bring about being-for-others (BN 257-58). Moreover, Clara’s inability to make sense of the instructions on the door, in effect, to think, signals the collapse of the Self-as-subject. It is also telling that Clara’s manner of looking has altered considerably since the beginning of the story. On the bus, Clara frequently directs her gaze away from the other passengers, studying the back of the chair in front, or looking out the window at the passing scenery. When Clara dares to turn her eyes towards the Other, she does so furtively. The reader is told: “observó *de reojo* a la señora” and “una y otra vez se atrevía a dirigir *una ojeada rápida* al interior del coche” (emphasis added, CC1 127). The protagonist’s gaze as described here contrasts starkly with the “mirada precisa” with which the text opened. It is my contention that this change underlines Clara’s transition in the third ekstasis of the being-for-itself.

Cortázar’s description of the moment when Clara first notices the accumulation of gazes directed towards her is a *tour de force*, at once unsettling and vaguely humorous. Since this paragraph is fruitful ground for analysis, it is worth quoting at some length:

Entonces la señora la miró a ella, por sobre el ramo se dio vuelta y la miró dulcemente como una vaca sobre un cerco, y Clara sacó el espejito y estuvo enseguida absorta en el estudio de sus labios y sus cejas. Sentía ya en la nuca una impresión desagradable; la sospecha de otra impertinencia le hizo darse vuelta con rapidez, enojada de

---

<sup>31</sup> Sartre uses this term throughout *Being and Nothingness* as a synonym for ‘object-state’.

veras. A dos centímetros de su cara estaban los ojos de un viejo de cuello duro, con un ramo de margaritas, componiendo un olor casi nauseabundo. En el fondo del ómnibus, instalados en el largo asiento verde, todos los pasajeros miraron hacia Clara, *parecían criticar alguna cosa en Clara que sostuvo sus miradas con un esfuerzo creciente*, sintiendo que cada vez era más difícil, no por la coincidencia de los ojos en ella ni por los ramos que llevaban los pasajeros; más bien porque había esperado un desenlace amable, una razón de risa como tener un tizne en la nariz (pero no lo tenía); y sobre su comienzo de risa se posaban helándola esas miradas atentas y continuas, como si los ramos la estuvieran mirando. (emphasis added, CC1 127)

Here, the reader gets a sense of the simultaneity of the various aspects of being-for-others. This paragraph introduces the two primary features of Sartre's theory which underlie Cortázar's entire text; the Other is revealed to Clara through 'the look,' and the role of the Other as an element of disintegration in her universe is announced by the emphasis on the bouquets. However, the section quoted above also demonstrates that Cortázar's depiction of the gaze shares a number of peculiarities with Sartre's concept of 'the look.' For example, Clara's sudden self-consciousness concerning her appearance is a reaction to the gaze of the Other.

Cortázar has isolated the instant when Clara recognises her body as an object-for-the-Other. In Sartre's words, this moment is "a revelation in emptiness of the existence of my body outside as an in-itself for the Other" (BN 352), and he labels it "the shock of the encounter with the Other" (BN 352). According to Sartre, the object of the gaze experiences a sense of corporal alienation. Whilst recognising its body as an object on which points of view are brought to bear, the being-for-itself necessarily accepts that these judgements are inaccessible to him/her. In light of Sartre's theory, the way in which Clara scrutinises her features is poignant in its futility. As the latter part of the above quotation shows, Clara is justified in reading the gaze of the Other as a type of judgement. Here, Cortázar again underlines the sense of vulnerability and attendant fear which Sartre identifies as primary elements of being-for-others. Furthermore, Clara's inability to sustain the gaze of the others supports Sartre's contention that in any encounter between beings-for-themselves, one party dominates the other.

It is also propitious for our application of Sartre's theory to Cortázar's text that Clara senses the gaze of the old man sitting behind her. Sartre prevails on the reader of *Being and Nothingness* to recognise that the apprehension of 'the look' is more complex than perceiving "the convergence of two ocular globes in my direction" (BN 257). Rather, it is the awareness of the possibility of being seen, and is often experienced as a sensation. Although seeing that someone is watching you can precipitate being-for-others, and, in Cortázar's fiction, this is the typical scenario, it is important to acknowledge the finer points of Sartre's theory. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre points out that since 'the look' is the probable fact of being seen, it can be signalled by footsteps or the movement of a curtain, the eye can be represented by a farmhouse on a hill<sup>32</sup> or the windows of a passing train.<sup>33</sup> Sartre claims that, in a given situation, once the For-itself has apprehended 'the look,' it will feel and act, it will *be*, in accordance with this knowledge. In other words, it will enter being-for-others. According to Sartre, this mode of being will persist even in the absence of the Other's gaze; we continue to relate differently to our environment because we are now aware of ourselves as visible (Catalano 163-164). In this respect, it is noteworthy that in "Ómnibus" Clara continues to feel the gaze of the Other even when she is no longer its object:

[T]odos los pasajeros estaban mirando al hombre y también a Clara, sólo que ya no la miraban directamente porque les interesaba más el recién llegado, pero era como si la incluyeran en su mirada, unieran a los dos en la misma observación. (CC1 128)

Similarly, the narrator of "Axolotl" becomes fixated on the possibility that the creatures of the *Jardin des Plantes* are always watching, even in the dark: "Acaso sus ojos veían en plena noche, y el día continuaba para ellos indefinidamente. Los ojos de los axolotl no tienen párpados" (CC1 383). In

---

<sup>32</sup> This is the example that Sartre uses in *Being and Nothingness* 258.

<sup>33</sup> As is the case in Cortázar's "Final del juego."

“Después del almuerzo,” the thoughts and actions of the narrator move exclusively within a space circumscribed by the potential attention of others.

The power of the gaze to exercise an enduring influence over its object has been substantiated by History, and by penal history in particular. The original French title of Michel Foucault’s definitive study of the development of discipline in Western society, *Surveiller et punir*,<sup>34</sup> announces the central role played by observation. Foucault himself chose the translation of the title, *Discipline and Punish*, on the basis that ‘surveiller’ does not have an exact equivalent in English (DP ix). Yet, Lisa Downing laments the loss of the contention, contained in the original title and fundamental to Foucault’s overall thesis, that power is intimately linked to seeing and being seen (80-81).

*Discipline and Punish* traces the development in European society of strategies for creating ‘docile bodies’, obedient citizens conditioned to be the regulators and enforcers of their own discipline. According to Foucault, the institutions of the nineteenth century created ‘docile bodies’ by means of the four following practices: Firstly, through what Foucault calls ‘the art of distributions’ (DP 141-149). This refers to the fact that institutions are predominantly heterogeneous places, closed off from the outside. Within, this space is subdivided, isolating the members of the community from one another. Categorisation by rank can further dissipate the possibility of forming a unified body. Secondly, through the control of activity, with timetables which promoted the exhaustive use of time (DP 149-156). Foucault demonstrates that an infinitesimal emphasis on the length of time taken to carry out an activity, on the most accurate and efficient use of the body, and on the correct way that the body should manipulate an object, aimed at the creation of a mechanical body. In this way, subjects would have neither the time nor the capacity to question, to dissent.

Foucault describes the third strategy as ‘the organisation of geneses’ (DP 156-162). This refers to the separation and strict temporal organisation of activities according to the category of subject. For example, the period of training should be distinct from the period of practice; the instruction of military recruits should be separate from the exercise of veterans. Each

---

<sup>34</sup> In this study, I reference the following English edition, Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. All direct quotations from this text will be followed by the abbreviation DP, and the page number, in parenthesis.

segment should be concluded with an examination. This will demonstrate that each subject undergoes the same treatment, but it will also allow the institution to judge whether the subject has reached the required level, and to differentiate the abilities of each individual. Finally, the institution aims at 'the composition of forces,' wherein the individual body becomes an element to be placed and articulated on others (*DP* 162-169). For example, the position of a soldier in a line of infantry is central to the function of the whole. The composition of forces relies on a shared time and a precise system of commands: "All the activity of the disciplined individual must be punctuated and sustained by injunctions whose efficacy rests on brevity and clarity; the order does not need to be explained or formulated; it must trigger off the required behaviour and that is enough" (*DP* 166).

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault identifies constant observation as one of the most powerful weapons, not only for the so-called correction of 'abnormal' individuals,<sup>35</sup> but for ensuring the compliance of society as a whole. Perhaps one of the most controversial, and ultimately influential, claims of Foucault's text was that the disciplinary model implemented in the prisons of the nineteenth century was common to a wide range of institutions, including schools, hospitals, and the military. Foucault posits that all of modern society is a disciplinary culture predicated on a meticulous and unrelenting system of observation. Perhaps the fictional counterpart of Foucault's modern society can be found in the terrifying construct of George Orwell's Oceania. In the world of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the inhabitants of Oceania are watched at all times through machines known as telescreens. The narrator explains the manner in which their power functions:

[S]o long as [Winston]<sup>36</sup> remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There

---

<sup>35</sup> Foucault uses the term 'abnormal' to refer to anyone who was considered as not conforming to the rules of society in general. In addition to criminals who broke the law, this category frequently referred to homosexuals or those labelled as insane. In the schools of the nineteenth century, 'abnormality' could be judged on something as basic as being left-handed. On this point, Downing refers the reader to Foucault's *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*. She argues that this makes an enlightening companion to *Discipline and Punish*, which Foucault was preparing at the time he gave these lectures.

<sup>36</sup> Winston is the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.



was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. *You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinised.* (emphasis added, 4-5)

In his characterisation of modern disciplinary society, written several decades after the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Foucault seems to echo Orwell's words:

The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see *induce effects of power*, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible. (emphasis added, *DP* 170-71)

The salient point in both instances is that surveillance allows discipline to become self-regulatory. An individual or population living under constant threat of observation, but without, at any given moment, being able to ascertain whether they are being watched, will automatically behave at all times as though they are the object of the gaze. Jeremy Bentham's architectural figure, the Panopticon,<sup>37</sup> is the classic model of this subtle yet effective form of control, and it is central to Foucault's account of the rise of disciplinary power.<sup>38</sup> The Panopticon prison is a circular building with cells arranged, on a number of levels, around its circumference. In the centre of the circle is a watchtower; the symbolic eye, analogous to Orwell's telescreens and Sartre's farmhouse on the hill. The position of the watchtower allows the supervisor to observe with ease any one, or indeed, as the name of Bentham's structure suggests, all of the prisoners. Thus, whilst the inmates are isolated from one another, they are in a state of permanent visibility for the guards:

---

<sup>37</sup> Bentham first published drawings of his Panopticon prison in 1791.

<sup>38</sup> An entire section of Foucault's study is entitled Panopticism (*DP* 195-228).

By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualised and constantly visible ... Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication. The arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. (DP 200)

Moreover, the watchtower is designed in such a way so as to prevent the prisoners from identifying the supervisor, or even ascertaining whether or not he is present. For this reason, Foucault describes the Panopticon as “a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad” (DP 202). Every aspect of Bentham’s concept is calculated to ensure that the prisoner is always an “object of information,” never a “subject in communication” (DP 200). The prisoner, aware of his utter objectivisation, and of himself as confronting an anonymous and impersonal power, becomes what Foucault calls “the principle of his own subjection” (DP 203). Foucault sums up the primary effect of the Panopticon thus:

[T]o induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (DP 201)

It is arguable that Foucault’s study of the role of the gaze in the exercise of power validates Sartre’s concept of the dimension of ‘the unrevealed’. *Being and Nothingness* demonstrates that ‘the look’ of the Other compels the being-for-itself to acknowledge its object-state. The sense of shame, vulnerability, fear, and enslavement, which accompany this

acknowledgement are the key elements in the successful operation of Bentham's Panopticon and Orwell's Oceania. Whereas Sartre examines this theme from a purely ontological perspective, and Foucault offers a historical study of its application in mechanisms of discipline, both conclude that the power of the gaze lies in its capacity to inspire the object to assume responsibility for its own control. As seen above with regard to Cortázar's stories, despite the withdrawal of the Other's gaze, the being-for-itself continues to behave as though inscribed in a state of permanent visibility. In "Axolotl" and "Ómnibus," Cortázar certainly represents the gaze as an instrument of control.

Foucault devotes a section of *Discipline and Punish* to a study of the gaze as a correlative of normalisation (170-194). He describes how a system of 'hierarchical observation' developed in schools, factories, and the army. The task of supervision was distributed across a number of levels, and focused on increasingly smaller units. Selected people were authorised to observe all those from their own rank downwards, and to report to those above. The multiple nature of this gaze allowed it to penetrate every aspect of the institution while, at the same time, safe-guarding power by preventing resentment from focusing on any single target. The result was a form of disciplinary power which was both all-pervading and discreet.

Foucault argues that 'hierarchical observation' permitted the implementation of a strict code of standardisation. Any infractions were swiftly detected and punished. Surveillance became the primary apparatus in modern society's drive towards homogeneity. It is my contention that the link which Foucault draws between observation and normalisation is pertinent to an analysis of "Ómnibus" and "Después del almuerzo." In the former story, the Other's gaze is represented as a judgement against Clara and the young man for an unidentified transgression. Cortázar's emphasis on the flowers suggests that Clara's empty hands violate the norm established by the other passengers, but the ambiguity of the source of tension on the bus is never definitively resolved. Yet, that there is an element of criticism in the gaze of the Other is never in question. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude

that, in leaving a question over the significance of the bouquets, Cortázar underlines the fundamental power of the gaze as a weapon of normalisation.

A comparable narrative strategy is at work in "Después del almuerzo." One afternoon, the young narrator's parents charge him with taking an obscure being into the centre of Buenos Aires for a walk. Throughout the text, the narrator's ward is referred to simply as him/it.<sup>39</sup> Cortázar does not offer the reader any physical description, and the unidentified creature does not speak. The narrative cultivates an even deeper air of mystery by couching the actions of the narrator's companion in consciously ambiguous terms. He/it seems to be governed by whims such as the refusal to walk, to cross the street, or to acknowledge others (CC1 378 & 380). There is also a vague reference by the narrator to "esa cosa horrible" (CC1 375), an earlier incident with the neighbour's cat. Whilst the narrator's family exhibit a certain obligatory attachment to their strange ward, it is accompanied by a distinct element of shame, particularly on behalf of the narrator. During their trip into town, he is in a constant state of vigilance, fearful that his unpredictable companion will draw the attention of the public through abnormal behaviour. Thus, he consistently attempts to normalise him/it.

Once more, Cortázar represents the gaze as an ideal instrument of normalisation. When he/it jumps through puddles, the neighbours stare, and the narrator registers their gaze as a judgement: "[Y] todo el tiempo sentía que los vecinos estaban mirando desde los jardines, sin decir nada pero mirando" (CC1 375). In the confined space of the tram, terrified that his eccentric companion will attract the gaze of the other passengers, the narrator tries to behave as inconspicuously as possible (CC1 376-77). He rejects the idea of bringing him/it into a cafe on the basis that, "la gente estaría sentada y tendría más tiempo para mirarnos" (CC1 378). Yet, the story never makes it clear to the reader why the visual attention of the public gravitates towards him/it; we remain ignorant of the cause of the narrator's shame. Cortázar has purposely cultivated these lacunae in order to focus attention on the basic normal/abnormal dyad which is the centre of the text. Here, as in "Ómnibus," Cortázar's refusal to dissipate ambiguity forces the

---

<sup>39</sup> Cortázar only ever refers to the narrator's companion using the pronouns 'lo,' 'le' and 'él.'

reader to recognise the principal theme of the story: the role of the gaze in the increasing standardisation of society.

This power of the Other's look to shape the Self is the core of being-for-others. Sartre's ontology maintains that, in the third ekstasis of the being-for-itself, being is utterly dependent on recognition from the Other. He underlines this primary characteristic of being-for-others in his lecture, "Existentialism and Humanism":<sup>40</sup>

Thus the man who discovers himself directly in the cogito also discovers all the others, and discovers them as the condition of his own existence. He recognises that he cannot be anything (in the sense in which one says one is spiritual, or that one is wicked or jealous) unless others recognise him as such. I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself, except through the mediation of another. The Other is indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself. Under these conditions, the intimate discovery of myself is at the same time the revelation of the Other as a freedom which confronts mine, and which cannot think or will without doing so either for or against me. Thus, at once, we find ourselves in a world which is, let us say, that of "intersubjectivity". It is in this world that man has to decide what he is and what others are. (Priest 39)

This concept that the Other is indispensable to the existence and nature of the Self, is the cornerstone of Sartre's play *Huis Clos*.<sup>41</sup> Garcin, Estelle, and Inez, are in hell; locked in a drawing room with one another, they await their torturers. As the play unfolds, the protagonists question one another about their lives and their crimes. Ultimately, the characters comprehend that they have each been specifically chosen to act as torturer to the other two. This epiphany leads Garcin to make the now famous statement: "Hell is ... other people!" (223).

---

<sup>40</sup> The original title of this lecture is "L'existentialisme est un humanisme," and it was first given by Sartre in Paris on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 1945. Here, I refer to the translation of the lecture, reproduced in its entirety (Priest 25-57).

<sup>41</sup> Sartre's 1944 play is variously translated into English as *No Exit* or *In Camera*. In the current chapter, I reference the 1990 English translation by Black and Gilbert. For a brief exploration of the play's main themes see Hutier's book.

Naturally, 'the look' plays a pivotal role in Sartre's fictional representation of the third ekstasis of the For-itself. On arriving in hell, Garcin notes that the valet who shows him to the room never blinks. This image is redolent of the narrator's observation in Cortázar's story that the axolotls have no eyelids. Garcin remarks that the light is on, and that there is no switch. He grasps that he too will inhabit a world of permanent visibility. Everyone in the room will forever see, and be seen; there will be no sleep, no night, no darkness. Notably, there are no mirrors or even reflective surfaces in Sartre's hell. In order to see themselves, Garcin, Inez, and Estelle, must look to each other. Consequently, all three characters represent a perfect model of being-for-others, as each looks to the Other for validation of the Self. The beautiful Estelle seeks the attention and admiration of Garcin's male gaze. Inez, a homosexual, needs Estelle to reciprocate her desire, and Garcin wants to be recognised as brave by someone he considers his equal, by Inez. But the needs of each character are consistently denied. Despite repeated attempts, the object of the gaze proves incapable of influencing the Other. Inez best expresses this frustrating essence of being-for-others as she taunts Garcin:

You're a coward, Garcin, because I wish it. I wish it – do you hear? – I wish it. And yet, just look at me, see how weak I am, a mere breath on the air, a gaze observing you, a formless thought that thinks you. [He walks towards her, opening his hands.] Ah, they're open now, those big hands, those coarse, man's hands! But what do you hope to do? You can't throttle thoughts with hands. So you've no choice, you must convince me, and you're at my mercy. (221)

In the same way, the narrator of "Después del almuerzo" and his uncanny ward are at the mercy of the Buenos Aires public. It is this sense of helplessness against the gaze of the Other that governs Cortázar's narrator, and provides the text with its tangible suspense.

Having expounded the theoretical terms of being-for-others, Sartre examines the working mechanisms of this state of being during our concrete relations with others (*BN* 361-430). Sartre declares that since my actual relations with others are wholly governed by the attitude which I adopt

towards my being-as-object, there are only two possible responses to being-for-others. One, I can attempt to assimilate the Other's freedom. Sartre calls this the first attitude towards others, and claims that it can be witnessed most clearly in love, language, and masochism. Two, I can attempt to make an object of the Other. Sartre includes desire, indifference, hate, and sadism, under this second attitude towards others. Whilst the protagonists of *Huis Clos* choose this latter path, Cortázar's characters, by and large, attempt to recover themselves by absorbing the Other. Sartre insists that my assimilation of the Other does not signify the obliteration of my object-state. On the contrary, it is necessary that my being-in-itself, that is, the object produced by the Other's gaze, remains intact. In fact, Sartre argues that the only way to assimilate the Other's freedom, is to appropriate some element of the Other's perception of me. He explains:

I want to assimilate the Other as the Other-looking-at-me, and this project of assimilation includes an augmented recognition of my being-looked-at. In short, in order to maintain before me the Other's freedom which is looking at me, I identify myself totally with my being-looked-at. And since my being-as-object is the only possible relation between me and the Other, it is this being-as-object which alone can serve me as an instrument to effect my assimilation of the *other freedom*. (BN 228-29)

At the denouement of "Axolotl," "Ómnibus," and "Final del juego," Cortázar's protagonists are revealed as having undeniably absorbed some element of the Other's freedom. Specifically, the object of the gaze has embraced the dimension of 'the unrevealed,' and appropriated the Other's perception of the Self-as-object. "Axolotl" provides the most striking example of this response to being-for-others. The narrator of Cortázar's text so utterly assimilates the freedom of the Other that he *becomes* an axolotl. Under the gaze of these mysterious creatures, the narrator's recognition of his object-state has reached an uncanny extreme. It is as though an ontological gulf has opened up in the narrator, splitting his mind from his body. The conclusion of Cortázar's story sees the narrator's consciousness operating from *inside* the axolotl enclosure, watching his human body on the other side of the glass

partition. The For-itself has come to view its own body as an In-itself, as an object in the world.

Similarly, the protagonists of "Final del juego" conform to Sartre's first attitude towards others. Whilst Leticia quietly revels in Ariel's avowal of her beauty, the narrator and Holanda resent his indifference towards their statues. Despite the apparent variance of these reactions, all three girls in fact respond to Ariel's gaze in the same way, by appropriating his perception of them. Leticia's refusal to meet Ariel further demonstrates that she has fully accepted her object-state. Before Ariel's arrival, Leticia and the rest of the household wilfully ignore her physical difficulties. Indeed, Leticia asserts herself as the leader of the game. However, in welcoming Ariel's attraction towards her, Leticia must recognise that the grace of her statues is symbolic of the paralysis of her body. In "Ómnibus," Clara and the young man also internalise the judgement imposed on them by the gaze of the other passengers. Although they do not comprehend the significance of the bouquets, they assimilate the sense of their transgression sufficiently enough to experience shame. However, it is the final scene of the text which provides definitive proof that Clara and the young man have assimilated the freedom of the Other; they purchase two bunches of flowers. The way in which Clara and the young man react to the state of being-for-others severs the initial bond between them; their acceptance of their object-state increases in proportion to their reluctance to look at one another. At the end of the story, they neither look at nor talk to one another; each goes their separate way, a perfect In-itself carrying a bunch of flowers.

In the third chapter of part three of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre uses his concept of the two primary responses to being-for-others in an analysis of concrete human interactions (BN 361-430). His practical application of the first attitude towards others focuses largely on love. According to Sartre, love is characterised by permanent conflict; it is, fundamentally, a struggle for the Other's freedom. Naturally, this conflict is conducted by means of 'the look.' In an upsurge of transcendence, the lover chooses the beloved as a privileged object in the world, as "the condition of all valorisation and the objective foundation of all values" (BN 369). The beloved



recognises its being-as-object for the lover, and desperately wants to appropriate this alienated being-in-itself. Sartre explains that by assimilating the freedom of the lover, which encompasses a perception of the beloved as privileged object, the beloved hopes to gain access to an absolute foundation of the Self:

For if in one sense my being-as-object is an unbearable contingency and the pure "possession" of myself by another, still in another sense this being stands as the indication of what I should be obliged to recover and found in order to be the foundation of myself. But this is conceivable only if I assimilate the Other's freedom. Thus my project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other. (BN 364)

Sartre emphasises that the success of this process of assimilation depends on the nature of the lover remaining intact. Yet, as soon as the beloved engages 'the look' in an attempt to appropriate the freedom of the Other, he thereby asserts his own subjectivity and necessarily transforms the lover into a being-as-object. Thus, the inevitable failure of the first attitude towards others leads to the adoption of the second.

In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre defines the second attitude towards others as the project of transcending the Other's transcendence. He considers sexual desire a primary example of this second type of response to being-for-others. However, the domination of the Other, which Sartre sees as operating through desire, assumes a particular and complex structure. Sartre rejects the notion that the aim of desire is to use the body of the Other as an object. He argues that, on the contrary, sexual desire is motivated by the urge to appropriate an "organic totality" (BN 385). According to Sartre, the Other as organic totality "reveals not only life but also an appropriate consciousness" (BN 386). It is important to recognise that Sartre does not equate this consciousness with the full consciousness of the For-itself. Rather, it is a property of the desired object, which exists on the ground of a world organised by the freedom of the desiring For-itself. Nevertheless, desire

hinges on the continued existence of this element of consciousness in the object of desire:

Consciousness ... remains always at the horizon of the desired body; it makes the meaning and the unity of the body. A living body is an organic totality in situation with consciousness at the horizon: such is the object to which desire is addressed. (BN 386)

Desire seeks to ensnare and control this free subjectivity by awakening the body of the Other. Sartre describes this project as the attempt to “incarnate” (BN 389) the Other’s body as pure flesh. “Desire is an attempt to strip the body of its movements as of its clothing and to make it exist as pure flesh; it is an attempt to *incarnate* the Other’s body” (BN 389). The Other must be made flesh, not only for the one who desires, but also for himself. In the specific terminology of *Being and Nothingness*, flesh is defined as “the fascinating revelation of facticity” (BN 389):<sup>42</sup>

Since I can grasp the Other only in his objective facticity the problem is to ensnare his freedom within this facticity ... So the Other’s For-itself must come to play on the surface of his body, and be extended all through his body; and by touching this body I should finally touch the Other’s free subjectivity. (BN 394)

This excerpt from Sartre’s discussion reveals that the desiring For-itself employs the caress in order to incarnate the Other. For Sartre, “the caress is not a simple stroking; *it is a shaping*” (BN 390); it causes the flesh of the Other to be born beneath the fingertips of the lover. One of the most striking passages of Cortázar’s novel, *Rayuela*,<sup>43</sup> seems to express this element

---

<sup>42</sup> It will be recalled that facticity is the necessary connection which the For-itself has with the In-itself, and, therefore, with the world and its own past.

<sup>43</sup> For the purposes of this study, I use the 2003 Cátedra edition of Cortázar’s novel, Ed. Andrés Amorós. Throughout this thesis, all quotations from *Rayuela* will be directly followed by the abbreviation *R*, the page number, and the chapter, in parenthesis.

of Sartre's theory of desire. Chapter seven of *Rayuela* describes a kiss between the protagonist, Oliveira, and his lover, la Maga:

Toco tu boca, con un dedo toco el borde de tu boca, voy dibujándola como si saliera de mi mano, como si por primera vez tu boca se entreabriera, y me basta cerrar los ojos para deshacerlo todo y recomenzar, hago nacer cada vez la boca que deseo, la boca que mi mano elige y te dibuja en la cara, una boca elegida entre todas, con soberana libertad elegida por mí para dibujarla con mi mano en tu cara. (*R* 160; ch. 7)

Yet, despite the apparent dominance of the one who caresses, Sartre demonstrates that the nature of the caress necessitates a weakening of the subjectivity of the desiring For-itself. He claims that the successful operation of the caress demands that the one who desires must also become flesh; this is the reason why the consciousness of the For-itself becomes clogged or troubled in desire (*BN* 388). Sartre concludes his analysis of desire by declaring that, like love, it is an exercise doomed to failure by its inherent contradictions. Firstly, Sartre points out that "desire is an invitation to desire" (*BN* 396). The lover yearns for proof that he has succeeded in exciting the object of desire, but such proof reveals the consciousness of the Other as free and capable of transforming the lover into a being-as-object.

Sartre identifies pleasure as the second reason why desire fails: "[P]leasure is the death and failure of desire. It is the death of desire because it is not only its fulfilment but its limit and its end" (*BN* 397). The desiring For-itself wants the Other to retain a level of consciousness sufficient to recognise the role of the lover in incarnating his/her flesh. However, Sartre maintains that "pleasure ... motivates the appearance of reflective consciousness which is 'attention to pleasure'" (*BN* 397). Therefore, if the lover causes the Other to feel pleasure, the lover is eclipsed in the consciousness of the Other by the need of that consciousness to focus on his/her own pleasure. Equally, desire will collapse if the consciousness of the desiring For-itself becomes clogged by pleasure. In the final part of his essay, "Sartre's Theory of Sexuality," J. M. Russell explains:

For since I must be flesh in order to incarnate the other's flesh, I am liable to have my consciousness turn away from the concern with the responsiveness I was aiming at eliciting from the other, to a consciousness of my own pleasure.

The foregoing summaries of the concepts of love and desire as expounded in *Being and Nothingness* are intended, respectively, as examples of Sartre's first and second attitudes towards others. According to Sartre, language and masochism, like love, are responses to being-for-others which aim at appropriating some element of the object that I am for the Other. As examples of the second attitude towards others, desire is joined by sadism, hate, and indifference; each aims at transcending the Other's transcendence. As the above discussion demonstrates, Sartre considered all concrete human relations to be a relentless conflict in which the aims of both parties are destined to remain unfulfilled by virtue of the very nature of being-for-others. Moreover, Sartre maintains that our attitudes towards others move in an infinite cycle:

Just as Love finds its failure within itself and just as Desire arises from the death of Love in order to collapse in turn and give way to Love, so all the patterns of conduct toward the Other-as-object include within themselves an implicit and veiled reference to the Other-as-subject, and this reference is their death. Upon the death of a particular conduct toward the Other-as-object arises a new attitude which aims at getting hold of the Other-as-subject, and this in turn reveals its instability and collapses to give way to the opposite conduct. Thus we are indefinitely referred from the Other-as-object to the Other-as-subject and vice versa. The movement is never arrested, and this movement with its abrupt reversals of direction constitutes our relation with the Other. (BN 408)

It is my contention that the relationships between a number of Cortázar's characters conform to Sartre's theory of concrete human relations as outlined in *Being and Nothingness*. The current study has chosen to focus on the alternating attitudes of love and desire, as these are the Sartrean concepts most in evidence in Cortázar's texts. Not only do the relationships between Cortázar's fictional lovers tend to be marred by discord, but such

conflict frequently centres on questions of perception of the Self and the Other, freedom, and objectivisation. Moreover, Cortázar consistently structures these relationships using the figure of 'the look,' which is so fundamental to Sartre's model of being-for-others. Consequently, the subsequent section of this chapter will draw on Sartre's theories of love and desire, as described above, to examine the dynamic between couples at the centre of two short stories by Julio Cortázar, "Orientación de los gatos" and "Las caras de la medalla."<sup>44</sup>

The plot of "Orientación de los gatos" appears to faithfully reflect Sartre's love paradigm. It explores, purely from the perspective of the narrator, the difficulties that he is experiencing in his relationship with his wife, Alana. The narrator of "Orientación de los gatos" thoroughly frames these issues in terms of looking. Here, I argue that both the nature of the problems between Alana and the narrator, and the role assigned to the gaze as the basic medium of this struggle, coincide with Sartre's description of love as the attempt to assimilate the Other's freedom. In the opening lines of Cortázar's text, the narrator explicitly identifies the gaze as fundamental in shaping relations between himself, Alana, and their cat, Osiris:

Cuando Alana y Osiris me miran no puedo quejarme del menor disimulo, de la menor duplicidad. Me miran de frente ... También entre ellos se miran así ... mujer y gato conociéndose desde planos que se me escapan. (CC2 329)

The narrator interprets the steady visual exchange between Alana and Osiris as indicative of a relationship wherein the balance of power is equal. Yet, when they direct their gaze at him, the narrator clearly experiences his being as alienated. He refers to a feeling of distance "que ella no parece sentir pero que se interpone en mi felicidad cuando Alana me mira, cuando me mira de frente igual que Osiris" (CC2 329). Here, the narrator's response to the direct

---

<sup>44</sup> Both of these texts are included in the second volume of Cortázar's collected short stories; see CC2 329-31 and 195-205 respectively. "Las caras de la medalla" was originally published in *Alguien que anda por ahí* (1977), and "Orientación de los gatos" first appeared in *Queremos tanto a Glenda* (1981).

way in which Alana and Osiris look at him thoroughly echoes Sartre's account of being-for-others. Specifically, under the strong gaze of his wife, the narrator of "Orientación de los gatos" senses the loss of his freedom, and acknowledges his being-as-object. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre maintains that the third ekstasis of the For-itself is characterised by a sense of responsibility towards the object that I am for the Other. In love, according to Sartre, the beloved strives to assimilate the lover-as-transcendence, because therein lies his/her alienated In-itself. Theoretically, if the beloved were to appropriate the being-as-object that it is for the lover, he/she would have access to the foundation of a total Self. Sartre explains:

Thus to the extent that I am revealed to myself as responsible for my being, I *lay claim* to this being which I am; that is, I wish to recover it, or, more exactly, I am the project of the recovery of my being. I want to stretch out my hand and grab hold of this being which is presented to me as *my being* but at a distance. (BN 364)

"Orientación de los gatos" is a fictional account of the ontological struggle to recover the alienated being-in-itself that the lover's gaze makes of the beloved. The text traces the narrator's attempts to assimilate Alana's free subjectivity, and, thereby, to discover his being-as-object. Initially, Cortázar's narrator supposes that music may constitute a gateway to his wife's transcendence: "Hubo un tiempo en que la música me pareció el camino que me llevaría de verdad a Alana; ... la música la desnudaba de una manera diferente" (CC2 329). However, the narrator of "Orientación de los gatos" abandons music in favour of the greater depth of access to Alana's freedom which her contemplation of visual art seems to provide. Recognising that the subjectivity of his wife is most thoroughly revealed when she gazes at paintings, the narrator of "Orientación de los gatos" brings Alana to an art gallery. There, from a distance and with mounting intensity, he observes the alterations in his wife as she moves from picture to picture. Whilst the narrator barely glances at the paintings and confesses "yo no estaba ahí por los cuadros" (CC2 330), he fearfully witnesses Alana's "atroz inocencia de camaleón" (CC2 330) and "su casi terrible impulso de ave fénix" (CC2 331). As

Alana stares at the paintings, her almost visceral response to the various colours and compositional arrangements reveals the individual subjectivity which her husband wishes to appropriate. For example, standing in front of a canvas which depicts a boat at sea, the narrator notices that “un imperceptible ondular de las manos la hacía como nadar en el aire, buscar el mar abierto, una fuga de horizontes” (CC2 331). Similarly, a painting with a barbed fence in the foreground, denying access to the beautiful trees beyond, provokes Alana to step back.

At this juncture in our exegesis of “Orientación de los gatos,” it is important to note the changes in the visual relationships which structure the text, and to consider their relevance to Sartre’s philosophy of concrete human relations. The figure of the mutual gaze, with which the story opens, utterly disappears when the protagonists enter the art gallery. Instead, there develops a line of vision which extends, simultaneously, from the narrator to his wife, and from Alana to the paintings. Having escaped the penetrating look of Alana and Osiris, by which the narrator experienced his transcendence as transcended, he seeks, through studied contemplation of his wife, to access her subjectivity, and, ultimately, to rediscover himself:

[L]a iba viendo darse a cada pintura, mis ojos multiplicaban un triángulo fulminante que se tendía de ella al cuadro y del cuadro a mí mismo para volver a ella y aprehender el cambio, la aureola diferente que la envolvía un momento para ceder después a un aura nueva, a una tonalidad *que la exponía a la verdadera, a la última desnudez*. (emphasis added, CC2 330)

The narrator of “Orientación de los gatos” attempts to access Alana’s subjectivity whilst she is fully exercising her ocular faculties. Crucially, the fact that her gaze is directed away from the narrator symbolises that he is sufficiently free to study the nature of her transcendence. Moreover, Alana’s visual appropriation of the paintings in the gallery allows the narrator the hope of assimilating his wife as freedom. In the gallery, Cortázar depicts the figure of the gaze in such a way that Alana continues to be a free subjectivity. According to Sartre, these are primary considerations in the essential conflict

of love, the struggle of the beloved to assimilate the transcendence of the lover; “it is this concrete Other as an absolute reality whom in his otherness I wish to incorporate into myself” (BN 365). Only by ensuring that Alana’s freedom remains intact during the process of appropriation which characterises love, will the narrator be able to grasp his In-itself. During the visit to the gallery, the narrator of “Orientación de los gatos” anticipates the moment when his assimilation of Alana’s free subjectivity will be complete, and he will be able to recognise his being-as-object in her gaze:

[Y]o sabiendo que mi larga búsqueda había llegado a puerto y que mi amor abarcaría desde ahora lo visible y lo invisible, aceptaría la limpia mirada de Alana sin incertidumbres de puertas cerradas, de pasajes vedados. (CC2 331)

However, the narrator’s project as depicted in “Orientación de los gatos” also coincides with Sartre’s concept of love in that it is doomed to failure. It is notable that as Cortázar’s text progresses, the narrator’s fear of looking Alana in the eyes increases in direct proportion to the intensity with which he observes her moving through the gallery:

Me quedé atrás sabiendo que no me sería posible soportar su mirada, su sorpresa interrogativa cuando viera en mi cara el deslumbramiento de la confirmación, porque eso era también yo, eso era mi proyecto Alana, mi vida Alana, eso había sido deseado por mí y refrenado por un presente de ciudad y parsimonia, eso ahora al fin Alana, al fin Alana y yo desde ahora, desde ya mismo. (CC2 331)

Whilst the above excerpt demonstrates that the narrator seeks a complete ontological union with his wife, his reluctance to meet Alana’s gaze reveals that he is conscious of the danger inherent in his actions. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre explains that by engaging ‘the look’ in an attempt to assimilate the freedom of the lover, the beloved ultimately asserts his/her own transcendence and, consequently, runs the risk of reducing the lover to a being-as-object:



[T]o look at the Other's look is to posit oneself in one's own freedom and to attempt on the ground of this freedom to confront the Other's freedom. The meaning of the conflict thus sought would be to bring out into the open the struggle of two freedoms confronted as freedoms. But this intention must be immediately disappointed, for the sole fact that I assert myself in my freedom confronting the Other, I make the Other a transcendence-transcended – that is, an object. (BN 379)

Forced to seek recourse from his own subjectivity in order to assimilate that of his wife, the narrator of "Orientación de los gatos" then vainly attempts to restore his being-as-object: "[M]e acerqué a la puerta de salida ocultando todavía la cara, esperando que el aire y las luces de la calle me volvieran a lo que Alana conocía de mí" (CC2 331). He turns around to discover that Alana is staring at a painting of a cat that bears a striking resemblance to Osiris. The cat is gazing fixedly out of a window at something which is concealed from the viewer of the picture. The panic-stricken narrator of Cortázar's text sees that his wife has assumed the characteristics of an object: "Una última transformación hizo de ella una lenta estatua nítidamente separada de los demás, de mí que me acercaba indeciso buscándole los ojos perdidos en la tela" (CC2 331).

The narrator has the sensation that Alana has entered the painting. Indeed, he notes that she appears even more static than the image on the canvas. This further supports the argument of the current chapter that Cortázar's text depicts the nature of love as described by Sartre's ontological philosophy. These elements of the denouement of "Orientación de los gatos" symbolise that the lover has been transformed into a being-as-object by an upsurge in the transcendence of the beloved. In this regard, the project of the beloved has failed. In love, the narrator of "Orientación de los gatos" did not wish to destroy the subjectivity of his wife, nor did he hope to shed his being-as-object. This is clearly evidenced by the fact that, in the above quotation, the narrator attempts once more to engage Alana's powerful gaze. When Alana finally turns to look at the narrator, he realises that their ontological relations have completed a full circle. The tantalising promise of access to his wife's free subjectivity has collapsed, and, consequently, he will never grasp

his alienated being-as-object that Alana and Osiris perceive each time they look at him:

[E]lla había ido al cuadro pero no estaba de vuelta, seguía del lado del gato mirando más allá de la ventana donde nadie podía ver lo que ellos veían, lo que solamente Alana y Osiris veían cada vez que me miraban de frente. (CC2 331)

It is interesting to note the relevance of the name of the cat in “Orientación de los gatos” to Sartre’s claim that our concrete relations with others move in an infinite circle. Osiris is named for the Egyptian god of death and rebirth. It could be argued that there is certainly an implication of death and rebirth in the continuous movement between being-as-object and being-as-subject, which is at the centre of both Sartre’s philosophy of human relations and Cortázar’s text. Furthermore, the rather hopeless tone with which “Orientación de los gatos” closes is utterly consistent with Sartre’s declaration in *Being and Nothingness* that our relations with others constitute an eternal conflict that is condemned to failure (BN 408). This aspect of Sartre’s philosophy is also unmistakably present in the next Cortázar story that this chapter will examine, “Las caras de la medalla.”

The symbolism suggested by the title of “Las caras de la medalla,” of two sides of a coin, which are joined but destined never to meet, announces the theme of the subsequent narrative; it is a tale about the false promise of an impossible encounter. More specifically, Cortázar’s text chronicles the repeated failure of desire between two colleagues, Javier and Mireille. This theme of frustrated union is also reflected in the mode of narration which Cortázar chose for “Las caras de la medalla.” Initially, the narrator appears to be third person omniscient. However, a few lines into the first paragraph, when the narrator is describing how Javier and Mireille used to take tea together, the reader encounters the following: “*Nos gustaba el pequeño ritual*” (emphasis added, CC2 195). Later, it becomes evident that the narrator is almost certainly Javier. The illusion that the perspective of Mireille has

contributed to this account of their failed love affair constitutes a further echo of the symbol of the two sides of a coin:

Sólo uno de los dos escribe esto pero es lo mismo, es como si lo escribiéramos juntos aunque ya nunca más estaremos juntos ... Lo escribimos como una medalla es al mismo tiempo su anverso y su reverso que no se encontrarán jamás, que solo se vieron alguna vez en el doble juego de espejos de la vida. (CC2 196)

“Las caras de la medalla” is a retrospective examination of the relationship between Javier and Mireille. For the narrator, the writing of the text is a form of catharsis for the humiliating disappointment of their union. Primarily set in Geneva, the story traces the nuances of a developing attachment between two co-workers. Not long after their first meeting, Javier begins to desire Mireille. She enjoys the sense of familiarity which they cultivate, and is eventually seduced by the tenderness which grows between them. However, the core of the text revolves around the repeated failure of Javier and Mireille to consummate their relationship. The narrator recalls in detail two occasions, initiated by Javier and Mireille respectively, when the couple try unsuccessfully to make love. Following their last embarrassing encounter, Javier sends a letter to Mireille which remains unanswered. The text closes with the hopeless symbolism of the converse sides of a coin.

Here, I argue that certain features of Cortázar’s depiction of the relationship at the centre of “Las caras de la medalla” are deeply redolent of Jean-Paul Sartre’s concept of desire as described in *Being and Nothingness*. The current study will demonstrate that Javier’s desire for Mireille is a typical example of the adoption of the second attitude towards others; by means of his desire, he endeavours to transcend her transcendence. Of particular note in “Las caras de la medalla,” and of paramount importance in our application of Sartre’s philosophical paradigm, is the prominent role played by the gaze, light, and darkness, in shaping the relationship between Javier and Mireille.

In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre describes sexual desire as the project of ensnaring the Other’s free subjectivity within the object of his/her body; it

is the attempt to appropriate the “organic totality” (BN 385) of the Other. In this regard, it is worthy of note that Javier’s attraction towards Mireille is consistently portrayed as equally physical and psychological in nature. However, Mireille is a considerably reticent character. It is interesting that, rather than being attracted to an individual personality, as such, Javier seems more concerned with the revelation of a consciousness which lies hidden within the objectivity of her body as he sees it. Perhaps the following quotation, which conveys the onset of Javier’s desire during a barbecue at Mireille’s house, will help to clarify this interpretation:

[L]a vio afanarse con platos y vasos, le oyó decir una palabrota porque una chispa en la mano, los fragmentos se iban reuniendo y tal vez fue entonces que la deseó por primera vez, el mechón de pelo cruzándole la frente morena, los blue-jeans marcándole la cintura. (CC2 197)

There are a number of moments like this throughout “Las caras de la medalla,” where Javier’s gaze expresses his desire for Mireille. It should be recalled that, in his discussion of desire, Sartre identifies the caress as the medium for transcending the Other’s transcendence via his/her body. According to Sartre, the desiring For-itself also caresses the object of desire with his/her eyes, “to caress with the eyes and to desire are one and the same” (BN 390). It is appropriate, then, that Cortázar should employ the figure of the gaze to chart the vicissitudes of the relationship between Javier and Mireille.

The text emphasises that the hours preceding each of the unfulfilled physical encounters between the protagonists are characterised by frank mutual contemplation, “nos miramos como viejos amigos” (CC2 199). On the evening of the second time that Javier and Mireille try to consummate their relationship, they appear to recognise this gaze as an expression of desire, as a precursor of the actual caress that will soon follow. The narrator recalls: “Nunca habían hablado de eso que nuevamente estaba ahí en el gesto de verter el vino o *mirarse lentamente al término de un diálogo*” (emphasis added, CC2 202). Whilst this gaze encourages the protagonists to initiate sex,

on both occasions, the almost instantaneous collapse of visual exchange foreshadows the failure of their attempt. In the first instance, the couple return to Mireille's cabin where they listen to music, without looking at each other, before going upstairs.<sup>45</sup> The second time, whilst still in the restaurant, Mireille lowers her head and passes her hand over her eyes at the moment she tells Javier that she will accompany him to his hotel.<sup>46</sup> Desire has already begun to break down, because its expression via the visual caress is being stifled.

Cortázar also underlines the inability of Javier and Mireille to meet each other's eyes in the aftermath of their hopeless trysts; the reader notes that "apenas se miraban" (CC2 201), and "la sentía despedirse sin mirarlo" (CC2 203). Notably, the narrator of "Las caras de la medalla" attributes the failure of the sexual relationship between Javier and Mireille to their inability to maintain a form of communication based on 'the look': "No supimos hacer ni decir otra cosa, ni siquiera callarnos, abrazarnos en cualquier esquina, encontrarnos en cualquier mirada" (emphasis added, CC2 201). As Peter Fröhlicher observes in his study, *La mirada recíproca: Estudios sobre los últimos cuentos de Julio Cortázar*, it is interesting that the narrator draws a connection here between the failure of the couple to maintain visual contact, and their inability to forge a physical union (227-28). With this in mind, the current chapter will demonstrate that a close reading of the sexual encounters between Javier and Mireille encourages further comparison with Sartre's theory of desire.

Although Sartre argues that sexual desire is not motivated by a wish to use the Other's body as an object, he maintains that the body of the Other still plays a pivotal role in the operation of desire. The aim of the desiring For-itself is to bring the consciousness of the desired object to the surface of his/her body, or, in Sartre's own terminology, to incarnate the Other as flesh. If the one who desires succeeds in this enterprise, he/she will have transcended the transcendence of the Other. As the current study has already discussed above, the primary technique for incarnating the Other is the caress,

---

<sup>45</sup> "Nunca nos mirábamos a la hora de la música" (CC2 200).

<sup>46</sup> "[U]n gesto de Mireille al bajar la cabeza y pasarse la mano por los ojos, su simple frase para decirle que lo acompañaría a su hotel" (CC2 202).

both visual and tactile. There is much evidence in “Las caras de la medalla” to suggest that by repeatedly blocking Javier’s caresses, it is Mireille who hinders the development of their physical relations.

Firstly, Mireille unequivocally prevents her lover from visually caressing her naked body by thoroughly concealing it from his gaze. At the beginning of each encounter, Javier is frustrated by a delay which Mireille imposes on their physical union by locking herself in the bathroom; when she emerges she is resolutely wrapped in a bathrobe, on the first occasion, and in a towel, on the second. It is also worthy of note that the two sexual encounters related in “Las caras de la medalla” are thoroughly framed by considerations of light and darkness. Undeniably, the dissolution of desire coincides with an implicit argument between the lovers as to whether to keep the light on or off. Indeed, whilst reconsidering what transpired between Javier and Mireille, the narrator of the text twice refers to this issue as one of the primary reasons why their relationship failed (CC2 197 & 201). More revealing still is the narrator’s description of the first attempt of the lovers to consummate their relationship; it is worth quoting at some length:

La vio regresar envuelta en una bata de baño de esponja blanca, acercarse a la cama y tender la mano hacia el velador. «No apagues la luz», le pidió, pero Mireille negó con la cabeza y apagó, lo dejó desnudarse en la oscuridad total, buscar a tientas el borde de la cama, resbalar en la sombra contra su cuerpo inmóvil. No hicimos el amor. Estuvimos a un paso después que Javier conoció con las manos y los labios el cuerpo silencioso que lo esperaba en la tiniebla. Su deseo era otro, verla a la luz de la lámpara, sus senos y su vientre, acariciar una espalda definida, mirar las manos de Mireille en su propio cuerpo, detallar en mil fragmentos ese goce que precede al goce. En el silencio y la oscuridad totales, en la distancia y la timidez que caían sobre él desde Mireille invisible y muda, todo cedía a una irrealidad de entresueño y a la vez él era incapaz de hacerle frente, de saltar de la cama y encender la luz y volver a imponer una voluntad necesaria y hermosa. (CC2 200)

At this juncture in our analysis of “Las caras de la medalla,” it is pertinent to recall that in his general discussion of being-for-others, Sartre identifies ‘the look’ as the most powerful weapon in the struggle to transcend the Other’s

transcendence. Mireille's insistence on total darkness, by neutralising 'the look,' destroys the project of Javier's desire; that is, the attempt to dominate her free subjectivity. Consequently, his desire utterly dissolves in the face of this impasse.

The other path open to Javier is to incarnate the flesh of Mireille by means of the caress. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre argues that in desire, the desiring For-itself seeks to bring the desired object face to face with its own facticity by making it conscious of its own body. There is certainly a suggestion in "Las caras de la medalla" that Javier perceives the frigid persona and reserved dress of Mireille as a challenge. For example, the following extract implies that Javier's attraction towards Mireille stems from a desire to awaken her latent sexuality:

Mireille morena y callada, blusa hasta el cuello donde algo debía latir despacio, un pajarito de vida sin demasiados altibajos, una madre lejana, algún amor desdichado y sin secuelas, Mireille ya un poco solterona, un poco oficinista pero a veces silbando un tema de Mahler en el ascensor, vestida sin capricho, casi siempre de pardo o de traje sastre, una edad demasiado puesta, una discreción demasiado hosca. (CC2 196)

Javier wants to direct Mireille's consciousness towards her body. Again, this is reminiscent of Sartre's description of the attitude of the desiring For-itself towards the Other: "My goal is to cause him to be incarnated as flesh in his own eyes" (BN 395). If Javier were to succeed in arousing Mireille, he could claim some element of control over her free subjectivity. In the above quotation from "Las caras de la medalla," there is clearly a reference to Javier's desire to access Mireille's broader consciousness; he seeks to do so using the caress. According to Sartre, the caress has the potential to reveal the freedom of the Other, "the caress is designed to uncover the web of inertia beneath the action ie. the pure 'being-there' which sustains it" (BN 390). Yet, Javier's caresses prove as ineffectual as his gaze in the struggle to transcend Mireille's transcendence by means of his desire.

From the couple's first kiss, Mireille is portrayed as yielding to Javier's caresses, but remaining thoroughly unresponsive to them. During their final, hopeless encounter, she is described as "rígida y distante" (CC2 203). In refusing to respond to Javier's endeavours to incarnate her flesh, Mireille's subjectivity recedes deeper within the objectivity of her body. The protagonist of Cortázar's text cannot simply use Mireille's body as an object because, as Sartre explains, such an act would be contradictory to the true purpose of desire. Instead, recognising that access to Mireille's freedom, to the goal of his desire, has been closed off, Javier abandons his project. Ironically, perhaps due to the fact that the protagonists of "Las caras de la medalla" are unable to consummate their relationship, Javier is condemned to continue desiring Mireille. In this regard, Cortázar's choice of name for the object of desire in his text may not have been accidental. It is believed that the French forename, Mireille, derives from a Provençal or Occitan word meaning 'to admire'. Since Sartre maintains that pleasure is the death of desire, it seems appropriate that "Las caras de la medalla" should close by depicting Javier's sustained desire for Mireille.

It is evident from the foregoing discussion of "Las caras de la medalla" that desire is predominantly manifested in the character of Javier. Given the lack of passion exhibited by Mireille, her unresponsiveness to Javier's sexual advances, it is difficult to fathom her interest in the relationship. The inscrutability of her motives is, perhaps, a by-product of the fact that the text is narrated from Javier's perspective. For a greater understanding of Mireille's character, the reader would be well advised to consult another story by Cortázar called "Ciao, Verona." Written the same year as "Las caras de la medalla," but suppressed from publication until 2007, this text constitutes a sort of companion piece to the story of Javier and Mireille.<sup>47</sup> The narrative of "Ciao, Verona" takes the form of a letter written by Mireille to a woman called

---

<sup>47</sup> "Ciao, Verona" was apparently penned by Cortázar during 1977 in Paris. However, it seems that he did not want it published during his lifetime. It was 'rediscovered' by Aurora Bernárdez (Cortázar's former wife and the executor of his estate) in a drawer with other papers, and published for the first time by *El País (Babelia)*, Madrid, 3 de noviembre de 2007. It was later re-published with other miscellaneous papers in the 2009 collection, *Papeles Inesperados*. All references to this story by the current study will be taken from this book, see "Ciao, Verona" (83-106). Direct quotations will be followed by the abbreviation *PI*, and the page number in parenthesis.



Lamia, whom she is in love with. It becomes clear that Mireille's love is utterly unrequited; she reproaches Lamia for falsely encouraging her attentions whilst having relationships with a number of other women. The letter indicates that Lamia was aware of the doomed courtship of Javier and Mireille, and that she was greatly amused by Javier's attempt to exorcise his humiliation by writing a story about it.<sup>48</sup> Mireille admits that this letter, which offers, for Lamia's enjoyment, a description of yet another failed encounter with Javier, is a form of exorcism for her.

Still filled with desire for Mireille, Javier invites her to spend a week with him in Verona. Their trip revolves around a pretence of friendship. For example, they take separate rooms at the hotel; yet, Javier's hopes for their reunion are barely concealed. Meanwhile, Mireille appears resolved that the embarrassing nights of Geneva will never be repeated. She has been induced to come to Verona by lingering feelings of tenderness towards Javier, and, in order to relieve him of the guilt concerning their failed union by explaining her relationship with Lamia. Mireille recalls for Lamia the moment when she could have revealed everything to Javier; but, like a cruel reflection of their failure to connect on the physical plane, she shrinks from the confession:

[N]o me dejes estar tan sola en esa hora en que bajé la cabeza y él comprendió y puso en el suelo la pequeña lámpara para que sólo el fuego de nuestras pipas ardiera alternativamente mientras yo no te nombraba pero todo estaba nombrándote, mi pipa, mi voz como quemada por la pena, la simple horrible definición de lo que soy frente a quien me escuchaba con los ojos cerrados ... no fue así, por supuesto, solamente su mano otra vez apretando mi rodilla como una aceptación dolorosa. (PI 92)

Javier and Mireille leave Verona utterly estranged. Mireille tells Lamia that, later, she receives a letter from Javier in which he recounts a dream that he had whilst in Verona. In the dream, he and Mireille are lying on a bed in a church. A circle of women surround the bed and, as Mireille gets up to join them, Javier realises that he will be an object of sacrifice for a ritual in which

---

<sup>48</sup> In this way, the text of "*Ciao, Verona*" makes reference to "*Las caras de la medalla*."

Mireille is complicit. Despite the fact that the dream implies some recognition on Javier's part, albeit subconscious, of Mireille's sexuality, he expresses a desire to see her again. Mireille never responds to his letter, and the text closes with the same hopeless tone that pervades the end of "Las caras de la medalla."

With the publication of "*Ciao, Verona*," readers of Cortázar's work have been able to re-evaluate "Las caras de la medalla." In particular, the actions of the enigmatic Mireille come into focus when seen through the lens of "*Ciao, Verona*." As can be seen from the excerpt quoted above, the gaze, light, darkness, and perceptions of the Self and the Other, are equally central concerns of this 'later' story. By revealing Mireille's sexuality and her unrequited love for Lamia, "*Ciao, Verona*" allows the reader of "Las caras de la medalla" to see her relationship with Javier as an expression of the need to be desired. Utterly rejected by Lamia and flattered by the attentions of Javier, Mireille is attracted by the possibility of seeing herself through his eyes. Through love she hopes to assimilate Javier's freedom and, thereby, gain access to her alienated being-in-itself. Mireille wants proof of her objectivity as a desirable woman. Yet, there are also indications that Mireille needs Javier to see who she is in a more fundamental way. It seems appropriate to recall that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre proclaims: "the Other accomplishes for us a function of which we are incapable and which nevertheless is incumbent on us: *to see ourselves as we are*" (BN 353-54).

In "*Ciao, Verona*" there are suggestions that Mireille has not fully come to terms with her sexuality. The letter evokes a time when Lamia mocked Mireille for being constrained by the values according to which her parents had raised her. It is also telling that, despite her intentions, Mireille fails to tell Javier about her love for Lamia. Moreover, it could be argued that Mireille's determination in "Las caras de la medalla" to conceal her body from Javier's gaze, and her refusal to respond to his caresses, are symptomatic of a reluctance to confront her own facticity. Only when Mireille feels that Javier is beginning to see her in an unfavourable light, is she able to assume his perspective. This moment coincides with the dissolution of Mireille's feelings for Javier; "nunca lo había deseado menos y por eso podía tenerle lástima y

estar de su lado y mirarme desde sus ojos y odiarme y compadecerlo" (PI 94). In this way, Cortázar's chronicle of the romance between Javier and Mireille reflects Sartre's characterisation of human interaction as a circle of conflict in which the attitude of the participants alternates between the attempt to assimilate the freedom of the Other, and the struggle to transcend the Other's transcendence. Certainly, the quality of hopelessness which pervades Cortázar's depiction of the relationships at the centre of "Orientación de los gatos," "Las caras de la medalla," and "Ciao, Verona," recalls Sartre's maxim that the aims of both parties in any human encounter are destined to remain unfulfilled by the very nature of being-for-others.

Despite the conclusions of this opening chapter, Cortázar's understanding of the power of the gaze to effect ontological changes was not an entirely negative one. On the contrary, the Argentine author also recognised the positive potential inherent in perception. If the awareness of 'being-seen' disrupts the ability of the For-itself to assert its own freedom, surely the obverse is also true, and man can change his mode of being for the better by harnessing the power to see. It is to this aspect of Cortázar's portrayal of ways of seeing that the current thesis will now turn.

## Chapter 2

### Husserl's Phenomenological *Epoché*: *Rayuela* and the Rejection of Traditional Modes of Perception as a Path Towards New Ways of Being

Julio Cortázar has always sought alternative ways of seeing. During the series of interviews conducted by Omar Prego, which were later published as *La fascinación de las palabras*, Cortázar recalls his childhood passion for unusual optics:

Desde muy pequeño, los anteojos, los vidrios de anteojos, me parecieron fascinantes ... cuando encontraba tapones de frascos de perfumes con facetas, esos que cuando los mirás ves reflejarse cincuenta veces la misma cosa, o cristales de colores que prisman y reflejan la luz, o lentes de anteojos que te dan una imagen más pequeña o más grande de lo que estás viendo, todo eso era un poco hacer, con los objetos de la realidad, lo que en otro plano yo estaba haciendo también con las palabras. Es decir, buscar todas las posibilidades de pasaje. Ahí vuelve esa palabra, pasaje, que yo he usado tanto porque no he encontrado otra que me explique mejor esa insatisfacción ante las cosas dadas. (Prego 26-7)

Cortázar's instinctive refusal to accept the world as it appears, to obediently internalise inherited concepts, is the hallmark of his life and his literature.<sup>49</sup> At the technical level of Cortázar's fiction, the consequences of this dissatisfaction with convention are readily discernible, and have received much critical attention. The 'tablero de dirección',<sup>50</sup> chapter 34,<sup>51</sup> and the

<sup>49</sup> Cortázar confesses to Prego that, "desde muy pequeño, mi desdicha y mi dicha al mismo tiempo fue el de no aceptar las cosas como dadas ... Yo parezco haber nacido para no aceptar las cosas tal como me son dadas" (Prego 27).

<sup>50</sup> Cortázar's most celebrated novel, *Rayuela*, is divided into one hundred and fifty-five relatively short chapters. These are, in turn, distributed across three parts; 'Del lado de allá,' 'Del lado de acá,' and 'De otros lados' (capítulos prescindibles). Cortázar opens the novel by stating that it can be read in two distinct ways. Firstly, the reader can follow the chapters in a linear fashion, and finish at chapter fifty-six. In this way, the reader will have read the story set out in the first two parts, but will have dispensed with the 'capítulos prescindibles.' The alternative is to follow the 'tablero de dirección' which Cortázar has created. In the 'tablero de dirección,' laid out at the

neologisms of *Rayuela*; the assorted media and odd juxtapositions of his 'collage' texts; each innovative technique is both a demonstration of Cortázar's unique vision, and a challenge to his readers to seek the other side of habit.

Naturally, Cortázar's long-standing struggle against conformity is also manifest in the themes and characters of his fiction. In this regard, *Rayuela* undoubtedly offers the most sustained and complete example. The protagonist of the novel, Oliveira, has consciously rejected the norms of society; he has no occupation or routine, and he seeks to avoid any form of political affiliation or emotional commitment. Yet, Oliveira recognises that such manoeuvres are merely superficial; the true key to the destruction of convention lies in altering the very concepts on which thought and action are predicated. Thus, throughout the text, the protagonist casts doubt on the conceptual framework which has been inherited from Western civilisation. He particularly criticises the primacy of reason, and the utterly entrenched dialectical nature of our current thought processes. In his own reflections, Oliveira vainly attempts to circumvent these inherent prejudices. He discovers an ally in this struggle in the form of an elderly writer called Morelli.<sup>52</sup> Whilst the protagonist of *Rayuela* seeks freedom from the constraints of custom on a personal and psychological level, Morelli does so on the aesthetic plane.<sup>53</sup> Morelli's notebooks are filled with quotations which denounce the way in which habit fosters a kind of mental paralysis; in his writing, he points to the possibility of discovering "el hueco entre los ladrillos, la luz que pasa" (R 531; ch. 66). He brings these convictions to bear on his own literary production.

---

beginning of the text, all the chapters from all three sections of the novel have been shuffled; it directs the reader to follow this specific order, beginning with chapter seventy-three.

<sup>51</sup> In chapter 34 of *Rayuela*, the protagonist reads a book by Galdós, which he has found on the bedside table of his erstwhile lover. The text of chapter 34 is a series of alternating lines from the Galdós novel which the protagonist is reading, and his own reflections on the dissolution of his relationship with the owner of the book.

<sup>52</sup> It is generally accepted that Morelli acts as a mouthpiece for Cortázar's own opinions concerning writing and literature.

<sup>53</sup> See chapters 141 and 60 of *Rayuela*, they are read in sequence when following the 'tablero de dirección.'

For example, he seeks to reach “el umbral” (R 671; ch. 124) by deliberately stripping his characters and his language back to their most basic forms.<sup>54</sup>

The attempts of Morelli/Cortázar to transcend artistic norms mirror Oliveira’s struggle to break through the ideological wall which has been built and fortified by millennia of civilisation; all three men are engaged in the same fundamental enterprise. This assault on habit has been duly recognised as one of the central themes of *Rayuela*, and has subsequently inspired numerous critical studies.<sup>55</sup> However, the approach of extant criticism has been rather reductionist. The tendency has been to focus on the specific targets of this rejection of convention, at the expense of detecting a significant contextual thread. For example, whilst Curutchet traces Oliveira’s dissatisfaction with Western concepts of knowledge, and Csep’s study identifies Zen Buddhism as a possible alternative, both fail to recognise that the underlying issue is a question of perception.

The central thesis of the current chapter is that Cortázar’s fiction thoroughly links the demand for the destruction of the “Gran Costumbre” (R 546; ch. 73)<sup>56</sup> with concepts of perception. It is noteworthy that, as seen above, Cortázar establishes this connection himself whilst being interviewed by Omar Prego. In light of this, it is curious that current scholarship is conspicuously silent with regard to identifying perception as a major thematic thread in Cortázar’s *oeuvre*, and examining it with reference to the treatment of habit therein. An early exception to this critical lacuna is the review of *Rayuela* which Mac Adam contributed to *The New Leader* in 1966, the suitably titled “New Forms of Perception.” Mac Adam identifies alternative modes of perception as the crux of the text, the key to both the protagonist’s search and the experimental techniques of Morelli/Cortázar:

---

<sup>54</sup> See chapters 112 and 124 of *Rayuela*.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Alegría’s article and the book by Aronne Amestoy.

<sup>56</sup> Cortázar uses this term throughout *Rayuela* to refer to habit, but it appears for the first time in chapter 73, the first chapter of the novel when read as directed by the ‘tablero de dirección.’ This prominent position in the text identifies the rejection of convention as one of the central themes of the novel. As we shall see below, the story of the Neapolitan establishes a fundamental link between the treatment of habit and questions of perception in *Rayuela*.

*Hopscotch* is ... as much the author's search for a new novelistic reality as it is his hero's search for a metaphysical view of himself. While describing a man's personal attempt to see his life from another point of view, *Hopscotch* attacks the traditional separation of novel and reader. (Mac Adam, "New Forms" 24)

In discussing the unusual structure of the novel, Mac Adam argues that the eclectic nature of the 'capítulos prescindibles,' and their distribution in the 'tablero de dirección,' were inspired by "a desire to make a new experience out of old material using a new perception of events" (Mac Adam, "New Forms" 25). Cortázar hoped that the arrangement of the 'capítulos prescindibles' would inspire his readers to see the events of the main narrative in a new way. However, "New Forms of Perception" inevitably offers a severely limited treatment of one of the most extensive and complex themes of Cortázar's literature. It is the intention of the current thesis to follow the lead set by Mac Adam, and to extend it to an in-depth analysis of the representation of questions of perception in Cortázar's work.

It is my contention that a philosophical paradigm for Cortázar's treatment of perception may be found in twentieth century phenomenology. At the most basic level, phenomenology has been defined as the study of essences (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* vii). The father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, emphasised the need to clarify the essence of concepts used in various forms of knowledge, such as consciousness, matter, and perception. He argued that the only way to achieve this was to get "back to the things themselves" (M. Russell 51). It should be noted that this call to action takes account of human subjectivity. Husserl recognised that awareness of the world is always someone's awareness; all knowledge is ultimately based on direct experience. It does not follow that phenomenology implies a retreat into inner consciousness. On the contrary, Husserl did not doubt the existence of an objective world. He subscribed to the view put forward by the Austrian philosopher, Franz Brentano, that all consciousness is intentional.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, the aim of phenomenology is to describe direct human experience of the world, to concentrate on how things *appear* to our

---

<sup>57</sup> The notion that all consciousness is consciousness of something.

subjective consciousness. However, according to Husserl, this is extremely difficult to achieve because the subject matter of phenomenology is obscured by what he calls the 'natural attitude' (*die natürliche Einstellung*).

The 'natural attitude' is a manner of being which orients our lived experience; it is a default attitude to which we consistently revert when dealing with the objective existence of the world. By using the 'natural attitude' as a common framework, we create an independent universe which is recognisable to all. It is within the context of the 'natural attitude' that we can manipulate objects in a meaningful way, and communicate most effectively with others. To a certain extent then, adoption of the 'natural attitude' is essential if we are to function as a part of society. Husserl strongly identifies the 'natural attitude' with common sense and science. Whilst he respects the practical advances wrought by scientific investigation, Husserl argues that the dominance of the natural sciences has inaugurated a naturalistic prejudice which utterly devalues all alternative forms of enquiry. He explores the implications of this hegemony in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936).

According to Husserl, the crisis of European sciences is that they are steadily detaching themselves from their very basis, the world of direct experience. Husserl claims that, since Galileo, the natural world has become mathematised; science has structured the universe using idealised concepts, so that it can be theorised mathematically.<sup>58</sup> One of the most fundamental errors of modern society has been to accept that the exact terms used in science reveal the world as it really is. Once science was designated as truth, direct perception of the world increasingly came to be considered illusory; a subjective and, therefore, valueless impression. In *Husserl: A Guide to the Perplexed* Russell explains:

The entire realm of first-person experience, therefore, came to be regarded as a mere veil of appearances behind which stands the hidden Objective world accessible only to science. Consequently, one

---

<sup>58</sup> According to Husserl, science deals in 'exact' essences; that is, calculable concepts. Direct experience, on the other hand, is characterised by what Husserl terms 'morphological' essences (M. Russell 185).



comes to feel that the world as it is 'for me' must be radically distinguished from the world as it is 'in itself' [CES 164, 305-6]. The legacy of the ongoing mathematization of nature, then, is that the 'true world' that it offers appears increasingly foreign to the world of my experience [i.e. the 'apparent world']. (M. Russell 187)

To a certain degree, the claims of modern science were an extension of the Western philosophical tradition, according to which, pure reason was the highest human attribute. We must transcend the merely personal and, thereby, acquire an objective view of the world. In *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, Suzuki charges this "Greek spirit" (26) with inculcating a mode of perception that empties the world of all wonder. He claims that "[t]he genius of the Greek signifies the break-through of the conscious into the materiality of the world, whereby the latter was robbed of her original dreamlikeness" (26, note 2).

Husserl was supported by later phenomenologists, such as Merleau-Ponty, in his criticism of this 'View from Nowhere' which traditional philosophy sought, and the natural sciences claimed to possess.<sup>59</sup> Husserl and Merleau-Ponty remind us that the sciences are, in fact, manmade accomplishments; all theories used therein have been formulated by humans on the basis of direct experience. For this reason, Merleau-Ponty refers to each individual as "the absolute source" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* ix). The belief that objectivism offers the most reliable means of understanding ourselves, and the world, is exposed as a fallacy by virtue of the fact that mankind *invented* the concept of objectivity. Husserl argues that scientific concepts have become sedimented, merely symbolic, as they pass from one generation to the next. The theoretical constructs of science have forgotten their basis in lived experience, their only source of legitimacy. Husserl declared that the natural sciences have lost their "meaning-fundament" (Husserl 48-53).<sup>60</sup> This is the crisis of European sciences, and it

---

<sup>59</sup> The 'View from Nowhere' is a term used by the American philosopher Thomas Nagel, in his book of the same name, to refer to a human but objective perspective on the world (Matthews 14).

<sup>60</sup> This section of *The Crisis of European Sciences* is entitled 'The life-world as the forgotten meaning-fundament of natural science.' Merleau-Ponty follows Husserl in

can only be resolved by rediscovering the rootedness of science in the lifeworld.

The solution which Husserl proposes in *The Crisis of European Sciences* simply represents a specific application of the broader phenomenological agenda. Phenomenology is a philosophical method that aims at recapturing the world as we directly experience it in pre-reflective perception; it is a new way of looking, which enables us to see things ordinarily obscured by the 'natural attitude.' Husserl argued that this liberation from our conventional way of seeing was to be achieved through the transcendental phenomenological reduction or *epoché* (an ancient Greek term meaning 'suspension'). The world of the 'natural attitude' is, by definition, posited as independent of my existence. Yet, as Husserl points out, it is this very belief in the objectivity of the world which predisposes us to experience the phenomena we encounter as factual. Thus, the experience of factual existence has nothing to do with the actual quality of the entity; it is wholly dictated by the way in which the basic perception is framed. Husserl believed that if the frame of the experience were altered, paths would be opened towards different modes of perception. The phenomenological reduction, therefore, demands a 'bracketing' of the assumptions inherent in the 'natural attitude'; it aims at instituting a system of universal doubt with regard to the objective existence of the world and its contents.

It is extremely important to recognise that Husserl is not interested in whether or not the world is *actually* doubtful. Rather, what he seeks through the phenomenological *epoché* is the very *effect* of attempting to doubt, it is the "radical alteration" (M. Russell 64-6) of the 'natural attitude'. By conceiving of the possibility that a real world, independent of individual consciousness, does not exist, experience becomes situated within an alternative framework known as the 'phenomenological attitude',<sup>61</sup> and we begin to perceive phenomena in an entirely new way. The transcendental

---

arguing that the relationship between perception and all other modes of thought, including science, is one of *fundierung* [foundation] (Merleau-Ponty, *The World* 8).

<sup>61</sup> The 'phenomenological attitude' is the term used to refer to the manner of being which is attained through the operation of the transcendental phenomenological reduction. It is the frame of reference that the phenomenologist must transpose himself or herself into in order to pursue phenomenological enquiry.

phenomenological reduction causes a shift in the apparent relationship between consciousness and the phenomena of the world; the latter become products of the former. M. Russell succinctly describes this outcome when he says that “after the transcendental reduction, what remains is *absolute* consciousness and the *relative* being of the world” (71). In this way, Husserl’s early definitions of phenomenology and the phenomenological *epoché* fall within the confines of transcendental philosophy. Initially, phenomenology focused on the investigation of pure concepts; it disregarded the fact of the objects to which such concepts referred. This is the inherent weakness of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology; it contradicts the theory of intentionality. Thoughts cannot be analysed in isolation if all thoughts have an intentional object. As stated above, Husserl accepted the intentionality of consciousness. It was a student of Husserl, Martin Heidegger, who would identify this central contradiction in his mentor’s philosophy, and subsequently take phenomenology in another direction.

Heidegger turned away from Husserl’s transcendental philosophy to develop a form of existential phenomenology. By means of ontological investigations, he concluded that human experience of being is being-in-the-world (*Inderweltsein*). Heidegger argued that we do not exist as detached subjects or pure reason, but as a thoroughly integrated part of the world; he uses the term *Dasein*<sup>62</sup> to designate this uniquely human mode of being. According to Heidegger, phenomenology cannot be an investigation of pure consciousness. Rather, phenomenological enquiry should examine how phenomena appear to us in the context of our interactions with the world; it must be, as Heidegger said, “the analytic of *Dasein*” (qtd. in Matthews 12). This existential branch of phenomenology would be adopted and developed by later philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.<sup>63</sup> However, Heidegger’s observations also forced Husserl to revise his own position.

Husserl recognised the validity of the criticisms which Heidegger brought against transcendental phenomenology. In many respects, *The Crisis*

---

<sup>62</sup> *Dasein* is a German word for ‘existence’, which literally means ‘being there’.

<sup>63</sup> Merleau-Ponty, for example, developed the concept of ‘corporeality,’ and investigated the central role played by the body in our direct experience of the world.

of *European Sciences*, the last text published by Husserl before his death in 1938, constitutes a re-working of the theory of phenomenology in light of Heidegger's findings. Here, Husserl introduces the concept of *Lebenswelt*, or lifeworld;<sup>64</sup> the idea of pure consciousness is abandoned and he acknowledges that consciousness is always already embedded in the world, operating within a context of established meanings and pre-judgements. The phenomenological *epoché* is adjusted accordingly; it is no longer a 'stepping back' from our ordinary involvement with the world. Indeed, direct interaction with the world is identified as the essential foundation of all phenomenological investigation. Rather, the new aim of the phenomenological reduction, as articulated by Husserl, is to remove all presupposition derived from scientific and philosophical theories. Perhaps Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant, offered the most accurate definition of the phenomenological *epoché* when he described it as an attitude of total "wonder" towards the world (qtd. in Matthews 17).

A substantial element of Julio Cortázar's work, in a way that echoes the phenomenologist agenda, calls for the rejection of theoretical preconceptions and a renewed sense of wonder concerning the everyday. Texts such as *Los aeronautas de la cosmopista* and "Instrucciones para subir una escalera" have all the hallmarks of a phenomenological investigation; they dramatise the rejection of the 'natural attitude' as practical necessity, and reveal the fecund potential of the non-utilitarian 'phenomenological attitude.' These works emphasise the unparalleled value of an utterly unmediated communion with the world and the objects therein. However, it is Cortázar's magnum opus, the novel *Rayuela*, which proves the most fruitful ground for an application of phenomenological theory. The current chapter will demonstrate that the parallel quests which Oliveira and Morelli pursue, share the characteristics of a phenomenological enquiry. Both men fervently fight to break free from the 'natural attitude.' Whilst Morelli attempts to write beyond the confines of a sedimented artistic praxis, Oliveira struggles to circumvent the dictates of habit in his actions, and the framework of an inherited philosophy in his thoughts. At the most basic level, Oliveira and

---

<sup>64</sup> The concept of *Lebenswelt* is undoubtedly inspired by Heidegger's *Inderweltsein* (being-in-the-world).

Morelli seek a path that will lead to a pre-reflective experience of the world; notably, this is also the fundamental goal of phenomenology. Throughout the novel, the protagonist's lover, la Maga, is represented as unconstrained by the 'natural attitude' and pre-eminent in her ability to access life directly. Here, I will compare Cortázar's representation of the characters Oliveira and la Maga, as the contrast between an attempted phenomenological reduction and one which has been successfully completed.

As stated in the opening pages of this chapter, the complementary themes of habit and perception in *Rayuela* have not received a level of critical attention commensurate with their weight in the text. The use of phenomenology as a theoretical approach to reading the novel is highly appropriate in that questions of habit and perception are at the very centre of this philosophical movement. With his seminal treatise, *Phenomenology of Perception*, the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty developed the notion of the primacy of perception in phenomenology. According to Merleau-Ponty, the basic unit of our direct, pre-reflective involvement with the world is perception; he argues that exercising the phenomenological *epoché* is a question of changing our way of seeing the world. Indeed, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty declares that: "True philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world" (xx). The 'natural attitude,' which must be suspended in the phenomenological reduction, is a form of habit. It is the attitude to which we revert when dealing with the practicalities of living, and it is characterised by a set of established theories inherited from the past. Consequently, this 'natural attitude' fosters habitual modes of perception. The task of the phenomenologist is to step outside the confines of the 'natural attitude,' thereby obtaining a new form of perception which will permit the study of essences. In an analogous way, Oliveira's quest, as represented in *Rayuela*, is an attempt to re-establish direct access to experience by means of adopting new ways of seeing.

This phenomenological reading of *Rayuela* will begin by identifying questions of habit in perception as a fundamental theme in the novel. Through an exploration of selected texts, from both the main narrative and the 'capítulos prescindibles,' I will demonstrate that Cortázar repeatedly

condemns the increasing stagnation of mankind's perceptive faculties. The current chapter suggests that the cause of this paralysis, as represented in the novel, reveals marked similarities to the 'natural attitude' as defined by phenomenology.<sup>65</sup> Notably, Cortázar's criticism of the dominant role played by both practical concerns and traditional philosophy in determining perception of the world seems to echo the views of Edmund Husserl. Likewise, the struggles of Oliveira and Morelli to escape the bonds of habit mirror the attempts of the philosopher to perform the phenomenological reduction; they are all searching for access to a pre-reflective experience of the world. It will be shown that Oliveira's search, in particular, is consistently framed using visual metaphors, such as the kaleidoscope. Here, I argue that the protagonist's ultimate goal is to access an alternative mode of perception, one that does not allow the 'natural attitude' to block direct communication with the world. Undeniably, the character of la Maga is in no way constrained by the 'natural attitude.' On the contrary, Cortázar portrays her as enjoying a unique perspective on the world, and, therefore, an authentic union with it. Below, I examine the significance of the way in which Cortázar contrasts Oliveira's way of seeing with that of his lover. Oliveira envies the alternative mode of perception which characterises la Maga; it seems that the only hope for a successful conclusion to his search is to see as she sees.

However, before advancing to the detailed analysis of *Rayuela* as outlined above, it will be useful to undertake a brief survey of this theme as it appears in a number of Cortázar's other works. Firstly, it should be stated that the current study agrees with Standish in his assessment of the way in which Cortázar contrasts the verbs *mirar* and *ver* (*Understanding Julio Cortázar* 55-6). For Cortázar, *ver* often carries connotations of nonchalance, even automatism, whilst *mirar* expresses a more involved form of contemplation. This distinction is not necessarily a question of engaging one's consciousness. Rather, the quality which Cortázar attaches to the verb *mirar* is reminiscent of the pre-reflective perception sought by phenomenology. Interestingly, Cortázar wrote a short satirical piece dedicated to the difference between *ver* and *mirar*.

---

<sup>65</sup> Merleau-Ponty called continued adherence to the 'natural attitude' "a kind of mental blindness," whilst Kant referred to it as a "dogmatic slumber" (qtd. in Langer 169).

As announced in the title, “Todo lo que ve lo ve blando”<sup>66</sup> describes a man who sees everything as ‘soft’. Cortázar attributes this odd outlook to the fact that the gentleman in question sees rather than looks; “lo ablanda con sólo verlo, ni siquiera con mirarlo porque él más bien ve que mira” (VDOM 1: 60). The text suggests that there was perhaps a time when he was still capable of looking. However, this form of perception afflicts him “porque no le gustan nada las cosas duras” (VDOM 1: 60), with the result that, at the age of twenty, “empezó solamente a ver, cuidadosamente a nada más que ver” (VDOM 1: 60). This suggestion that one’s perceptive faculties become fixed at some point in adulthood appears throughout Cortázar’s work. Indeed, it is a theme which is treated quite extensively in *Rayuela*, most notably in chapters eighty-four and ninety-eight. Standish also notes that Cortázar attaches the verb *mirar* more frequently to the gaze of children than to adults; children perceive candidly and unimpeded by the ‘natural attitude’ (*Understanding Julio Cortázar* 55).

The references in “Todo lo que ve lo ve blando” to seeing ‘soft’ or ‘hard,’ as synonyms for *ver* and *mirar* respectively, nicely contrast the habitual, comforting way of looking at the world with one that is more truthful but potentially disconcerting. Here, Cortázar demonstrates that *mirar* is the gaze of someone who experiences being as being-in-the-world; it is the mark of authentic connections with others, and of direct access to essences:

[E]l que mira ve dos veces, ve lo que está viendo y además es lo que está viendo o por lo menos podría serlo o querría serlo o querría no serlo, todas ellas maneras sumamente filosóficas y existenciales de situarse y de situar el mundo. (VDOM 1: 60)

In contrast, the person whose perceptual capacity is limited to the verb *ver* becomes isolated. Firstly, others feel vacant when they are the object of this type of gaze. Cortázar describes this sensation with characteristic humour in

---

<sup>66</sup> See ‘Para una antropología de bolsillo’ in Cortázar’s *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* 1: 60-3. All direct quotations from *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* will be followed by the abbreviation VDOM, the volume, and the page number, in parenthesis.

“Todo lo que ve lo ve blando”; “aunque sé que no se trata de mí sino de mi imagen en mi amigo ... lo mismo me aflijo porque a nadie le gusta que lo vean como un flan de sémola” (*VDOM* 1: 61). Moreover, since true contemplation calls for a certain degree of assimilation between subject and object, to look at a person who only sees implies “la más horrible amenaza de disolución” (*VDOM* 1: 61). For this reason, Cortázar closes the text by lamenting that his unfortunate friend must never be looked at, only seen (*VDOM* 1: 61).

There can be no doubt that the verb *mirar*, as defined by Cortázar, expresses the nature of his visual approach to the world. Even in adulthood he seemed to retain the artless gaze of a child, filled with wonder in the face of the most everyday encounters. However, Cortázar was also aware of the insidious nature of habit, with the result that he often actively cultivated alternative modes of perception. Through the interview with Omar Prego quoted above, we have already witnessed some of the systems which Cortázar used to transgress customary ways of seeing. “Instrucciones para subir una escalera” (*CC1* 416) superbly demonstrates the effects of adopting a similar change of perspective when confronted with a routine object. Here, the narrator does not employ any instrument which would distort his actual view of the staircase. Rather, it is a question of rejecting all foreknowledge, of adopting a new attitude. This experiment is very much akin to the phenomenological reduction, wherein the investigating philosopher attempts to dissolve the practical ties that bind him to phenomena, and, in so doing, bring the strangeness of the world into relief.

“Instrucciones para subir una escalera” turns an utterly mundane object, and its corresponding function, into something quite alien. As the title suggests, the narrative is expressly designed to be intelligible to someone who has never before encountered stairs. Cortázar deconstructs the staircase into its most basic components, and deliberately refrains from using ‘specific’ vocabulary unless it is preceded by a definition:

[C]on frecuencia el suelo se pliega de una manera tal que una parte sube en ángulo recto con el plano del suelo, y luego la parte siguiente se coloca paralela a este plano ... poniendo la mano izquierda en una



de las partes verticales, y la derecha en la horizontal correspondiente, se está en posesión momentánea de un peldaño o escalón. (CC1 416)

With the section of the text which explains how to ascend the stairs, Cortázar is equally sparing in his use of labels, and, therefore, skilfully draws attention to the role which they play in our routine interaction with the world. He demonstrates the potential for confusion that lies beneath such seemingly concrete terms. This approach is seen to greatest effect in his description of feet, which is worth quoting at some length:

Para subir una escalera se comienza por levantar esa parte del cuerpo situada a la derecha abajo, envuelta casi siempre en cuero o gamuza, y que salvo excepciones cabe exactamente en el escalón. Puesta en el primer peldaño dicha parte, que para abreviar llamaremos pie, se recoge la parte equivalente de la izquierda (también llamada pie, pero que no ha de confundirse con el pie antes citado), y llevándola a la altura del pie, se le hace seguir hasta colocarla en el segundo peldaño, con lo cual en éste descansará el pie, y en el primero descansará el pie ... La coincidencia de nombre entre el pie y el pie hace difícil la explicación. Cuidese especialmente de no levantar al mismo tiempo el pie y el pie. (CC1 416)

In this way, Cortázar exposes the 'natural attitude' as a kind of false sanctuary. The dictates of habit in our practical involvement with the world fix a certain perceptual limit, which whilst facilitating manipulation of the object in question, inhibits any meaningful contact. Cultivating a new way of seeing is the only way to break free of this 'natural attitude,' and, consequently, to arrive at an alternative mode of being. Yet, as the struggles of Oliveira bear witness, this is extremely difficult to achieve. Moreover, despite the prevailing comic tone of "Instrucciones para subir una escalera," the text demonstrates that a world unframed by the 'natural attitude' is potentially extremely disconcerting. Indeed, the most startling aspect of Cortázar's text is its ability to disorientate the average reader. The ambiguity of the syntax is such that, in spite of the title, it provokes the sensation that an entirely unknown object is being described. This, of course, is Cortázar's intention. It is to his credit

that, even if the reader breathes a sigh of relief on eventually identifying the object, he has succeeded in momentarily altering their perspective. In truth, the text is an invitation to readers to continue seeking such altered perspectives in their everyday lives; at the very least, it identifies the world beyond the 'natural attitude' as rich in meaning. "Instrucciones para subir una escalera" certainly shows that Cortázar firmly believed in the value of rejecting habit in perception.

If "Instrucciones para subir una escalera" represents the earliest literary expression<sup>67</sup> of Cortázar's espousal of new forms of perception, *Los autonautas de la cosmopista*<sup>68</sup> is the most extensive. Ostensibly a travel journal detailing a voyage from Paris to Marseille, *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* is, in fact, a book devoted to the rejection of habitual ways of seeing. Perhaps the clearest statement of intent is to be found in the dedication with which Cortázar has chosen to preface his text:

Dedicamos esta expedición y su crónica a todos los piantados del mundo y en especial al caballero inglés cuyo nombre no recordamos y que en el siglo dieciocho recorrió la distancia que va de Londres a Edimburgo caminando hacia atrás y entonando himnos anabaptistas.  
(AC 7)

The basic premise of the text is to turn a routine activity, and its corresponding apparatus, into something remarkable. In 1982, Julio Cortázar and his partner, Carol Dunlop, drive their Volkswagen camper van the length of the motorway from Paris to Marseille. However, the journey is entirely unconventional. As Cortázar explains in his ironical letter to the director of the Motorways Association,<sup>69</sup> the expedition will be defined by two principal

---

<sup>67</sup> "Instrucciones para subir una escalera" first appeared in *Historias de cronopios y de famas*, published in 1962. Although "Instrucciones para subir una escalera" constitutes the first extensive treatment of this theme in Cortázar's writing, as demonstrated by the quotation which opens this chapter, the pursuit of new ways of seeing dates back to his childhood.

<sup>68</sup> All quotations from this text will be followed by the abbreviation AC, and the page number, in parenthesis.

<sup>69</sup> Here, Cortázar asks the director of the Motorways Association for permission to undertake the planned expedition and, therefore, spend an entire month on the motorway system (AC 17-18).

rules. First, they must stop at each of the sixty-five service areas along their route; averaging two stops per day, they will reach their destination in just over one month. Second, apart from visiting the service areas, the travellers are forbidden from exiting the motorway. Consequently, for the duration of the journey, Cortázar and Dunlop rely on provisions brought to them by friends, and on items available in motorway service stations. This self-imposed confinement to the motorway will induce the travellers to look with renewed eyes at a part of the world whose essence is obscured by its utility.

Cortázar himself identifies the rejection of habit in perception as the *raison d'être* of the expedition, in a short section of the book aptly sub-titled 'Donde se verá que los expedicionarios pasaron varios años en el mal camino, incluso si se trataba del mismo.'<sup>70</sup> Here, Cortázar confesses that, for many years, he and Carol coincided with the vast majority of people, "que toman la autopista por lo que parece ser" (AC 26). Cortázar saw the motorway as a means of getting from a point of origin to a destination as quickly and as easily as possible. For a time, he submitted to the mental vacuity which the design of the motorway fosters so successfully:

Los ingenieros que concibieron y elaboraron lo que cabría llamar la institución de la autopista hicieron proezas para apartar del camino del automovilista no sólo todo obstáculo que pudiera disminuir la velocidad (bien se sabe que la gran mayoría de los usuarios de esta vía son fanáticos de un buen promedio de marcha), sino también todo lo que podía distraer al conductor de su concentración en la banda de asfalto que tiende a dar a quienes la siguen ... la impresión de una continuidad ininterrumpida, continuidad que acaba por englobar ... no sólo las ruedas del vehículo que el humano en el volante tiene todavía la ilusión de controlar, sino incluso el volante de dicho vehículo y las manos y los reflejos de dicho ser humano que integra así, conscientemente o no, esa gran totalidad impersonal. (AC 26-7)

---

<sup>70</sup> See AC 26-8. This is a sub-section of the longer piece, 'De los orígenes de la expedición: su génesis, su lenta elaboración y su sinuosa madurez, y de cómo *el pálido lector no solo verá que la reflexión científica tiende a transformar la visión del mundo en quien la practica, sino que se percatará asimismo de los obstáculos que se alzan en el camino del investigador*, y tendrá al mismo tiempo amplia oportunidad de admirar la astucia y el coraje de los arrojados expedicionarios,' (emphasis added, AC 26).

The journey described in *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* is a reaction against the easy attractions of the motorway, and their propensity to deaden the senses of those who use it. Julio and Carol consciously eject themselves from the 'natural attitude' and, adopting what they ironically refer to as "el espíritu científico" (AC 28), look closely at the world of motorway service areas. In a manner reminiscent of a philosopher undertaking a phenomenological investigation, 'los expedicionarios' of Cortázar's text seek the essence of their object of study by refusing to manipulate it in the customary way, and establishing a direct contact. In this way, Cortázar and Dunlop look beyond the grey concrete of the motorway to discover a fascinating ecosystem of truckers and holidaymakers, filled with humour, tension, love, and sometimes magic.

By spending such an extended length of time in an environment expressly designed for motorists to take a brief rest, Cortázar witnesses a tender romance between a female lorry driver and another trucker, he is initiated into the etiquette of motorway toilets, he finds new meaning in the symbols which preside over the motorway, and is fascinated by the array of objects which can be bought at the service stations.<sup>71</sup> The comedy of Cortázar's determination to see traffic cones as witches' hats, his description of playground apparatus as torture devices, and his acceptance of the Michelin Man as a god of the motorway, demonstrates the power of new ways of seeing. This altered perspective on an apparently dreary environment is what makes *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* such a unique and surprisingly enjoyable book. Cortázar and Dunlop certainly consider themselves enriched by the experience:

[D]e no ser por el espíritu científico ... es posible que nuestras mentes hubieran permanecido cerradas para siempre a esta gran vía que se desplegaba vanamente ante nuestros ojos desde hacía años, ante nuestros ojos sellados entonces por la más crasa ignorancia. (AC 28)

---

<sup>71</sup> He discovers one shop which sells different sized statues of Buddha (AC 170-76).

Naturally, the structure of *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* reflects the search for different modes of perception. The entire text is produced from within the confines of a rather bizarre framework; Cortázar and Dunlop are intrepid explorers undertaking a scientific investigation of the motorway. Consequently, *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* is written as half travelogue, half detailed experiment. For example, the '*Diario de ruta*'<sup>72</sup> is a pastiche of a captain's log, whilst the description of flora and fauna imitates the work of a botanist. Moreover, the book offers a multiple perspective on the journey by means of the three contributors. Although most of the writing is produced by Cortázar, Dunlop also pens a number of pieces. Her son, Stéphane Hébert, who was appointed "cartógrafo ex post facto" (AC 25), used the text coupled with descriptions from Dunlop and Cortázar to produce drawings of the '*paraderos*' they explored; these 'maps' punctuate the book. Also interspersed throughout *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* are photographs taken on the journey, primarily by Dunlop. As a form of documentary evidence these images not only reflect the concept of exploration, they also echo the principle of the journey in their frequent use of unusual perspective.

It is hoped that the preceding pages go some way towards identifying the search for new ways of seeing as a significant theme in Cortázar's writing. The original publication dates of *Historias de cronopios y de famas* (1962) and *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* (1983), separated as they are by twenty years, demonstrate that the rejection of habit in perception was certainly of enduring interest for Cortázar. The most recent publication to issue from the Cortazarian canon also includes a short piece which returns to this theme. In 2009 Alfaguara published a miscellaneous collection of forgotten Cortázar texts; it was given the title *Papeles inesperados*. These papers, discovered in a dresser drawer, were subsequently edited by Carles Álvarez Garriga and Aurora Bernárdez, Cortázar's first wife and the guardian of his estate. The book saw the first publication of a number of texts, but others had been published previously elsewhere. "Monólogo del peatón" (PI 215-18), for

---

<sup>72</sup> Cortázar wrote one of these for every day of the journey. The '*Diario de ruta*' is the typical record of the explorer; it includes the date, weather, temperature, food consumed, direction of journey, distance covered, details of stops and anything else of note.

example, first appeared in the automobile magazine *Motor 16* in January 1984, just weeks before Cortázar's death.<sup>73</sup>

Oddly, considering the context in which it was published, the text recounts Cortázar's general dislike of cars. He notes that this attitude may seem inconsistent with the journey described in *Los autonautas de la cosmopista*, and he defends this apparent contradiction by exalting the power of adopting an altered perspective on routine objects. Cortázar's affection for his Volkswagen camper van is justified by the fact that it is not a vehicle, but a red dragon named Fafner.<sup>74</sup> Throughout *Los autonautas de la cosmopista* Cortázar anthropomorphises the van to such an extent that it comes to be considered a valued travelling companion, a protagonist in the drama. Likewise, Cortázar and Dunlop neutralise the effect of cars on the motorway by looking at them in a new way. In "Monólogo del peatón" Cortázar offers a comprehensive explanation of this *modus operandi*, and definitively identifies it as the defining principle behind *Los autonautas de la cosmopista*:

Pero el lector de ese libro sabe que nuestro viaje era precisamente un desafío a la costumbre, y que entre sus muchos lados patafísicos el más visible era el de buscar las excepciones en las reglas, el silencio en el estrépito, la calma en el fragor ... Si los autos hubieran sido para nosotros lo que son para el que se suma a esa horda desatada de la que hay que cuidarse a cada segundo sin por eso dejar de ser parte de ella, el viaje hubiera perdido no sólo su razón de ser sino el ser de su razón, y esa razón era precisamente el reto supremo, *afirmar frente a los autos que podíamos verlos sin verlos, que podíamos aparearnos a ellos desde otra dimensión, que los neutralizábamos con las armas del juego, y que ese juego era uno de los rumbos de una vida más bella, menos atada a las rutinas y a los códigos*. Y eso sin ninguna jactancia ni sentimiento de superioridad, simplemente porque *éramos un lobo y una osita y ya se sabe que eso cambia las perspectivas, las ópticas y no solamente el pelaje*. (emphasis added, PI 216)

The reference to a wolf and a teddy bear, contained in the above excerpt, will undoubtedly strike the uninitiated reader as strange. Yet,

---

<sup>73</sup> See *Motor 16*, Madrid, no.13, 21 de enero de 1984. Cortázar passed away on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1984.

<sup>74</sup> Cortázar names his van after the dragon in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung).

Cortázar and Dunlop designate themselves and each other as such throughout *Los aeronautas de la cosmopista*. As was the case with Fafner the dragon, this intimate nomenclature stems from Cortázar's natural aversion to habit and inherited forms of expression:

[N]o veo por qué hay que tolerar invariablemente lo que nos viene de antes y de fuera, y así a los seres que amé y que amo les fui poniendo nombres que nacían de un encuentro, de un contacto entre claves secretas, y entonces mujeres fueron flores, fueron pájaros, fueron animalitos del bosque. (AC 23)

In the interview quoted at the very beginning of the current chapter, Cortázar identifies his refusal to accept "las cosas como dadas" (Prego 27) and his search for new ways of seeing as two manifestations of the same impulse. The fact that Cortázar returns to this theme in "Monólogo del peatón," just weeks before his death, demonstrates its continuing centrality to his life and work. Likewise, the extent to which the search for new forms of perception is the fabric of Cortázar's most celebrated novel highlights the importance of this concept to his overall aesthetic. It is now time to turn to an examination of *Rayuela*.

If the reader follows Cortázar's 'tablero de dirección,' the chapter which opens *Rayuela* is seventy-three. This rather lyrical piece of text is calculated to thoroughly resonate with the reader as they advance through the novel. By virtue of its unusual style and significant position, it can be assumed that the concepts explored therein will feature prominently throughout *Rayuela*. Chapter seventy-three is an eloquent plea to reject habit and seek new ways of seeing. It is fitting that the first chapter of the 'tablero de dirección' should be one of the 'capítulos prescindibles,' and that its central theme should be perception. It may be recalled that in "New Forms of Perception," Mac Adam argues that the role of the 'capítulos prescindibles,' as they are arranged in the 'tablero de dirección,' is to lend a different perspective to the main narrative. In chapter seventy-three, Cortázar urges the reader to search for a different mode of perception, to struggle against the 'natural attitude' and re-establish a direct contact with the world. Here,

he uses wonderful imagery to symbolise the dangerous appeal of convention; it is a colourless, imageless fire, “que nos arderá dulcemente hasta calcinarnos” (R 544; ch. 73). The text wonders whether it is still possible to reach the other side of habit, fortified as it is by the bastions of time and memory, “las sustancias pegajosas que nos retienen de este lado” (R 544; ch. 73).

Moreover, the narrator of chapter seventy-three recognises that, merely by formulating the struggle in terms of a rebellion against conformity signals defeat. The pre-eminent role of dialectics in the thought processes of the Western world is a salient feature of the ‘natural attitude’ as defined by Husserl. Inherited from the Greek philosophical tradition, entrenched by the developments of science, binary logic is a construct which facilitates our practical involvement with the world by reducing everything into opposing categories. This process of simplification prevents us from seeing the nuances in between, it blocks direct access to the richness of experience. Chapter seventy-three of *Rayuela* calls for the complete destruction of the objective dualities which characterise the ‘natural attitude.’ In our contact with the world, we must undertake a personal search for a new perspective which will reveal the possibilities that lie in between. Andrés Amorós supports this reading of chapter seventy-three in his introduction to the novel: “La solución vendría de una nueva manera de ver que advirtiera que, entre una cosa y su opuesta, existen infinidad de matices, y que las dos, desde otra perspectiva, pueden ser una sola” (emphasis added, R 30). As will be shown below, this is the nature of both Oliveira’s and Morelli’s quest in the novel. The starting point of this search is a transformation of the habitual ways of seeing; in chapter seventy-three, Cortázar makes this argument with the story of the Neapolitan.

In one of his books, Morelli tells the tale of a Neapolitan who spent years sitting in the doorway of his house, staring at a screw on the ground (R 545; ch. 73). This absorbed contemplation of a commonplace object baffles his neighbours. Yet, the gaze of the Neapolitan causes the perceptual habits and prejudices of the neighbours to relax; this is evident from the way in which their attitudes evolve:



El tornillo fue primero risa, tomada de pelo, irritación comunal, junta de vecinos, signo de violación de los deberes cívicos, finalmente encogimiento de hombros, la paz, el tornillo fue la paz, nadie podía pasar por la calle sin mirar de reojo el tornillo y sentir que era la paz. (R 545; ch. 73)

When the Neapolitan dies one of the neighbours steals the screw. Morelli imagines that the new owner frequently takes the screw out of wherever it is hidden, and gazes at it intently but uncomprehending. The neighbour has simply acquired the habit of the Neapolitan. In this way, he has effectively closed himself off from the meaningful contact which the Neapolitan evidently enjoyed. If the neighbour errs through habitual action, Morelli fails in his reading of the story by means of philosophical convention. He assumes that the screw must be something else, and applies the traditional concept of a god. The narrator of chapter seventy-three dismisses this as “solución demasiado fácil” (R 545; ch. 73). He recognises that the story of the Neapolitan is about perception:

Quizá el error estuviera en aceptar que ese objeto era un tornillo por el hecho de que tenía la forma de un tornillo. Picasso toma un auto de juguete y lo convierte en el mentón de un cinocéfalo. A lo mejor el Napolitano era un idiota pero también pudo ser el inventor de un mundo. Del tornillo a un ojo, de un ojo a una estrella ... ¿Por qué entregarse a la Gran Costumbre? (R 545-46; ch. 73)

This piece of text should be recognised as a manifesto for *Rayuela*. Here, Cortázar condenses one of the guiding principles of the novel. Firstly, he indicates the mental stagnation which derives from habitual forms of perception. With the reference to Picasso, Cortázar demonstrates that it is still possible to access new ways of seeing. It is interesting that Cortázar chose to frame the anecdote about the Neapolitan with an analogy from the world of visual art. In 1951 Picasso completed a sculpture which he called *Baboon and Young*; it is an example of assemblage. As with the other artistic media in which Picasso worked, in sculpture he sought an innovative approach. Along with artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Picasso pioneered the technique of

assemblage in which existing objects are recycled and married in unusual juxtapositions in order to create something new. In the piece which Cortázar references above, two toy cars are used to stunning effect to generate the image of a baboon's face. Not only does this sculpture demonstrate Picasso's unique vision, it reminds those who gaze upon it that there are other ways of looking. Likewise, by suggesting that the Neapolitan may be in possession of similarly innovative perceptual faculties, Cortázar encourages the reader to question the way in which we see the world, and suggests that an altered vision could bring humanity to a higher plane. This treatment of questions of perception in the opening chapter of *Rayuela* is intended to impact significantly on the reader's interpretation of the novel. Specifically, chapter seventy-three foreshadows the portrayal throughout the text of the protagonist's search as the pursuit of new ways of seeing.

The 'tablero de dirección' leads the reader from chapter seventy-three to chapter one, which opens the section of the novel that is set in Paris. Chapter one is written in the first person; the narrator, we later discover, is an Argentine called Horacio Oliveira. The reader learns that Oliveira has been leading a bohemian lifestyle, wandering around the city with his lover, la Maga; spending his time in cafes; discussing art, jazz, philosophy, and literature, with his friends from the "Club de la Serpiente" (*R* 125; ch. 1). His life, however, is far from carefree. On the contrary, Oliveira is cursed with a mania for intense introspection which turns living into a constant and anguished struggle. Haunted by this pervading dissatisfaction with the universe as he encounters it, Oliveira is always searching for something else; "me había dado cuenta de que buscar era mi signo, emblema de los que salen de noche sin propósito fijo, razón de los matadores de brújulas" (*R* 126-27; ch. 1). Yet, the object of his search is by no means clear to Oliveira. For this reason, the protagonist of *Rayuela* uses metaphors such as 'el centro,' 'el otro lado,' 'el kibbutz del deseo,' or 'el Cielo,' to describe what he is looking for. There is much evidence in the novel to support the argument that these symbols represent a place, existentially speaking, from where Oliveira can experience a direct contact with the world. The object of the search in *Rayuela* is therefore akin to the pre-reflective involvement with phenomena which the philosopher attempts to access by means of the phenomenological

reduction. The phenomenologist reaches this 'phenomenological attitude' by altering his habitual mode of perception; he rejects the confines of the 'natural attitude,' and looks at the world with renewed eyes. *Rayuela* identifies the successful completion of Oliveira's quest with his embracing a specific way of seeing. The protagonist's search is nowhere connected more clearly with questions of perception than in chapter nineteen.

At this point in the main narrative, the protagonist has moved into his lover's flat. La Maga's baby, Rocamadour, is also living with them. Ordinarily, the child stays in the countryside where he is being raised, but when Rocamadour is taken ill, his mother brings him to the city in order to care for him herself. Chapter nineteen opens as Oliveira and la Maga discuss his search; he speaks of finding the centre from which it will be possible to grasp the unity of his life. When la Maga gets up to attend to her son, Oliveira continues to reflect on the nature of this quest. He associates the successful completion of his search with obtaining a true perspective, with accessing the right vantage point:

«Y ese centro que no sé lo que es, ¿no vale como expresión topográfica de una unidad? Ando por una enorme pieza con piso de baldosas y una de esas baldosas es el punto exacto en que debería pararme para que todo se ordenara en su justa perspectiva. El punto exacto». (R 214-15; ch. 19)

Oliveira is convinced that if he can learn to really look at himself and the world, everything will coalesce into a meaningful unity. As if to further underline the importance of ways of seeing in the existential trials of his protagonist, Cortázar uses the contemplation of visual art in a curious analogy. The focus of Oliveira's thoughts shifts away from the room in which he is standing, and alights on paintings which he has possibly seen in the Louvre:<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Amorós argues that the first painting mentioned is probably Titian's portrait of King Francis I of France (1494-1547); it is part of the Louvre's vast collection. The subject of the second picture is the Italian town of Sinigaglia (now Senigallia) on the Adriatic coast. Amorós does not offer any suggestions on the provenance or style of this painting. See footnotes 3 & 4 (R 215; ch. 19).

«Un cuadro anamórfico en el que hay que buscar el ángulo justo (y lo importante de este ejemplo es que el hángulo es terriblemente hagudo, hay que tener la nariz casi hadosada a la tela para que de golpe el montón de rayas sin sentido se convierta en el retrato de Francisco I o en la batalla de Sinigaglia, algo hincalificablemente hasombroso)». (R 215; ch. 19)

If these excerpts from chapter nineteen prove sufficiently that the search in *Rayuela* is represented as the pursuit of a new way of seeing, the nature of the desired form of perception is perhaps less readily discernible. Yet, it could be argued that the description of the longed-for perspective as being from a terribly acute angle, or as having one's nose right up against the canvas, offers some clue. Both images are symbolic of a way of seeing which is utterly focused on the object being perceived; no peripheral data are permitted to intrude on the direct contact established between the seer and that which is seen. The section of text quoted above also reveals to the reader the nature of the elements which threaten to impose themselves on this authentic form of perception. Here, we witness Oliveira's predilection for placing the letter H at the beginning of words. The next chapter in the sequence of the 'tablero de dirección,' chapter ninety, explains why Oliveira finds this practice necessary:

En esos casos Oliveira agarraba una hoja de papel y escribía las grandes palabras por las que iba resbalando su rumia. Escribía por ejemplo: «El gran hasunto», o «la hencrucijada» ... «La hunidad», hescribía Holiveira. «El hego y el hotro.» Usaba las haches como otros la penicilina. Después volvía más despacio al asunto, se sentía mejor ... A partir de esos momentos se sentía capaz de pensar sin que las palabras le jugaran sucio. (R 581; ch. 90)

Oliveira prefaces words with an H in an attempt to cleanse them of the residues of habitual use and established meaning which they have acquired over the years. He feels that it is impossible to know whether one's thoughts are transparent and entirely one's own if they are expressed by inherited formulae. At various points in the text, words are referred to as "las perras negras" (R 594; ch.93, for example); they are represented as

treacherous. According to both Oliveira and Morelli, language has become an impediment to direct experience. The way in which Morelli attempts to purify the words he uses is a symptom of the fact that “condena en el lenguaje el reflejo de una óptica y de un Organum falsos o incompletos, que nos enmascaran la realidad, la humanidad” (R 611; ch. 99). Oliveira is frustrated by his deep-rooted attachment to ideas and the language which supports them;<sup>76</sup> “la meditación siempre amenazada por los idola fori, las palabras que falsean las instituciones, las petrificaciones simplificantes” (R 450; ch. 48). The protagonist of *Rayuela* recognises that this habit distorts his contact with the world, and even prevents genuine being. In this respect, la Maga is the antithesis of Oliveira. Whilst discussing her character in chapter one hundred and forty-two, Ronald and Etienne remark that “no era capaz de creer en los nombres, tenía que apoyar el dedo sobre algo y sólo entonces lo admitía ... Sí, sí, pero en cambio era capaz de felicidades infinitas” (R 718; ch. 142).

Oliveira is not gratuitous in his use of the letter H to cleanse the words with which he describes the perspective necessary to access the centre. Rather, this indictment of language supports Cortázar’s representation of the search as the desire to obtain a new way of seeing that would constitute an authentic communion with the world. This new form of perception must not be contaminated by the thoughts and words which so obstinately impose themselves on Oliveira. In *The Doors of Perception*,<sup>77</sup> Aldous Huxley presents an analogous warning about the way in which language infects pure vision:

We must learn how to handle language effectively; but at the same time we must preserve and, if necessary, intensify our ability to look at the world directly and not through that half-opaque medium of concepts, which distorts every given fact into the all too familiar likeness of some generic label or explanatory abstraction. (DPHH 47)

It is telling that Cortázar borrows the term *idola fori* from Francis Bacon to refer to this barrier between mankind and reality. As the title

---

<sup>76</sup> “[L]a irritación de ... [saber] que como siempre me costaba mucho menos pensar que ser” (R 135; ch. 2).

<sup>77</sup> All quotations from this text will be followed by the abbreviation *DPHH*, and the page number, in parenthesis.

suggests, Bacon's seminal text, *Novum Organum*<sup>78</sup> (1620), proposes a new method for the investigation of nature. In Book 1 of the treatise, Bacon argues that there are four idols, or man-made impediments, which mislead us in our interactions with the world, and which must be rejected. The four idols are the *idola tribus* (Idols of the Tribe, prejudices arising from human nature); the *idola specus* (Idols of the Cave, prejudices which are peculiar to the individual); the *idola fori* (Idols of the Marketplace, prejudices resulting from social relationships); and the *idola theatri* (Idols of the Theatre, prejudices coming from false philosophical systems). The *idola fori*, which Oliveira refers to in *Rayuela*, are false ideas which stem from the deception of language. Bacon makes the point that people habitually use words without having any clear concept of their meaning. Indeed, he argues that standard practice allows society to manipulate words which have no coherent idea attached to them at all. For this reason, in Book 1, aphorism LIX, Bacon identifies the *idola fori* as possibly the greatest obstacle in accessing the truth:

But the Idols of the Market Place are the most troublesome of all — idols which have crept into the understanding through the alliances of words and names. For men believe that their reason governs words; but it is also true that words react on the understanding; and this it is that has rendered philosophy and the sciences sophistical and inactive. Now words, being commonly framed and applied according to the capacity of the vulgar, follow those lines of division which are most obvious to the vulgar understanding. And whenever an understanding of greater acuteness or a more diligent observation would alter those lines to suit the true divisions of nature, words stand in the way and resist the change.

The argument which Bacon presents here, in some respects, foreshadows the statement which Husserl makes centuries later regarding the need to reject the 'natural attitude.' Both men are searching for a way to grasp the essence of phenomena, and both recognise the role of habitual forms of understanding in preventing that access. Having said that, the reader must not infer from the foregoing that the *Novum Organum* and phenomenology are part of the same project; on the contrary, they differ in

---

<sup>78</sup> *Novum Organum* is a Latin term meaning 'new instruments.'

many important respects. In his treatise, Bacon proposes a scientific method designed to reveal the actual composition of forms, whilst phenomenology investigates, from a philosophical standpoint, the way in which phenomena appear to the perceiver. Indeed, it could be argued that the *Novum Organum* forms an integral part of the naturalistic prejudice which Husserl criticises in *The Crisis of European Sciences*. From the perspective of phenomenology, the 'new instruments' heralded by Bacon ironically soon joined the ranks of the *idola fori* which he had criticised. Inherited scientific reasoning came to impede direct access to the world in the same manner as habitual use of language. Despite the fact that history has pitted Bacon and Husserl against each other in this way, the similarities between the *idola fori* and the 'natural attitude' should not be overlooked. At the most basic level, these two concepts caution against the anaesthetising effects of habit, and that is why both are relevant to Cortázar's representation of the search in *Rayuela*.

As chapter nineteen draws to a close, Oliveira recognises that the ultimate failure of his search would be to fall into the same trap as many of his contemporaries, to accept the semblance of unity built using principles and words. He wonders at how concepts such as charity, justice, and morality, "pasaban a ser como dientes o pelos, algo aceptado y fatalmente incorporado, algo que no se vive ni se analiza porque *es así*" (R 216; ch. 19). Oliveira describes this as "la violación del hombre por la palabra" (R 216; ch. 19); he despairs of reaching the centre because he is incapable of articulating his search without reference to the enemy. Cortázar's protagonist understands that his education and intellect constitute a barrier in his search for "una reconciliación total consigo mismo y con la realidad que habitaba" (R 216; ch. 19); he recognises that the successful completion of his quest would be to experience life directly without recourse to language and ideas:

algo que fuera por fin como un sentido de eso que ahora era nada más que estar ahí tomando mate y mirando el culito al aire de Rocamadour y los dedos de la Maga yendo y viniendo con algodones, oyendo los berridos de Rocamadour a quien no le gustaba en absoluto que le anduvieran en el traste. (R 216; ch. 19)

If Oliveira here criticises the sclerosis of attitude which typifies his Argentine friends, he spends an entire chapter lamenting the way in which our modes of perception become fixed. Chapter eighty-four of *Rayuela* opens with an anecdote which demonstrates how two people can perceive the same set of circumstances in entirely different ways. Oliveira has collected some beautiful leaves and pasted them on to a lampshade in his flat. Gregorovious, a member of the club, calls by and stays for a few hours but does not even look at the lamp. Another day, a painter friend called Etienne comes to visit Oliveira and, with his hat still in his hand, immediately notices the lampshade. He picks it up, studies the leaves, and effusively compares it to the style of Dürer.<sup>79</sup> The utter contrast between the way in which Gregorovious and Etienne respond to the lamp causes Oliveira to reflect on the fact that each individual has his own visual limits. Whilst the perceptual boundaries of childhood frequently exhibit a certain elasticity, Cortázar's protagonist maintains that "[u]n día eso *se fija* (lo que llaman la madurez, el hombre hecho y derecho)" (R 570; ch.84). Oliveira employs two metaphors to illustrate this sclerosis of vision which accompanies adulthood.

The most striking metaphor for the perceptual limits of the individual can be found in Oliveira's description of man as an amoeba that sticks out pseudopods to capture and digest data from the surrounding environment. These pseudopods clearly symbolise man's perceptual faculties. According to Oliveira, the length and direction of these pseudopods vary greatly from person to person. Upon reaching maturity, the pseudopods of the amoeba become fixed in their current state of development, with the result that, in certain directions they can see further, whilst on the side of their stunted pseudopods, they fail to perceive something directly in front of them.<sup>80</sup> For this reason, Gregorovious instantly understood that Oliveira was preoccupied about Pola (another lover), yet he was incapable of seeing a lamp sitting just two feet away. Etienne, on the other hand, is captivated by the leaves on the lampshade, but he does not notice Oliveira's mood. The protagonist of

---

<sup>79</sup> Albrecht Dürer, German painter (1471-1528).

<sup>80</sup> Oliveira claims that the only exception to this rule is a genius such as Goethe (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832, German writer). He argues that geniuses have their pseudopods stuck out in all directions, at the same length, and in a uniform diameter (R 570; ch. 84).



*Rayuela* sadly notes that he is not immune to this deficiency in perception: "Me quedé pensando en todas las hojas que no veré yo, el juntador de hojas secas ... Por todos lados habrá lámparas, habrá hojas que no veré" (R 568; ch. 84).

Our perceptual limits become fixed in adulthood because it is a time characterised by the rejection of uncertainty and the accumulation of so-called truths. However, Oliveira suggests that maturity is but a semblance of unity. In fact, we are all divided beings, comfortably unaware of our deficient pseudopods:

[H]ay líneas de aire a los lados de tu cabeza, de tu mirada, zonas de detención de tus ojos, tu olfato, tu gusto, es decir que andás con tu límite *por fuera* y más allá de ese límite no podés llegar cuando creés que has aprehendido plenamente cualquier cosa. (R 569; ch. 84)

Once we believe that we have grasped the totality of something, it becomes extremely difficult to move beyond our concept of that totality. Oliveira illustrates this point by means of the iceberg metaphor (R 570; ch. 84).<sup>81</sup> He argues that man only sees the tip of the iceberg; much lies concealed beneath the waters of habit. Throughout the novel, the protagonist strives to see the other side of habit; he desperately hopes to acquire an alternative perspective on the world. The amoeba with pseudopods, which Cortázar presents in chapter eighty-four of *Rayuela*, shares considerable similarities with Husserl's description of man's relationship to the 'natural attitude.' Our reliance on the 'natural attitude' has developed our perceptual faculties in a certain direction to the utter detriment of our ability to adopt a radically alternative perspective.

The long pseudopods of Western society, such as reason and objectivity, are largely unaware of the mysterious underdeveloped pseudopods. The latter constitute an integral part of each of us, but access to, and development of, these more intuitive perceptual faculties has been

---

<sup>81</sup> Here, with characteristic irony, Oliveira uses the tragic story of the *Titanic* to symbolise the dangers of ignoring what lies beneath.

blocked by our adherence to the 'natural attitude.' Moreover the description in the above quotation, of man's perceptual limits as being outside, seems to echo Husserl's criticism of the role which the concept of objectivity plays in the 'natural attitude.' From the natural sciences and traditional Western philosophy we have inherited the belief that the reality of phenomena is objectively verifiable. By positing a world which is independent of the perceiver, the 'natural attitude' forms a mental barrier that, not only makes it difficult to see beyond these limits, but, perhaps more frighteningly, convinces us that there is nothing further to be revealed:

En esa forma el tipo va viviendo bastante convencido de que no se le escapa nada interesante, hasta que un instantáneo corrimiento a un costado le muestra por un segundo, sin por desgracia darle tiempo a *saber qué*, le muestra su parcelado ser, sus seudópodos irregulares, la sospecha de que más allá, donde ahora veo el aire limpio, o en esta indecisión, en la encrucijada de la opción, yo mismo, en el resto de la realidad que ignoro me estoy esperando inútilmente. (R 570; ch. 84)

Most people never experience this fleeting epiphany, secure as they are in the 'natural attitude,' but Oliveira confesses that he frequently becomes conscious of his deficient pseudopods. "Puedo saber mucho o vivir mucho en un sentido dado, pero entonces *lo otro* se arrima por el lado de mis carencias y me rasca la cabeza con su uña fría" (R 570; ch. 84). This awareness of his perceptual limits is intolerable because it asserts itself at moments when he is content that everything has coalesced into a fixed and transparent unity. Moreover, whilst Oliveira recognises the shortcomings of his perceptual faculties, he still struggles to change the way in which he sees. Only on rare occasions, which Oliveira refers to in chapter eighty-four as 'paravisions,' does he manage to see from an altered perspective. He claims that these 'paravisions' are often brought on by extremes of happiness or depression. Although they are extremely brief in their duration, in allowing Oliveira to see himself from a different perspective, the 'paravisions' reveal to him his irregular pseudopods:

[E]n ese instante sé *lo que soy* porque estoy exactamente sabiendo *lo que no soy* (eso que ignoraré luego astutamente) ... Cuando es eso, ya no estoy mirando hacia el mundo, de mí a lo otro, sino que por un segundo soy el mundo, el plano de fuera, *lo demás mirándome*. Me veo como pueden verme los otros ... Mido mi defectividad, advierto todo lo que por ausencia o defecto no nos vemos nunca. Veo lo que no soy. (R 569; ch. 84)

As Mac Adam points out in “New Forms of Perception,” this altered vision is the object of Oliveira’s search. Yet, he is not content with the tantalising glimpses offered by the ‘paravisions.’ Cortázar’s protagonist seeks a permanent way of seeing which is completely free from the constraints of the ‘natural attitude.’ For this reason, Oliveira cultivates situations which he considers conducive to provoking the ‘paravisions.’ Principally, these strategies involve events of a more primal nature, such as sex, death, or play.<sup>82</sup> Somewhat removed from the primacy of reason, Oliveira seems to consider such moments as possible vehicles for reaching ‘*el otro lado*.’ Notably, he also attempts to divest these incidents of any habitual gestures and, instead, actively seeks transgressive practices.

Thus, chapter eighty-four reveals one of the central themes of *Rayuela*; it identifies the object of the protagonist’s search as a new way of seeing. Therein, Oliveira laments the way in which habit leads to the stagnation of man’s perceptive faculties, and he recognises this blindness as the source of his own angst. However, the brief ‘paravisions’ convince Oliveira that it is possible to access a view from elsewhere, and his actions throughout *Rayuela* are an attempt to achieve just that. This interpretation of the novel is supported by the fact that the concerns of the writer, Morelli, utterly mirror those of Oliveira. Chapter sixty-six describes a mock-up of the final page of one of Morelli’s books. The page contains a single sentence: “«En el fondo sabía que no se puede ir más allá porque no lo hay»” (R 531; ch. 66). This

---

<sup>82</sup> See chapters 5, 28, and 41 of *Rayuela*. Respectively, these describe the way in which Oliveira ritualises his sexual relationship with la Maga, the way he conceals Rocamadour’s death from la Maga, whilst simultaneously alerting everyone else in the room of the fact, and the construction of a ‘bridge’ between two upper storey windows using planks before compelling Talita to cross them. In each case, there are references to the possibility that the action being undertaken might reveal to Oliveira the Other Side, and thus signal the end of his search.

phrase is repeated down the entire length of the page. There are no commas or full stops, so that the repeated sentence gives the impression of forming a wall. Indeed, the page is a wall of words which illustrates the very meaning of the sentence.

Yet, despite the seemingly definite quality of this text, Morelli subtly demonstrates that the wall has another side, and that it can be reached: “Pero hacia abajo y a la derecha, en una de las frases falta la palabra *lo*. Un ojo sensible descubre el hueco entre los ladrillos, la luz que pasa” (R 531; ch.66). Whilst chapter sixty-six does not explicitly identify the nature of this wall, Morelli’s frequent criticism of habits of seeing elsewhere in the novel makes for compelling comparison. The suggestion that a sensitive eye may discover a passage through the wall is a clear reference to questions of perception. In this way, Morelli here seems to echo the concerns and hopes which Oliveira expresses in chapter eighty-four. Both men recognise that habitual ways of seeing form a wall through which it becomes increasingly difficult to pass. However, Oliveira and Morelli firmly believe that renewing our modes of perception is not only possible, but that it would improve our very way of being.

The ‘hole in the wall’ metaphor which Morelli uses in chapter sixty-six to express the possibility of a form of perception free from the constraints of the ‘natural attitude’ is redolent of a short story by H. G. Wells entitled “The Door in the Wall.” Indeed, the manner in which Cortázar represents his protagonist’s search shows marked similarities with the principal themes of Wells’s text. Following the untimely death of his friend, a successful politician named Lionel Wallace, the narrator of “The Door in the Wall” recounts a tale in which reason and mysticism vie for precedence within man. He explains that, as a child, Wallace discovered a door in a wall which leads to an utterly wondrous universe. On returning to our world, Wallace devotes his life to the pursuit of logic, and the door in the wall disappears. However, with the advancing years, re-entering the world beyond the door seems increasingly vital to the protagonist of Wells’s story. Wallace searches fervently for the door in the wall, but each time it appears, he places the demands of the ‘natural attitude’ ahead of opening it. Ultimately, Wallace dies when he opens

a door which has been cut into hoarding to facilitate the movement of workers who are excavating a tunnel, and he falls into the pit. The title of Wells's story has become synonymous with any form of passage which transports people out of habitual modes of being, to the other side. Huxley, for example, uses the phrase when discussing man's search for transcendence in *The Doors of Perception*:

That humanity at large will ever be able to dispense with Artificial Paradises seems very unlikely. Most men and women lead lives at the worst so painful, at the best so monotonous, poor and limited that the urge to escape, the longing to transcend themselves if only for a few moments, is and has always been one of the principal appetites of the soul. Art and religion, carnivals and saturnalia, dancing and listening to oratory – all these have served, in H. G. Wells' phrase, as Doors in the Wall. (38)

Notably, Wallace only opens the door in the wall during the innocence of early childhood. Cortázar has often represented children as being more receptive to the mysteries of the universe than adults. Still somewhat free from the influences of reason and habit, Cortázar believes that the child enjoys a more direct communion with the phenomena of the world. Standish agrees, declaring that "Cortázar saw children as spontaneous and intuitive beings uninhibited by the trappings of adulthood, the conventions and patterns of thought and action that limit adults" (*Understanding Julio Cortázar* 34). Naturally, this frankness extends to the way in which children perceive. The narrator of Cortázar's short story "Manuscrito hallado en un bolsillo" reflects that "los niños ... miran fijo y de lleno en las cosas hasta el día en que les enseñan a situarse también en los intersticios" (CC2 66). For this reason, Cortázar most frequently applies the verb *mirar* to the mode of perception exhibited by children, and by adults, such as la Maga, who preserve a child-like openness (*Understanding Julio Cortázar* 55). Much of Cortázar's writing suggests that an authentic mode of being is only accessible to those who retain, as Eugen Fink described it, an attitude of total wonder towards the world.

The part of *Rayuela* that most clearly contrasts the child's way of seeing with that of an adult constrained by the 'natural attitude' is chapter ninety-eight. As Oliveira reads a note by Morelli concerning a young boy, he is reminded of la Maga's nature. He is frustrated by the fact that, whilst he recognises that she is capable of showing the way to 'el otro lado,' his incorrigibly logical optic nerve continues to see her world as chaotic. In the note which Oliveira is reading, Morelli records experiencing a similar sensation when talking with the young boy who delivers his post. Morelli breaks off his reading of Heisenberg<sup>83</sup> to listen to the boy as he describes a model airplane that he is building.

Mientras me cuenta, da dos saltitos sobre el pie izquierdo, tres sobre el derecho, dos sobre el izquierdo. Le pregunto por qué dos y tres, y no dos y dos o tres y tres. Me mira sorprendido, no comprende. Sensación de que Heisenberg y yo estamos del otro lado de un territorio, mientras que el niño sigue todavía a caballo, con un pie en cada uno, sin saberlo, y que pronto no estará más que de nuestro lado y toda comunicación se habrá perdido. (R 609-10; ch. 98)

Here, Cortázar thoroughly places Morelli on the side of the adult whose perceptual faculties have become stagnant. The reference to Heisenberg underlines the nature and extent of his intellectual development, whilst his question to the boy reveals a solid foundation of common sense. Conversely, the actions of the boy are represented as utterly instinctive; he does not recognise any validity in the writer's question. Perhaps this is why Cortázar opens this chapter with the following sentence: "Y así es cómo los que nos iluminan son los ciegos" (R 609; ch. 98). It is also noteworthy that Morelli suggests that there are two territories. The candour of children allows them to see the 'Door in the Wall' and enter the world beyond. However, Morelli predicts that as the boy moves into adulthood, his ability to access the other side will wane in direct proportion to his accumulation of the type of attitudes which are required if one is to survive on this side.

---

<sup>83</sup> Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976), German physicist and winner of the Nobel Prize in physics in 1932.

Whilst Oliveira desperately desires and searches for a 'Door in the Wall,' he remains on this side by virtue of the fact that he is naturally adept at key elements of the 'natural attitude,' such as logic. Consequently, he only ever achieves brief glimpses from an altered perspective during his 'paravisions.' It is pertinent to recall that Oliveira attempts to provoke these 'paravisions' by means of strategies such as play. By way of comparison, it is interesting to note that, on one occasion, Lionel Wallace sees the door in the wall whilst playing a game. He calls the game North-West Passage, and the aim is to discover an alternative route to school. Wallace explains to the narrator:

The way to school was plain enough; the game consisted in finding some way that wasn't plain, starting off ten minutes early in some almost hopeless direction, and working one's way round through unaccustomed streets to my goal. (Wells 12)

This temptation to reject the strictures of routine in order to see the world in a new way, to make oneself more receptive to the richness of life, is the same impulse that prevents Oliveira and la Maga from fixing a time and place to meet. Indeed, it could be argued that Oliveira's search for a new form of perception is the impetus behind all of his exploits, particularly his sojourn in Paris and his relationship with la Maga.

The protagonist's dissatisfaction with his habitual way of seeing is revealed early in the main narrative of *Rayuela*. In chapter three the reader accompanies Oliveira through his insomnia, as he ponders the nature of his relationship with the world. He acknowledges "el peso del sujeto en la noción del objeto" (R 141; ch. 3); his mode of perception is heavily influenced by his personal history. Oliveira recognises that it is foolish to discount, and extremely difficult to counter, the impact which nationality, education, and family, has had on his outlook. Yet, he is grateful to la Maga for making him see that the role of experience in determining the nature of our perception is not confined to such monumental influences. Rather, seemingly insignificant events "podían ser factores de primer orden en su cosmovisión" (R 141; ch. 3).

Oliveira resolutely refuses to fall into the same trap as many of his contemporaries, whose measure of professional success allows them to consider themselves insightful whilst simultaneously occasioning a sclerosis of their perceptive faculties.

However, Oliveira is not immune to habits of perception. Indeed, his determination not to adhere to any particular viewpoint, to look at everything with the same objective eye, has become an accursed reflex: "Lo malo estaba en que a fuerza de temer la excesiva localización de los puntos de vista, había terminado por pesar y hasta aceptar demasiado el sí y el no de todo, a mirar desde el fiel los platillos de la balanza" (R 141; ch. 3). In this way, Oliveira has lost his sense of unity; he is consequently incapable of enjoying the type of direct experience of phenomena which is so typical of la Maga. Although Cortázar's protagonist envies the contentment that this form of perception can inspire, his inveterately logical intellect soon raises objections. Oliveira criticises the egocentrism which motivates this way of seeing; his references to Aesop's fables indicate that he fears the potential for self-deception and the use of weak reasons to justify oneself, which the rejection of an objective viewpoint often implies (R 143; ch. 3).

Yet, Oliveira also recognises the limits of the 'natural attitude,' and, despite his reservations, he covets a pre-reflective experience of the world which might provide access to the centre. For example, he reflects on the actions of heroic soldiers:

[I]nsinuaban quizá una supervisión, un instantáneo asomarse a algo absoluto, por fuera de toda conciencia ... frente a lo cual la clarividencia ordinaria, la lucidez de gabinete, de tres de la mañana en la cama y en mitad de un cigarrillo, eran menos eficaces que las de un topo. (R 143; ch. 3)

Certain that he must alter his way of seeing in order to gain access to '*el otro lado*,' Oliveira consults la Maga when she wakes. Without a moment of hesitation his lover declares that a truly intuitive mode of being would be impossible for Oliveira; he thinks too much before taking any action.



Significantly, la Maga uses visual art as a metaphor to illustrate the contrast between the ways in which she and Oliveira interact with the world:

-Vos sos como un testigo, sos el que va al museo y mira los cuadros. Quiero decir que los cuadros están ahí y vos en el museo, cerca y lejos al mismo tiempo. Yo soy un cuadro. Rocamadour es un cuadro. Etienne es un cuadro, esta pieza es un cuadro. Vos creés que estás en esta pieza pero no estás. Vos estás mirando la pieza, no estás en la pieza. (R 144; ch. 3)

By describing Oliveira as a witness, la Maga emphasises how his analytical perspective prevents him from communicating directly with the phenomena of the world. A perfect example of how his excessive logic leads to stasis, and an ensuing void, can be seen in chapter ninety. Ronald, a member of the club, asks Oliveira to help him put up posters around Paris demanding Algerian independence. A thorough consideration of the situation causes Oliveira to refuse to help. Starting from the premise that the majority of social action is simply a convenient mask for selfish motives, Oliveira fears that he would only be agreeing to help Ronald in order to assuage his own guilt, or present himself as a hero.

Cortázar's protagonist is simply incapable of spontaneous action. Reflecting on the nature of his being, Oliveira here seems to echo la Maga by identifying himself as a spectator: "Ser actor significaba renunciar a la platea, y él parecía nacido para ser espectador en filo uno. «Lo malo», se decía Oliveira, «es que además pretendo ser un espectador activo y ahí empieza la cosa»" (R 583; ch.90). Oliveira's naturally logical disposition pulls against his desire to experience life in an authentic and utterly uninhibited way. Yet, he is not entirely closed off; Cortázar's protagonist catches occasional and brief glimpses of the secrets beyond the 'Door in the Wall':

Se sabía espectador al margen del espectáculo, como estar en un teatro con los ojos vendados: a veces le llegaba el sentido segundo de alguna palabra, de alguna música, llenándolo de ansiedad porque era capaz de intuir que ahí estaba el sentido primero. En esos momentos

se sabía más próximo al centro que muchos que vivían convencidos de ser el eje de la rueda, pero la suya era una proximidad inútil, un instante tantálico que ni siquiera adquiriría calidad suplicio. (R 584; ch. 90)

It is noteworthy that, in the above quotation, Cortázar once more associates the successful completion of his protagonist's quest with the adoption of a new way of seeing. However, Oliveira cannot maintain this new form of perception, because the aims of his search are paradoxical; he wants to enjoy this rich, pre-reflective communion with the world whilst remaining consciously aware of how it functions. The implication here that Oliveira is figuratively blindfolded is an important one, which recurs with increasing frequency towards the end of the novel. The significance of this symbolism will be considered at a later stage in the current chapter.

The final exchange between Oliveira and la Maga, at the close of chapter three, undeniably supports the thesis that the protagonist of *Rayuela* yearns to see as his lover sees. Impressed by la Maga's judicious appraisal of his ontological impasse, Oliveira teasingly declares that her powers of perception could compete with those of Saint Thomas. La Maga misinterprets Oliveira's comment; she assumes that he refers to the disciple, when he had actually been thinking about Saint Thomas Aquinas.<sup>84</sup> The way in which Cortázar plays with the names of these two saints is extremely clever. Not only does it allow him to further underline the gulf between his protagonist's intellectualism and la Maga's impulsive nature, but it unequivocally frames their relationship, and Oliveira's search, with the theme of perception. When la Maga objects to what she interprets as a comparison with someone who required evidential proofs in order to believe, Oliveira realises that his lover has inadvertently picked the most appropriate Saint Thomas. In chapter four, Oliveira marvels at this ability to find satisfactory answers without the need to resort to any systematic thought: "«Cierra los ojos y da en el blanco», pensaba Oliveira. «Exactamente el sistema Zen de tirar el arco. Pero da en el blanco

---

<sup>84</sup> For a brief overview of Aquinas's thought on perception see Hamlyn's book 46-50. Like Aristotle, Aquinas emphasised the importance of direct sense perception, and in *De Veritate*, (q. 2a. 3 arg. 19) he declared that "nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu" ("nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses").

simplemente porque no sabe que ése es el sistema»" (R 150; ch. 4). Oliveira envies the simplicity and precision of this outlook:

Feliz de ella que podía creer sin ver, que formaba cuerpo con la duración, el continuo de la vida. Feliz de ella que estaba dentro de la pieza, que tenía derecho de ciudad en todo lo que tocaba y convivía, pez río abajo, hoja en el árbol, nube en el cielo, imagen en el poema. Pez, hoja, nube, imagen: exactamente eso, a menos que... (R 144; ch. 3)

He recognises that this organic form of existence could be the centre that he is trying to reach. Yet, whereas this direct communion with phenomena is an inherent quality of la Maga's being, Oliveira's dogged adherence to the 'natural attitude' provokes an element of distance in his perception of the world. Indeed, the '*a menos que...*' at the close of the above quotation is the perfect illustration of the protagonist's Achilles heel; as soon as he approaches a more intuitive way of seeing, his reasoning reflex asserts itself, and he begins to analyse the situation. In chapter two of *Rayuela* Oliveira admits that it has always been easier for him to think than to be.<sup>85</sup> Here Cortázar beautifully contrasts la Maga's way of seeing with that of his protagonist. Oliveira is proud of the disorganisation in which they live, considering it a rejection of convention. However, the fact that he thinks about being in terms of disorganisation and convention signifies that he is constrained by the 'natural attitude.' La Maga looks at the world in a very different way, "a la Maga no había que plantearle la realidad en términos metódicos, el elogio del desorden la hubiera escandalizado tanto como su denuncia" (R 134; ch. 2). Oliveira knows that by entering the world of la Maga, he will reach the other side. Yet, he notes with frustration that his logical mode of perception prevents him from submitting unreservedly:

---

<sup>85</sup> "Y así me había encontrado con la Maga, que era mi testigo y mi espía sin saberlo, y la irritación de estar pensando en todo eso y sabiendo que como siempre me costaba mucho menos pensar que ser" (R 135; ch. 2).

Lo que verdaderamente me exasperaba era saber que nunca volvería a estar tan cerca de mi libertad como en esos días en que me sentía acorralado por el mundo Maga, y que la ansiedad por liberarme era una admisión de derrota. (R 136; ch. 2)

At the end of chapter two, Oliveira feels as though he is assimilating la Maga's way of seeing; he wonders whether it makes as much sense to fashion a doll out of breadcrumbs, as it does to write a novel, or to give one's life in the defence of principles. However, he immediately assigns a value to each of these actions, thereby signalling a return to his customary mode of perception: "El péndulo cumple su vaivén instantáneo y otra vez me inserto en las categorías tranquilizadoras: muñequito insignificante, novela trascendente, muerte heroica" (R 138; ch. 2).

Of this disparity between the mode of perception exhibited by Oliveira and la Maga, Cortázar makes a central feature in his novel. It is both the stimulus for the relationship between these two characters, and the reason for the dissolution of their union. Not only does it reveal the key to the protagonist's search, but it seems to reflect the concerns of Morelli. Cortázar's portrayal of la Maga's *modus vivendi*, filtered as it often is through the opinions of the other characters, at times appears contradictory. Since Oliveira and the other members of the club both admire and scorn la Maga, she is represented as extremely perceptive in some respects, and woefully myopic in others. The members of the club are grateful when she takes them into her world and, for a moment, allows them to share in the wonder of seeing things as she sees them. Yet, in exasperation, they sneer at her inability of comprehend their intellectual discussions:

Dentro del grupo la Maga funcionaba muy mal, Oliveira se daba cuenta de que prefería ver por separado a todos los del Club, irse por la calle con Etienne o con Babs, meterlos en su mundo sin pretender nunca meterlos en su mundo pero metiéndolos porque era gente que no estaba esperando otra cosa que salirse del recorrido ordinario de los autobuses y de la historia, y así de una manera o de otra todos los del Club le estaba agradecidos a la Maga aunque la cubrieran de insultos a la menor ocasión. (R 147; ch. 4)

In chapter four, for example, Etienne responds cruelly to one of la Maga's questions by claiming that she would not understand his explanation. Hurt, la Maga sits at a distance from the others and begins to play with a leaf. When she removes the main body of the leaf in order to expose the veins, "un delicado fantasma verde se iba dibujando contra su piel" (R 151; ch. 4), Etienne snatches it from her to admire its beauty. It is notable that the members of the club only disparage la Maga when they are in the grip of the 'natural attitude,' repressed by reason and unable to see beyond the conventions of their intellectual education. Occasionally, they see well enough to recognise that la Maga's mode of perception leads to a richness of experience which seems increasingly inaccessible to them. La Maga's way of seeing shares many similarities with the 'phenomenological attitude,' as sought by philosophers through the phenomenological reduction.

Firstly, Cortázar portrays la Maga as someone who experiences phenomena directly. Without the intrusion of elements of the 'natural attitude,' such as habit and logic, la Maga is supremely capable of establishing an authentic contact with the world. In this way, Oliveira's lover sees the essence of things; she instinctively accomplishes the objective of phenomenology. Chapter one hundred and forty-two of *Rayuela* records a conversation between Etienne and Ronald about the nature of la Maga. Etienne recalls finding her in his studio one night; she was standing in front of a painting that he had completed that morning. As though she saw the true meaning of the painting, la Maga was crying terribly as she gazed at it. Etienne tells Ronald that he too had cried that morning on finishing the canvas. He regrets that he did not confess this to la Maga; it would have validated her intuitive response to the picture.

Logical as always, Ronald argues that this proves nothing; the incident was simply coincidental. Etienne disagrees, "- Por lo menos prueba un contacto. Cuántos otros, delante de esa tela, la apreciaron con frases pulidas, recuento de influencias, todos los comentarios posibles *en torno*" (R 719; ch. 142). Others who viewed Etienne's painting were prevented from truly seeing it by their obedience to the 'natural attitude.' They looked at the canvas with a logical eye, analysing the components, the colours, the style; when la Maga

gazed at the same picture, she instinctively saw what it was trying to communicate. Etienne understands the nature of la Maga's gaze because he also once experienced this type of vision:

[E]n la galería Barberini, estaba analizando un Andrea del Sarto, lo que se dice analizar, y en una de esas lo vi. No me pidas que explique nada. Lo vi (y no todo el cuadro, apenas un detalle del fondo, una figurita en un camino). Se me saltaron las lágrimas, es todo lo que te puedo decir. (R 720; ch. 142)

It is extremely pertinent to our use of phenomenological philosophy in this study of *Rayuela* that, in chapter one hundred and forty-two, Etienne identifies the accumulation of knowledge as damaging to our innate perceptual qualities:

[E]stamos bien instalados y satisfechos en nuestra ciencia colectiva. Es sabido que el Littré<sup>86</sup> nos hace dormir tranquilos, está ahí al alcance de la mano, con todas las respuestas. Y es cierto, pero solamente porque ya no sabemos hacer las preguntas que lo liquidarían. (R 720; ch. 142)

As though echoing Oliveira in other parts of the text, Etienne implies that mankind has lost something fundamental, has strayed away from the centre. Of all the members of the club, only la Maga "estaba más cerca y lo sentía" (R 720; ch. 142); the others have been blinded by their eager acceptance of traditional forms of knowledge. In commenting on la Maga's eagerness to learn, Etienne claims that she confused knowing with understanding. He argues that la Maga's ignorance afforded her an authentic contact with the essence of the world, "La pobre entendía tan bien muchas cosas que ignorábamos a fuerza de saberlas" (R 718; ch. 142).

---

<sup>86</sup> According to Amorós in footnote 8 (R 720; ch. 142), this reference is to Émile Littré (1801-1872), author of the *Dictionary of the French Language*.

Oliveira also recognises the value of la Maga's pure vision, "se daba cuenta de que la Maga se asomaba a cada rato a esas grandes terrazas sin tiempo que todos ellos buscaban dialecticamente" (R 150; ch. 4). For this reason, he advises her: "-No aprendas datos idiotas ... Por qué te vas a poner anteojos si no los necesitás" (R 151; ch. 4). According to phenomenology, a way of seeing which remains uninhibited by the 'natural attitude' is characterised by a sense of wonder. Chapter four of *Rayuela* unambiguously depicts la Maga's form of perception as one that marvels at the seemingly mundane, and is entirely impervious to the dictates of convention:

[E]sa manera de no hacer las cosas como hay que hacerlas, de ignorar resueltamente las grandes cifras de la cuenta y quedarse en cambio arrobada delante de la cola de un modesto 3, o parada en medio de la calle (el Renault negro frenaba a dos metros y el conductor sacaba la cabeza y puteaba con el acento de Picardía), parada como si tal cosa para mirar desde el medio de la calle una vista del Panteón a lo lejos, siempre mucho mejor que la vista que se tenía desde la vereda. (R 147; ch. 4)

Each time that the gaze of other members of the club settles on a given object, they taint their vision with associations taken from history, literature, or philosophy. This affliction reaches almost epidemic proportions in Oliveira; in chapter ninety, he laments that he is even capable of making a dialectical operation out of soup.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, one of the qualities that most attracts him to la Maga is her ability to look at the world without labelling it. On the day they meet, Oliveira instantly recognises this essential difference between himself and la Maga:

París danzaba afuera esperándonos, apenas habíamos desembarcado, apenas vivíamos, todo estaba ahí sin nombre y sin historia (sobre todo para Babylone, y el pobre Sèvres hacía un enorme esfuerzo, fascinado por esa manera Babylone de mirar lo gótico sin ponerle etiquetas, de andar por las orillas del río sin ver remontar los drakens normandos). (R 596-97; ch. 93)

---

<sup>87</sup> "«Hasta de la sopa hago una operación dialéctica»" (R 584; ch. 90).

Oliveira tries to see Paris with the same simplicity and sense of wonder which la Maga enjoys, but his use here of the labels Babylonia and Sèvres are the very proof of his failure. Oliveira creates a metaphor out of the fact that he and la Maga go for a drink on Sèvres-Babylone the day they meet.<sup>88</sup> Referring to the delicate porcelain from Sèvres, Oliveira designates himself as such, whilst the associations which Babylonia elicits, “raíz de tiempo, cosa anterior, primeval being, terror y delicia de los comienzos” (*R* 596; ch. 93), prompts him to give la Maga that epithet.

As if to accentuate the distancing effect of Oliveira’s gaze, Cortázar portrays la Maga’s perception as a unity with the object of experience. Her way of seeing reveals a visceral quality reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the body-subject (*Phenomenology of Perception*). On more than one occasion in *Rayuela* Cortázar emphasises that la Maga’s mode of perception reveals a perfect harmony between herself and the phenomena of the world. It will be recalled that in chapter three she is compared to a fish swimming downstream, a leaf on a tree, a cloud in the sky, and an image in a poem (*R* 144; ch. 3). In the moments following the dissolution of his relationship with la Maga, Oliveira recognises that their defining difference is her pre-reflective union with the world against the analytical distance which he inevitably maintains:

Hay ríos metafísicos, ella los nada como esa golondrina está nadando en el aire, girando alucinada en torno al campanario ... Yo describo y defino y deseo esos ríos, ella los nada. Yo los busco, los encuentro, los miro desde el puente, ella los nada. Y no lo sabe, igualita a la golondrina. No necesita saber como yo, puede vivir en el desorden sin que ninguna conciencia de orden la retenga. Ese desorden que es su orden misterioso, esa bohemia del cuerpo y el alma que le abre de par en par las verdaderas puertas. Su vida no es desorden más que para mí, enterrado en prejuicios que desprecio y respeto al mismo tiempo. (*R* 234; ch. 21)

---

<sup>88</sup> Sèvres-Babylone is a corner, and a Paris metro station, where the Rue de Sèvres and the Rue de Babylone meet and intersect with the Boulevard Raspail.



Merleau-Ponty argues that perception is never the result of pure consciousness; rather, the perceiver is an incarnate subjectivity. According to Merleau-Ponty, perception originates from the inherence in the world of the body-subject; it is a pre-reflective response to phenomena. However, this “living dialogue between the body-subject and its existential environment” has become hidden beneath reasoning consciousness (Langer 73). It is the task of phenomenology to return this primordial bond, between perceiving subject and object, to its rightful place.

Merleau-Ponty maintains that, in its purest form, perception is a synaesthetic experience. He claims that the senses only appear as separate following an act of reflection. On more than one occasion in *Rayuela*, Cortázar depicts la Maga’s perception of her environment in terms which are extremely suggestive of synaesthesia. In chapter twenty-eight, as the club are gathered in la Maga’s flat, they hear footsteps on the stairs outside. La Maga’s perception of the event seamlessly alters from the auditory to the tactile; “-La escalera se va dibujando en la oreja – dijo la Maga - Ahora es como si yo tuviera una mano en la escalera y la pasara por los escalones uno por uno” (R 302; ch. 28). In a similar vein, la Maga sees wonderful colours and images in chapter twenty-six as she listens to Gregorovius explaining complex ideas:

Por momentos alguna frase de Gregorovius se dibujaba en la sombra, verde o blanca, a veces era un Atlan, otras un Estève, después un sonido cualquiera giraba y se aglutinaba, crecía como un Manessier, como un Wilfredo Lam, como un Piaubert, como un Etienne, como Max Ernst. Era divertido, Gregorovius decía: «...y están todos mirando los rumbos babilónicos, por expresarme así, y entonces...», la Maga veía nacer de las palabras un resplandeciente Deyrolle, un Bissière, pero Gregorovius ya hablaba de la inutilidad de un ontología empírica y de golpe un Friedländer, un delicado Villon que reticulaba la penumbra y la hacía vibrar, *ontología empírica*, azules como de humo, rosas, *empírica*, un amarillo pálido, un hueco donde temblaban chispas blanquecinas.<sup>89</sup> (R 278-79; ch. 26)

---

<sup>89</sup> According to Amorós, all of the names referenced here are painters of the Paris School, predominantly from the early twentieth century. For a brief description of their styles see R 278-79; ch. 26, footnotes 1-8.

It could be argued that the above quotation, in some measure, negates our erstwhile portrayal of la Maga as an individual who perceives without reference to received ideas. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the painters are named by the third-person omniscient narrator of chapter twenty-six. In a manner which has become a trademark of Julio Cortázar's writing, the narrator employs cultural allusions to communicate la Maga's synaesthetic experience. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that la Maga draws any artistic analogies from the bursts of colour that she sees.

As has already been noted above, Maurice Merleau-Ponty claimed that authentic perception is synaesthetic. The scientific prejudices criticised by Husserl in *The Crisis of European Sciences* have blinded us to this truth, and convinced mankind that synaesthesia is the exception rather than the rule. Whilst la Maga seems to be impervious to the effects of the 'natural attitude,' they have utterly anaesthetised Oliveira's perceptual faculties. Consequently, his search must follow the path of the phenomenologist, cleansing himself of the 'natural attitude' in the phenomenological reduction, and engaging with the lived experience of his body-subject. Only by focusing on the phenomenal body, the actual subject of perception, will he rediscover the true nature of perception prior to any intellectual reconstruction of our experience. The current chapter has previously indicated the various strategies which Oliveira uses to evade the constraints of the 'natural attitude,' and thereby attain an altered form of perception. There is also an implication, in chapter twelve of *Rayuela*, that taking substances which artificially alter the way in which the user sees could open a 'Door in the Wall.' In this part of the novel, the protagonist is at a party held by the club, listening to jazz, smoking, and drinking vodka:

Una mano de humo lo llevaba de la mano, lo iniciaba en un descenso, si era un descenso, le mostraba un centro, si era un centro ... Cerrando los ojos alcanzó a decirse que si un pobre ritual era capaz de excentrarlo así para mostrarle mejor un centro, excentrarlo hacia un centro sin embargo inconcebible, tal vez no todo estaba perdido y alguna vez, en otras circunstancias, después de otras pruebas, el acceso sería posible ... No estaba lo bastante borracho para dejar de pensar consecutivamente, y le bastaba ese pobre pensamiento para sentir que lo alejaba cada vez más de algo demasiado lejano,

demasiado precioso para mostrarse a través de esas nieblas torpemente propicias. (R 180; ch. 12)

Interestingly, Cortázar's protagonist feels closer to the centre upon closing his eyes. Perhaps this is symbolic of the phenomenological reduction; in order to reach the other side, Oliveira must first close himself off to the habitual associations that he draws from phenomena. Although Oliveira concludes that an "Artificial Paradise" (Huxley, *The Doors* 38), such as alcohol, is too base to reveal the 'Door in the Wall,' it is interesting to note that the centre begins to recede as soon as he engages his consciousness in an analytical way.

By way of a compelling comparison, it should be noted that a number of theorists, whose primary area of study was the nature of perception, examined the effect of substances such as mescaline on the experience of the perceiver. Merleau-Ponty, for example, argued that the original synaesthetic nature of perception comes to the fore under the influence of mescaline. He concluded that the drug allowed the perceiver to suspend the analytic attitude which ordinarily fragments the world.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, the subject experienced the essence of phenomena acutely, and everything appeared unified. The English author, Aldous Huxley, experienced this way of seeing for himself when he experimented with mescaline. One morning in 1953, Huxley took four-tenths of a gram. Recording his impressions during the subsequent hours, Huxley later expanded his interpretation of the incident into a comprehensive study of perception in which he draws from diverse sources, including Zen Buddhism and art history. He published the resultant text as *The Doors of Perception*.<sup>91</sup> Coincidentally, Oliveira thinks about this book during the same party referred to above (R 208; ch. 18).

---

<sup>90</sup> This is exactly what the philosopher is attempting to achieve through the phenomenological reduction, without benefit of narcotics.

<sup>91</sup> Huxley borrowed the title for his book from the following lines by William Blake: "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (Blake, *The Marriage* xxii).

Huxley concurs with the founding principle of phenomenology; the essence of phenomena is accessible to those who truly look.<sup>92</sup> In *The Doors of Perception* Huxley argues that all humans are potentially “Mind at Large” (11); that is, capable of experiencing the infinite qualities of the world. However, he claims that in order to survive, mankind has developed a sort of “reducing valve” (11) which blocks out ‘superfluous’ elements of a total awareness that threatens to overwhelm us. After millennia of evolution, most of us are now only capable of perceiving that which is useful. Once more, the views expressed here by Huxley are in accordance with phenomenology; his ‘reducing valve’ is simply an alternative term for the ‘natural attitude.’ According to Huxley, certain individuals are “born with a kind of bypass that circumvents the reducing valve” (11). As though echoing Oliveira’s description of Goethe as a being with exceptional ‘pseudopods,’ Huxley offers Blake, Swedenborg, and Johann Sebastian Bach, as examples of those with an innate capacity for bypassing the ‘reducing valve’ (4). He maintains, however, that anyone can acquire a temporary ‘bypass’; this can be achieved either spontaneously or artificially (11). The reference to circumventing the ‘reducing valve’ spontaneously seems to shed light on Oliveira’s assertion that his ‘paravisions’ are often provoked by extreme emotions. Equally, the strategic attempts of Cortázar’s protagonist to discover a ‘Door in the Wall’ support Huxley’s declaration that a ‘bypass’ can be intentionally produced.

It is also interesting that Huxley describes one of the key effects of mescaline in the following terms: “Visual impressions are greatly intensified and the eye recovers some of the perceptual innocence of childhood, when the sensum was not immediately and automatically subordinated to the concept” (12). As has already been demonstrated by the current study, with reference to chapter ninety-eight of *Rayuela*, Cortázar also attributes the pure vision of children to their being free from the dictates of the ‘natural attitude.’ Perhaps la Maga, who in chapter ninety-eight is to some extent represented as akin to children, has an innate ‘bypass’ where the ‘reducing valve’ is

---

<sup>92</sup> At the beginning of his trip, Huxley stares at a vase of flowers that appear to be glowing. When his companion asks whether the impression is agreeable, Huxley responds that it is neither agreeable nor disagreeable, “It just *is*” (Huxley, *The Doors* 8). For the remainder of the text, Huxley refers to this quality as “Is-ness” (7). When he later becomes fascinated by the folds of his grey flannel trousers, he exclaims: “This is how one ought to see, how things really are” (19).

concerned. For this reason, Oliveira is elated and frustrated in equal measure by la Maga's way of seeing: "[E]ra feliz a pesar de estar todo el tiempo exasperado por esa manera de no hacer las cosas como hay que hacerlas" (*R* 147; ch. 4).

*Rayuela* offers ample evidence in support of the thesis that Oliveira seeks to appropriate la Maga's way of seeing. Chapter twenty-one finds Oliveira in a cafe after he has just abandoned his lover. The narrative follows Oliveira's reflections on the failure of his search, which he mentally addresses to la Maga as a continuation of their conversation from the previous chapter. Desperately frustrated by the fact that his attachment to the 'natural attitude' prevents him from accessing an authentic mode of perception, Oliveira begs la Maga: "Ah, dejame entrar, dejame ver algún día como ven tus ojos" (*R* 234; ch. 21). From the very beginning of their relationship, Oliveira recognised that la Maga was always discovering the Doors in the Wall that he sought so fervently without success. Consequently, Oliveira came to believe that his lover had the power to show him the way to the centre, and that their relationship was a prerequisite to the successful completion of his search. In chapter ninety-two, the narrator says of their relationship, "todo el tiempo él había esperado de esa alegre embriaguez algo como un despertar, *un ver mejor lo que lo circundaba*" (emphasis added, *R* 588; ch. 92). Certainly, la Maga proved to be a generous teacher. At an early stage of the novel, the reader encounters the following:

Por si fuera poco ya le daba lecciones sobre la manera de mirar y de ver; lecciones que ella no sospechaba, solamente su manera de pararse de golpe en la calle para espiar un vaguán donde no había nada, pero más allá un vislumbre verde, un resplandor. (*R* 146; ch. 4)

Although Oliveira is grateful for these lessons, he is incapable of internalising them in a pre-reflective manner. Instead, he ponders the nature of la Maga's way of seeing, and this concession to his rational prejudices swiftly destroys the impact of his lover's example. This impasse is neatly illustrated in chapter

ninety-eight, where Oliveira thinks objectively about the fact that la Maga is showing him how to reach *'el otro lado'*:

Visto objetivamente: Ella era incapaz de mostrarme nada dentro de mi terreno, incluso en el suyo giraba desconcertada, tanteando, manoteando. Un murciélago frenético, el dibujo de la mosca en el aire de la habitación. De pronto, para mí sentado ahí mirándola, un indicio, un barrunto. Sin que ella lo supiera, la razón de sus lágrimas o el orden de sus compras o su manera de freír las palas eran *signos*. (R 609; ch. 98)

Oliveira's decision to terminate the relationship with la Maga constitutes an admission of his failure to appropriate her way of seeing. In chapter twenty-six of *Rayuela*, Gregorovious informs la Maga that Oliveira has left her because he is resentful that she has indicated a path which leads to the centre, but which he is incapable of following.<sup>93</sup> Notably, when Oliveira discusses his search for unity with la Maga in chapter nineteen, Cortázar chooses an example from visual art to contrast their modes of being. La Maga describes herself as a Vieira da Silva,<sup>94</sup> but classifies her lover as a Mondrian.<sup>95</sup> Unwittingly, Oliveira proves la Maga's assertion when he attempts to attach a rational definition to her analogy, "-Querés decir un espíritu lleno de rigor" (R 212; ch. 19). Significantly, la Maga responds: "-Yo digo un Mondrian" (R 212; ch. 19). Although she concedes that Mondrian is wonderful, la Maga argues that his work makes her feel trapped.<sup>96</sup> She compares this sensation with the images that assail her when Oliveira talks about his search; "-veo cosas muy hermosas pero muertas, flores disecadas y cosas así" (R 212; ch. 19). In a sense, Oliveira sees the world too clearly through his logical eye. Perhaps a greater degree of freedom is needed to establish an authentic contact;

<sup>93</sup> Gregorovious says of Oliveira: "- [Q]uiero decir que busca la luz negra, la llave, y empieza a darse cuenta de que cosas así no están en la biblioteca. En realidad usted le ha enseñado eso, y si él se va es porque no se lo va a perdonar jamás" (R 280; ch. 26).

<sup>94</sup> Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908-1992), Portuguese abstract painter known for her intuitive and chaotic style.

<sup>95</sup> Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Dutch abstract painter known for geometric shapes, primary colours, and his use of black vertical and horizontal lines.

<sup>96</sup> She says that Mondrian is "[S]in aire. Yo me ahogo un poco ahí dentro" (R 212; ch. 19).

Oliveira lacks the ability to focus on a single essence at the expense of all others.

It could be argued that, in chapter twenty, la Maga identifies a solution to the Achilles heel that prevents her lover from successfully completing his search. During this narrative *tour de force*, where Cortázar traces the dissolution of a relationship, as it moves through tenderness, humour, and grief, la Maga advises Oliveira: “[T]e haría tanto bien quedarte un poco ciego” (R 222; ch. 20). His response, although designed to frustrate la Maga, indicates that Oliveira understands her meaning: “-Ah, sí, el tacto que reemplaza las definiciones, el instinto que va más allá de la inteligencia. La vía mágica, la noche oscura del alma” (R 222; ch. 20). Moreover, the subsequent chapter reveals that la Maga’s words resonate more with Oliveira than he was prepared to admit to her. Cortázar’s protagonist reaches the conclusion that he will never truly live unless he manages to curtail his exclusively rational mode of perception. In a poignant paragraph, the reader witnesses Oliveira’s despair as he mentally implores his former lover to help him:

Dejate caer, golondrina, con esas filosas tijeras que recortan el cielo de Saint-Germain-des-Près, *arrancá estos ojos que miran sin ver*, estoy condenado sin apelación, pronto a ese cadalso azul al que me izan las manos de la mujer cuidando a su hijo, pronto la pena, pronto el orden mentido de estar solo y recobrar la suficiencia, la egociencia, la conciencia. Y con tanta ciencia una inútil ansia de tener lástima de algo, *de que llueva aquí dentro, de que por fin empiece a llover, a oler a tierra, a cosas vivas, sí, por fin a cosas vivas*. (emphasis added, R 235; ch. 21)

Further evidence in support of the contention that the object of the protagonist’s search is synonymous with obtaining an altered perspective can be found in the section of the novel entitled ‘Del lado de acá.’ These chapters of *Rayuela* depict Oliveira’s experiences on returning to Buenos Aires after his time in Paris; in particular, they deal with his renewed friendship with Traveler. During Oliveira’s absence, Traveler has married a woman named Talita. Traveler and his wife go to the port in order to welcome Oliveira home. However, the moment he disembarks, Oliveira is struck by a physical

resemblance between Talita and la Maga. An increasingly intense relationship develops between Oliveira and the Travelers, as the protagonist of *Rayuela* co-opts his friends into helping him search for a new way of seeing. In a phrase which seems to recall the effect of his 'paravisions,' Oliveira describes the discussions which transpire between himself and the Travelers as "la triple coincidencia en una histriónica búsqueda de puntos de mira que excentraran al mirador o a lo mirado" (R 384; ch. 40). In chapter seventy-eight, Oliveira confesses that, to a certain extent, his closeness with the Travelers is inspired by his desire to appropriate their manner of seeing: "[E]n realidad lo que quiero es apoderarme ... de sus maneras de ver" (R 557; ch. 78). However, it is perhaps most significant, given the supposed similarities between la Maga and Traveler's wife, that Talita feels as though Oliveira is using her "para alcanzar algo, *ver mejor algo*" (emphasis added, R 445; ch. 47). Certainly, the reader is reminded of the description of la Maga in chapter ninety-eight, when Oliveira claims that Talita "da la impresión de andar llevando una vela encendida en la mano, mostrando un camino" (R 556; ch. 78).

The denouement of Oliveira's story has always provoked a substantial amount of debate. However, the current chapter contends that the ambiguity surrounding the end of chapter fifty-six, coupled with subsequent vignettes from the 'capítulos prescindibles,' is consistent with the search for a new way of seeing. At this point in the novel, Oliveira and the Travelers have begun working in an asylum. As though assimilating to his new environment, Oliveira appears increasingly irrational. The final chapter of the main narrative describes how Oliveira, convinced that Traveler wants to kill him, barricades himself in his room. After devising a series of traps, or "líneas defensivas" (R 493; ch. 56), Oliveira waits for Traveler to launch his attack. When Traveler enters the room, he finds Oliveira sitting on the ledge of an open window. Genuinely concerned that his friend will fall or jump, Traveler talks to Oliveira about his search and the nature of their relationship. Once Oliveira is somewhat calmer, Traveler leaves to update the staff, and joins Talita who is watching Oliveira from the courtyard of the asylum. As Talita and Traveler gaze up at Oliveira, he feels that a genuine connection has finally been made. Sensing that the contact will be fleeting, Oliveira wishes that he could prolong this access to the centre. He reasons that the best thing to do would be to



lean further out of the window and let go. The main narrative ends with this thought, leaving the reader to decide whether Oliveira carries out the implied act of suicide.

It could be argued that Cortázar's decision to close the novel in this way reflects the central theme of the search for an alternative way of seeing. By designing the denouement of his text so that it depends on the complicity of the individual reader, Cortázar emphasises the effect of the various ways in which one can look at the world.<sup>97</sup> Ironically, the continued debate as to whether or not Oliveira commits suicide operates as a kind of extension of the novel's fundamental theme of perception. It seems apt that the readers of the H. G. Wells story discussed above are faced with an identical dilemma at the end of the text. The narrator of "The Door in the Wall" cautions that whilst it seems obvious to rational people that Lionel Wallace perished by means of an error in judgement, perhaps not everyone sees the same way. He says of Wallace:

I am more than half convinced that he had in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something – I know not what – that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination. We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger and death. But did he see like that? (Wells 23)

As with *Rayuela*, the meaning of the way in which the story ends remains at the discretion of the individual reader. Thus, in both cases, the ambiguity of the denouement compels the reader to actively enter into the central debate concerning perception, which shapes the two narratives.

---

<sup>97</sup> The fact that the novel is designed so that the reader can choose to follow the 'tablero de dirección,' or dispense with the chapters from 'De otros lados,' is clearly inspired by the same impulse.

Despite Cortázar's seemingly magnanimous concession in the prologue of *Rayuela*, that the reader can choose his or her own novel, the two options which he offers conclude in a conspicuously similar fashion. It is extremely significant that whether the reader follows the 'tablero de dirección' or reads the novel in the conventional way, the theme of perception takes centre stage at the close of the text. In a manner that beautifully showcases Cortázar's flair for irony, the denouement of the main narrative forces the "lector hembra" who chose it to engage with questions concerning their own mode of perception (R 559-61; ch. 79). Conversely, the end of the 'tablero de dirección' allows the "lector cómplice" to examine further the protagonist's struggle with his way of seeing (R 559-61; ch. 79).<sup>98</sup> Following the order laid out in the 'tablero de dirección,' only seven chapters remain after the one that relates Oliveira's possible suicide.<sup>99</sup> It also appears that, chronologically, all of these chapters are set after the point where the conventional narrative ends. Whilst Oliveira appears to be alive in each of these chapters, Cortázar ensures that an aura of uncertainty continues to surround the end of chapter fifty-six. In many of the subsequent sections of text Oliveira is apparently being treated for some ailment. However, the nature of his injuries is vague, and there is no indication as to how they were caused. At times Cortázar portrays Oliveira as healthy and living at home with his girlfriend, Gekrepten; at others, it seems as though Oliveira is being treated in the asylum. However, through all of this ambiguity, the current study has identified a common thread.

In five of the seven chapters which conclude the 'tablero de dirección,' there is a clear reference to Oliveira's eyes. At this juncture it is pertinent to recall la Maga's advice to her lover in chapter twenty; she said that it would do him good to go a little blind. On the majority of occasions that the reader encounters Oliveira after the incident in the asylum, his eyes are either closed

---

<sup>98</sup> In one of the 'capítulos prescindibles' of *Rayuela* Morelli introduces the categories of 'lector hembra' and 'lector cómplice'. According to Morelli, the 'lector hembra' passively absorbs a text; they are only content and secure within the confines of the conventional novel. A 'lector cómplice,' on the other hand, would actively enter into the creation of the text alongside the writer. Morelli longs to "Intentar ... un texto que no agarre al lector pero que lo vuelva obligadamente cómplice al murmurarle, por debajo del desarrollo convencional, otros rumbos más esotéricos" (R 559; ch. 79).

<sup>99</sup> These are chapters 135, 63, 88, 72, 77, 131, and 58.

or covered. In chapter one hundred and thirty-five Oliveira is eating fried cakes prepared for him by Gekrepten, when he alludes to the fact that his eyes are covered. He says: “- Es muy raro comer tortas fritas con los ojos tapados, che. Así deben entrenar a los puntos que van a descubrirnos el cosmos” (R 706; ch. 135). Considered in isolation, the association which Oliveira draws here, between limited vision and discovery of the universe, undoubtedly strikes the reader as curious. Yet, it is thoroughly consistent with the rest of the novel, when examined within the context of his search for a new way of seeing. Oliveira has come to recognise that, in looking at the world, his adherence to the ‘natural attitude’ prevents him from discovering the essence of phenomena and, thereby, denies him the sense of authentic being which he seeks. Cortázar illustrates this theme by demonstrating that his protagonist experiences the world more acutely when his habitual form of lucid vision is curtailed. In chapter seventy-two Oliveira does not appear to be injured, but he is clearly distressed about events at the asylum. Again, as he sips *mate* with Gekrepten, he declares: “-Con los ojos cerrados parece todavía más amargo, es una maravilla” (R 543; ch. 72).

In a number of these final chapters there is a reference to the fact that Oliveira is wearing a cold compress (R 706; ch. 135 and R 525; ch. 63). Given that Oliveira’s eyes often appear to be covered, it seems reasonable to assume that the compresses are designed to treat some ocular injury or inflammation. It could be argued that the focus on Oliveira’s impaired vision, in the last chapters of *Rayuela*, is symbolic of the fact that he has moved a step closer to the centre. By forging a moment of authentic contact with Traveler and Talita in chapter fifty-six, Oliveira has proven that he is capable of experiencing the world in a direct, pre-reflective manner. Thereafter, Cortázar portrays his protagonist as having his eyes covered or closed in order to symbolise the rejection of his intellectually based form of perception. Indeed, there are moments in the final chapters of the ‘tablero de dirección,’ which depict Oliveira as enjoying the type of vision which he envied in *la Maga*. For example, in chapter sixty-three Oliveira tells Talita that he can see phosphorescences (R 525; ch. 63).<sup>100</sup> Notably, in this section, Oliveira also asks

---

<sup>100</sup> This is redolent of *la Maga*’s synaesthetic experience in chapter 26.

Talita to change his head instead of his pillow. Perhaps this is another indication that it is Oliveira's aptitude for reason which frustrates his search.

Chapter eighty-eight of *Rayuela* appears to further support the central argument of this chapter. Whilst listening to Traveler talk about Ceferino Piriz,<sup>101</sup> Oliveira makes the following paradoxical statement: “-Con los ojos tapados es como un calidoscopio” (R 577; ch. 88). Whilst an optical instrument and bandaged eyes are incompatible, it should be recalled that, during the novel, both Oliveira and Morelli use the kaleidoscope as a symbol of the search. It is representative of a seemingly chaotic form of vision which suddenly coalesces to reveal exquisite forms. Oliveira's declaration in chapter eighty-eight implies that the destruction of his habitual way of seeing, governed as it is by the dictates of the 'natural attitude,' has permitted him to perceive the beauty and unity of the world. In this respect Oliveira's words here are reminiscent of the fact that the club used to visit “un vidente ciego, paradoja estimulante” (R 125; ch. 1). Furthermore, Cortázar's protagonist utters these words with reference to the theories of Ceferino Piriz; it is not merely a matter of chance that Piriz's vision of the world is the very antithesis of that orchestrated by reason.

Finally, in chapter seventy-seven there is a suggestion that Oliveira is opening and closing his eyes. It appears that Oliveira has paid a visit to Ferraguto, the owner of the asylum and, therefore, his employer. Ferraguto is understandably upset about the incident which Oliveira caused in chapter fifty-six. Significantly, he invokes the opinions of his wife; throughout the text she is portrayed as someone who rigorously adheres to the codes of convention. As Oliveira turns to leave, the narrator explains: “[U]no de los dos abrió los ojos, o los cerró. La puerta tenía también algo de ojo que se abría o se cerraba” (R 554; ch. 77). This denotes a moment of potential transition in the perceptual faculties of Oliveira and Ferraguto. It is as though Ferraguto is attempting to understand the eccentric behaviour of his employee, whilst it seems that Oliveira faces the danger of succumbing, once again, to the

---

<sup>101</sup> Ceferino Piriz is the author a text, which Traveler is reading, called *La Luz de la Paz del Mundo*. It is an entirely irrational categorisation of mankind; it proposes a bizarre system for the classification and organisation of the world. See chapters 129 and 133 of *Rayuela*.

'natural attitude.' This ambiguous reference to the opening and closing of eyes, coming as it does in the final pages of the novel, is surely intended to leave the reader wondering whether Oliveira accesses the new way of seeing which he sought, or whether he reverts to his habitual form of perception.

The preceding investigation of the ways in which Cortázar portrays his protagonist as a man in search of an alternative perspective is given further credence by the parallel quest of the writer Morelli. When Oliveira witnesses the aftermath of an accident in which an elderly man has been knocked down, he decides to visit him in hospital. There, Oliveira discovers that the man is the writer Morelli, whose works are read and much admired by the members of the club. Morelli entrusts Oliveira with a key to his flat, and asks that he compile a book from a series of his writings. Consequently, many of the 'capítulos prescindibles' of *Rayuela* are notes in which Morelli expounds the foundations of his aesthetic. Morelli aims, as far as possible, to expunge all traces of inherited concepts and conventional forms from his writing. In essence, he is attempting to forge an artistic praxis which is free from the influence of the 'natural attitude.' By emphasising the stagnation which habit provokes, and insisting that alternative routes are possible, Morelli undertakes an aesthetic journey which is analogous to Oliveira's personal quest. Indeed, the current chapter will demonstrate presently that Morelli's repeated use of visual metaphors suggests that, just like Oliveira, he is fervently searching for a new way of seeing.

Cortázar thoroughly establishes this link by designating the kaleidoscope as symbolic of the goal which both men are striving towards. The reader encounters this image for the first time in chapter one hundred and nine of *Rayuela*. Cortázar introduces this section of the text by means of another visual metaphor. Morelli's writing is compared to a photograph album; he only provides snapshots of his characters, the reader is left to fill in the narrative gaps. The narrator initially believes that Morelli entertained the hope that these fragments would find their own form of coherence. However, he rejects this assumption on the basis that such a text would too easily satisfy the '*lector hembra*' that Morelli disdains. Instead, the narrator concludes that Morelli wants to produce a text in which meaning will crystallise for the reader

despite the disorder of the individual fragments. Naturally, such a novel would constitute the textual equivalent of a kaleidoscope:

[P]arecía buscar una cristalización que, sin alterar el desorden en que circulaban los cuerpos de su pequeño sistema planetario, permitiera la comprensión ubicua y total de sus razones de ser, fueran éstas el desorden mismo, la inanidad o la gratuidad. Una cristalización en la que nada quedara subsumido, pero donde un ojo lúcido pudiese asomarse al calidoscopio y entender la gran rosa policroma, entenderla como una figura, *imago mundi* que por fuera del calidoscopio se resolvía en living room de estilo provenzal, o concierto de tías tomando té con galletitas Bagley. (R 647; ch. 109)

Here Cortázar underlines the power of the kaleidoscope to fashion a beautiful and unified image from disarray. In this way, he reminds his readers that we are too often attracted to the easy beauty of order, and he encourages us to seek the rewards of less conventional ways of seeing.

The kaleidoscope becomes associated with Oliveira's search at the end of chapter thirty-six, when he is arrested with the *clocharde*. The police van contains two other men who have just been picked up. It becomes clear that these men are in possession of a kaleidoscope, as Oliveira listens to their effusive exclamations about the colours and patterns they are seeing. Pondering the failure of his search, Oliveira concludes that mankind is looking through the wrong end of the kaleidoscope (R 369; ch. 36). It could be argued that this refers to the dependence of modern society on logic and science. Oliveira recognises that by eliminating the 'natural attitude' from his mode of perception, by grabbing the kaleidoscope from the other end, he might finally access the centre and see "la verdadera figura del mundo" (R 369; ch. 36).

With chapter eighty-six of *Rayuela* Cortázar explicitly identifies the rejection of inherited forms and the search for new ways of seeing as the central tenet of Morelli's philosophy. According to the text, the members of the club concluded that it was easier to understand Morelli from the quotations he used, rather than from his own writings. Wong insisted that

just two excerpts, both from Pauwels and Bergier,<sup>102</sup> were sufficient to elucidate Morelli's entire *oeuvre*. The first quote chosen by Wong refers to the formidable potential of human perception, and the self-imposed limitations which currently restrain it:

«Quizá haya un lugar en el hombre desde donde pueda percibirse la realidad entera. Esta hipótesis parece delirante. Auguste Comte<sup>103</sup> declaraba que jamás se conocería la composición química de una estrella. Al año siguiente, Bunsen<sup>104</sup> inventaba el espectroscopio.» (R 573; ch. 86)

The suggestion here that the true nature of human perception is potentially all-encompassing is equivalent to Huxley's definition of 'Mind at Large' in *The Doors of Perception*. Huxley quotes a section of text by the eminent Cambridge philosopher, C. D. Broad,<sup>105</sup> which he feels somewhat explains his experience of mescaline (Huxley, *The Doors* 10-11). Broad directs his readers to give greater credit to the theory of memory and sense perception put forward by Henri Bergson:<sup>106</sup> "Each person is at each moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe" (qtd. in Huxley, *The Doors* 10). However, in order to ensure that mankind is not overwhelmed, but continues to survive and flourish, the brain and nervous system shut out that which is not immediately and practically useful. Theoretically, our ability to perceive everything remains intact, but it has been obscured so successfully by

---

<sup>102</sup> Jacques Bergier (1912-1978) and Louis Pauwels (1920-1997) were journalists, living primarily in France, who wrote a book about the role of the occult in society called *Le Matin des magiciens* (1960). It was later translated into English as *The Dawn of Magic* and *The Morning of the Magicians*. The two quotes which Morelli has chosen have been taken from this text by Pauwels and Bergier.

<sup>103</sup> Auguste Comte (1798-1857), French philosopher and founder of the discipline of sociology.

<sup>104</sup> Robert Wilhelm Bunsen (1811-1899), German chemist and inventor of the Bunsen burner. With his colleague, Gustav Kirchhoff (1824-1887), a Prussian physicist, he invented the Bunsen-Kirchhoff spectroscopy, and they discovered the elements caesium (1860) and rubidium (1861).

<sup>105</sup> Charlie Dunbar Broad (1887-1971), English philosopher.

<sup>106</sup> Henri Louis Bergson (1859-1941), French philosopher who emphasised that in attempting to understand reality, experience and intuition were more significant than reason and science.

the basic societal requirements for survival that we have forgotten how to access it. Oliveira, Morelli, Huxley, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty, although taking various routes, are all attempting to reconnect with this lost way of seeing.

The barrier which continues to separate mankind from this intuitive form of perception is the 'natural attitude' as defined by phenomenology; that is, the habit of reverting to inherited forms such as logic, science, and language, in our interaction with the world. The above quotation from Morelli's notes concedes that the concept of an all-embracing vision might appear implausible to contemporary sensibilities. However, the anecdote involving Comte and Bunsen demonstrates that ways of seeing are not made infallible by virtue of their current acceptance; they should be amenable to modification. Whilst Morelli recognises that it is extremely difficult to bypass the 'reducing valve' of the 'natural attitude,' it is clear from the text that he is thoroughly convinced of the value of such an endeavour. Morelli's writing is overflowing with trenchant criticism of the way in which habit stagnates our perceptual faculties. In chapter one hundred and fifty-one, a Morelliana<sup>107</sup> likens the habitual perception of the 'natural attitude' to death, or, at the very least, a state of living devoid of vibrancy:

Basta mirar un momento con los ojos de todos los días el comportamiento de un gato o de una mosca para sentir que esa nueva visión a que tiende la ciencia, esa des-antropomorfización que proponen urgentemente los biólogos y los físicos como única posibilidad de enlace con hechos tales como el instinto o la vida vegetal, no es otra cosa que la remota, aislada, insistente voz con que ciertas líneas del budismo, del vedanta, del sufismo, de la mística occidental, nos instan a renunciar de una vez por todas a la mortalidad. (R 731; ch. 151)

Morelli's conviction that the objectivity of science is deadening the intensity of the human experience of *Inderweltsein* appears to echo Husserl. Both men recognise that deference to the scientific attitude provokes a

---

<sup>107</sup> The label that Cortázar/the members of the club give to some of Morelli's more philosophical observations.



dehumanising effect, which removes the element of wonder from our perception of the world. Morelli suggests that by taking a moment to contemplate the seemingly irrational or mystical behaviour of certain creatures, mankind might be reminded of what has been lost. This is akin to the methodology of phenomenology. The phenomenological reduction calls upon the philosopher to look at phenomena in a manner that attempts to banish the influence of the 'natural attitude.' Against the insistent claims of science, Morelli and Husserl maintain that mankind can only forge an authentic connection with phenomena via direct and pre-reflective perception. It is interesting that, in the above quotation, Morelli refers to the way in which science presents itself as necessary to human understanding of the environment; Husserl describes our internalisation of this assumption as the naturalistic prejudice.

Morelli is astounded by the extremes to which this naturalistic prejudice has extended. A footnote to chapter sixty-two of *Rayuela* explains that a Swedish scientist is developing a chemical theory of thought. According to this neurobiologist, all perception, thought, memory, and emotion, can be explained by a process in the brain involving neurons and protein molecules. This excessive homage to the logic of cause and effect inspires Morelli to conceive of a novel in which the actions of the characters cannot be explained by the conventional system of psychology.<sup>108</sup> Such a novel would bring to the fore "una oscura necesidad de evadir el estado de homo sapiens" (R 524; ch. 62). Morelli admits that the characters of his text would act and react in a manner recognisable to readers, which they might define using terms such as love or jealousy, but he maintains that the actions of these characters will not be motivated by reason. Rather, through them will operate an obscure transition symbolising the rejection of "la clave-razón" (R 524; ch. 62), and a search for a new way of seeing, a new path for mankind:

[E]n ellos algo que el homo sapiens guarda en lo subliminal se abriría penosamente un camino como si un tercer ojo parpadeara

---

<sup>108</sup> This experimental concept is the foundation of Cortázar's own novel, *62: Modelo para armar*. Throughout this thesis, all direct quotations from this novel will be followed by the abbreviation *62*, and the page number, in parenthesis.

penosamente debajo del hueso frontal ... a través y por ellos, ... una tentativa apenas concebible nace en el hombre como en otro tiempo fueron naciendo la clave-razón, la clave-sentimiento, la clave-pragmatismo. (R 524; ch. 62)

If the nature of the new path sought by Oliveira, Morelli, and phenomenology, remains somewhat shrouded in ambiguity, all share in the conviction that destruction of the 'natural attitude' constitutes the necessary first step along that path. The second quotation which Wong isolates as paradigmatic of Morell's aesthetic thoroughly criticises binary logic. As though echoing the philosophy of phenomenology, the excerpt which Morelli has chosen from *Le Matin des magiciens* argues that binary intelligence is incapable of revealing the essence of phenomena: "¿Pero qué decir de la insuficiencia de la inteligencia binaria en sí misma? La existencia interna, la esencia de las cosas se le escapa" (R 574; ch. 86). According to Pauwels and Bergier, logic explains the profound structures of reality, but it does not understand them. In order to access the essence of reality, it is necessary to remove the barrier erected by the primacy of reason, and to seek an alternative form of consciousness.<sup>109</sup>

Morelli entirely endorses this sentiment in his own writing. For example, in chapter one hundred and forty-seven the elderly writer maintains that the exaltation of reason is the greatest error which humanity has ever committed. We believe that our logical perception of the world frees us from the primeval darkness; but, Morelli cautions, reason is a false freedom that surreptitiously clouds eyes which were once capable of seeing the world as it truly is. This section of Morelli's writing seems to perfectly diagnose the way in which Oliveira's propensity for logic hinders his own search; it is consequently worth quoting at some length:

¿Por qué tan lejos de los dioses? Quizá por preguntarlo. ¿Y qué? El hombre es el animal que pregunta. El día en que verdaderamente sepamos preguntar, habrá diálogo. Por ahora las preguntas nos alejan

---

<sup>109</sup> In the excerpt quoted in chapter 86, Pauwels and Bergier suggest that an analogical consciousness would be better placed to assimilate the structures and rhythms of our world.

vertiginosamente de las respuestas. ¿Qué epifanía podemos esperar si nos estamos ahogando en la más falsa de las libertades, la dialéctica judeocristiana? Nos hace falta un *Novum Organum* de verdad, hay que abrir de par en par las ventanas y tirar todo a la calle, pero sobre todo hay que tirar también la ventana, y nosotros con ella. Es la muerte o salir volando. Hay que hacerlo, de alguna manera hay que hacerlo. Tener la valor de entrar en mitad de las fiestas y poner sobre la cabeza de la relampagueante dueña de casa un hermoso sapo verde, regalo de la noche, y asistir sin horror a la venganza de los lacayos. (R 727; ch. 147)

The dazzling lady referred to here is, of course, reason; the party is symbolic of the constant adulation which contemporary society bestows upon her. According to Morelli, civilisation will not be saved from the erroneous path that it has, with so much assurance, begun to march down, until we have the courage to turn the *status quo* upside down. At the very least, it is imperative to look with critical eyes at our intellectual inheritance.

Naturally, Morelli is most keenly concerned with the implications of this philosophical stance for his own literary production. Chapter sixty of *Rayuela* informs the reader that Morelli had considered adding a list of acknowledgements to a number of his published texts. There follows an extensive catalogue of names, including Jelly Roll Morton, Greta Garbo, and Arcimboldo; ultimately, the list never appears in any of Morelli's works. The admission of influence, which the inclusion of such a list would entail, would stand in direct contravention to the principle which Morelli is trying to practice through his writing. Morelli wants to turn away from inherited concepts and conventional techniques; his writing is an active search for a new method. In one of his many Morelliana, he quotes the following passage from *Ferdydurke*:<sup>110</sup>

[Y]o deseo esquivarme tanto de vuestro Arte, señores, como de vosotros mismos, ¡pues no puedo soportaros junto con aquel Arte, con vuestras concepciones, vuestra actitud artística y con todo vuestro medio artístico! (R 725; ch. 145)

---

<sup>110</sup> A novel by the Polish writer, Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969), which touches on the role of normalising forces in society.

Morelli, or indeed Cortázar, could equally have articulated these words; both writers consistently spurn typical *modus operandi*, and seek new forms of expression. In the case of Morelli, this leads to an apparent impoverishment of both the language and characters of his texts, as he tries to strip them back to an origin.<sup>111</sup> The members of the club who read Morelli's notes become unsettled as they witness the writer advancing into *terra incognita*; they recognise that the search for an alternative perspective necessarily plunges the seeker into ambiguity. Rejecting the *status quo* without benefit of a *novum organum* creates a frightening vacuum, where it is easier to slip back into the comfort of habit, than to advance into darkness.<sup>112</sup>

Las alusiones de Morelli a la inversión de los signos, a un mundo visto con otras y desde otras dimensiones, como preparación inevitable a una visión más pura (y todo esto en un pasaje resplandecientemente escrito, y a la vez sospechoso de burla, de helada ironía frente al espejo) los exasperaba al tenderles la percha de una casi esperanza, de una justificación, pero negándoles a la vez la seguridad total, manteniéndoles en una ambigüedad insoportable. Si algún consuelo les quedaba era pensar que también Morelli se movía en esa misma ambigüedad, orquestrando una obra cuya legítima primera audición debía ser quizá el más absoluto de los silencios. (R 717; ch. 141)

Chapter one hundred and two of *Rayuela* consists of two quotations found amongst Morelli's papers; perhaps they offer the writer comfort by corroborating the difficulty of his endeavour. Both excerpts have been taken from literary texts wherein the protagonist suffers greatly from having acquired an altered perspective on the world. Wong finds a copy of *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless*<sup>113</sup> in Morelli's library with a passage which

---

<sup>111</sup> See chapters 112 and 124 of *Rayuela*.

<sup>112</sup> See chapter 141 of *Rayuela*, where the members of the club become firstly exasperated by the ambiguity of Morelli's endeavours, and then accepting, when they realise that he too is compelled to suffer this uncertainty in order to remain faithful to his aesthetic.

<sup>113</sup> The debut novel by an Austrian writer called Robert Musil (1880-1942), *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless* (*The Confusions of Young Torless*) recounts the experiences of Törless while at a military boarding school. Whilst there, he collaborates with two other boys in the relentless abuse of another student. As a result, Törless begins to reflect on the difference between the rational and the irrational, between instinct and intellect.

has been firmly underlined. In the section of text which has captured Morelli's attention, the protagonist explains that the most trivial objects now appear strange to him:

¿Cuáles son las cosas que me parecen extrañas? Las más triviales. Sobre todo, los objetos inanimados. ¿Qué es lo que parece extraño en ellos? Algo que no conozco. ¡Pero es justamente eso! ¿De dónde diablos saco esa noción de «algo»? Siento que está ahí, que existe. Produce en mí un efecto, como si tratara de hablar ... Es como si tuviera un sentido adicional, uno más que los otros, pero que no se ha desarrollado del todo, un sentido que está ahí y se hace notar, pero que no funciona. Para mí el mundo está lleno de voces silenciosas. ¿Significa eso que soy un vidente, o que tengo alucinaciones? (R 631; ch. 102)

For Törless this sensation is entirely intuitive; he confesses that he is incapable of understanding the exact nature of this estrangement. Yet, he is aware that his current form of perception indicates an access to an obscure inner power which has not been shaped by society.

The second quotation chosen by Morelli is from Hofmannsthal's *The Letter of Lord Chandos*.<sup>114</sup> The fictitious Lord Philip Chandos writes to Francis Bacon seeking advice; he is suffering a crisis concerning the use of language.<sup>115</sup> According to the letter, Chandos had a successful literary career. However, he tells Bacon that he is becoming increasingly incapable of expressing himself, and is consequently considering abandoning all future writing projects. Chandos confesses that the root of this crisis is his growing conviction that language is inadequate to express the depth of human experience. As demonstrated above, Morelli and Oliveira are similarly conscious of the false comforts and limitations of language. It is notable, however, and highly germane to the central thesis of this chapter, that the excerpt which Morelli selects from *The Letter of Lord Chandos* does not focus on language, but on a form of perception freed from the strictures of habit:

---

<sup>114</sup> Hugo Von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929), another Austrian writer, published the fictional letter in a Berlin daily newspaper in 1902. It was purportedly written in 1603, by Lord Philip Chandos, and is addressed to Francis Bacon.

<sup>115</sup> It will be recalled that, in his *Novum Organum*, Francis Bacon warned his readers about the capacity of *idola fori*, such as language, to obscure direct experience.

Así como había visto cierto día con un vidrio de aumento la piel de mi dedo meñique, semejante a una llanura con surcos y hondonadas, así veía ahora a los hombres y sus acciones. Ya no conseguía percibirlos con la mirada simplificadora de la costumbre. Todo se descomponía en fragmentos que se fragmentaban a su vez; nada conseguía por medio de una noción definida. (R 631-32; ch. 102)

In many respects, Morelli has reached an impasse opposite to that which so frustrates Lord Chandos. Hofmannsthal's character laments that his altered form of perception is incompatible with his continued use of language, whilst Morelli hopes to reach the other side via the production of avant-garde literature. By telling the story of the famous sandhogs in chapter seventy-one, Morelli shows his appreciation of new ways of seeing, and reveals a yearning to acquire an unconventional mode of perception:

[N]ada está perdido si se tiene por fin el valor de proclamar que todo está perdido y que hay que empezar de nuevo, como los famosos obreros que en 1907 se dieron cuenta una mañana de agosto de que el túnel del Monte Brasco estaba mal enfilado y que acabarían saliendo a más de quince metros del túnel que excavaban los obreros yugoslavos viniendo de Dublivna. ¿Qué hicieron los famosos obreros? Los famosos obreros dejaron como estaba su túnel, salieron a la superficie, y después de varios días y noches de deliberación en diversas cantinas del Piemonte, empezaron a excavar por su cuenta y riesgo en otra parte del Brasco, y siguieron adelante sin preocuparse de los obreros yugoslavos, llegando después de cuatro meses y cinco días a la parte sur de Dublivna, con no poca sorpresa de un maestro de escuela jubilado que los vio aparecer a la altura del cuarto de baño de su casa. Ejemplo loable que hubieran debido seguir los obreros de Dublivna (aunque preciso es reconocer que los famosos obreros no les habían comunicado sus intenciones) en vez de obstinarse en empalmar con un túnel inexistente, como es el caso de tantos poetas asomados con más de medio cuerpo a la ventana de la sala de estar, a altas horas de la noche. (R 538-39; ch. 71)

Aware that access to "un reino milenario" (R 537; ch. 71)<sup>116</sup> demands a rejection of habit, Morelli attempts to induce an alternative world vision by

---

<sup>116</sup> In Morelli's writing the millenary kingdom is equivalent to the metaphors which Oliveira uses to express the object of his search, such as the centre, the other side, and the kibbutz of desire.

deconstructing accepted literary praxis. As demonstrated above, this method simply plunges the writer into a fog of ambiguity. However, the Morelliana of chapter one hundred and twelve offers a glimmer of hope for his trials. Here, Morelli senses that his approach is misguided; his attempts to produce a radical perspective in art will falter until he re-establishes an authentic contact with the world and the human condition:

Sólo hay una belleza que todavía puede darme ese acceso:<sup>117</sup> aquella que es un fin y no un medio, y que lo es porque su creador ha identificado en sí mismo su sentido de la condición humana con su sentido de la condición de artista. En cambio el plano meramente estético me parece eso: meramente. (R 653; ch. 112)

In chapter one hundred and sixteen Morelli identifies a number of visionaries who he feels have successfully reconciled the depths of their humanity with their artistic production. Firstly, he endorses Rimbaud's infamous exhortation, in *La Lettre du Voyant*,<sup>118</sup> that the poet must become a seer. Rimbaud argued that in order to become a seer, the poet had to arrive at full self-knowledge via a conscious derangement of the senses. According to Rimbaud, this exercise would refine the experiences of the poet into distilled essences, which could then be exploited to create poetry.<sup>119</sup> Notably, *La Lettre du Voyant* also stresses that it will be necessary to formulate a new language, capable of expressing the image that the poet perceives through this unique form of vision. Morelli confirms his acceptance of the eloquent argument put forward by Rimbaud, by means of two further metaphors. Both support the observation made by the current chapter, that Morelli considers a new way of looking at the world, a pre-reflective grasp of the essence of

---

<sup>117</sup> Here, Morelli refers to the object of his search as access to the absolute.

<sup>118</sup> The French poet, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), wrote *La Lettre du Voyant* (Letter of the Seer) in 1871, before moving to Paris.

<sup>119</sup> See *La Lettre du Voyant*: "Je dis qu'il faut être voyant, se faire voyant. Le Poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens. Toutes les formes d'amour, de souffrance, de folie; il cherche lui-même, il épuise en lui tous les poisons, pour n'en garder que les quintessences." ("I say one must be a seer, make oneself a seer. The Poet makes himself a seer by a long, immense and reasoned derangement of all the senses. All forms of love, suffering, madness, and he searches himself, he exhausts all poisons in him, keeping only the quintessence.")

phenomena, as a prerequisite for the creation of more resonant art forms. He calls for the rejection of fixed concepts which erect a barrier between the artist and their work; for example, the supposition that a narrative is a work of art. Instead, it is imperative that the writer experience the narrative in a pure and personal way, like the plaster we put on our faces to make a mask: “«Sentirla como sentiríamos el yeso que vertemos sobre un rostro para hacerle una mascarilla. Pero el rostro debería ser el nuestro»” (R 658: ch. 116).

Morelli offers the artist Manet<sup>120</sup> as the most complete example of his theory in action. He notes that at a time when painting was exhibiting increasing obedience to the dictates of realism, Manet’s desire to faithfully represent reality moved him to produce images of another order. Indeed, the entire Impressionist movement, which Manet greatly influenced, retreated from the tendency to represent reality as society claimed it *should be*, and instead sought to produce an authentic depiction of how the subject *actually appears* to the perceiver. Significantly, Merleau-Ponty draws parallels between the project of phenomenology and the advances of modern art;<sup>121</sup> both reassert “the claims of perception over those of theoretical reflection as guides to the truth” (Matthews 146). In *The World of Perception* Merleau-Ponty declares that “one of the great achievements of modern art and philosophy ... has been to allow us to rediscover the world in which we live, yet which we are always prone to forget” (Merleau-Ponty, *The World* 39).

Merleau-Ponty argued that painters such as Cézanne and Picasso fulfilled a role which was very similar to that of the phenomenologist. Through their work, such artists represent phenomena stripped of the conceptual clothing which society imposes upon them in order to make the world practical and mutually intelligible. In this way, modern art returns to

---

<sup>120</sup> Édouard Manet (1832-1883), French painter and pioneer in the transition from Realism to Impressionism.

<sup>121</sup> When Merleau-Ponty mentions modern art, he is referring to works produced in the fifty to seventy years preceding the 1948 radio lectures, from which *The World of Perception* is compiled. Consequently, this time frame encompasses the movements of Impressionism and Cubism; Merleau-Ponty specifically cites the work of Cézanne, Picasso, Braque, and Juan Gris (Merleau-Ponty, *The World* 93). Also, for an excellent investigation of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical reflections on visual art see *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*.



the most fundamental sense of perception, as “access to the truth” (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* xviii). This style of painting expresses an authentic contact with the world in truly experiencing it, rather than reflecting on it. In this respect, art has the potential to set mankind on the path to the centre in a much more effective way than phenomenology. The philosophical method entails a certain amount of introspection, which threatens to separate the subject from the experience of being. Science seeks to explain experience, phenomenology describes it, but looking at a work of art can be the experience itself. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this is how a painting can lead us back to “a vision of things themselves” (Merleau-Ponty, *The World* 93). By communicating the subjective experience of the artist to others, without referencing conventional concepts, modern art can inspire viewers to contemplate the world in a new way:

The visual arts, at least in their modern development, are not a ‘language’ in the conventional sense: they do not express meaning by means of generally accepted rules. But they can nevertheless express meaning in a more basic way: this meaning will be a new one, a new way of looking at the world and the objects in it, which is originally peculiar to the artist, but which he or she manages to ‘awaken’ by his or her skill in at least some of those who look at his or her work. This is why a mere rational analysis of a painting, in terms of existing norms of rationality, will never be able to replace a direct *experience* of the work itself. (Merleau-Ponty, *The World* 95)

Merleau-Ponty’s words here seem a fitting description of the incident referred to in chapter one hundred and forty-two of *Rayuela*, where la Maga bursts into tears when gazing at Etienne’s painting, whilst other members of the club analyse it rationally.

In chapter one hundred and sixteen of *Rayuela* Morelli says that the unique vision of artists, such as Manet, so successfully evades the conventional ways of seeing of contemporary society, that it is as though they inhabit a different time:

Y ese tiempo es el percibido y habitado por pintores y escritores que rehúsan apoyarse en la circunstancia ... están al margen del tiempo superficial de su época, y desde ese otro tiempo donde todo accede a la condición de figura, donde todo vale como signo y no como tema de descripción, intentan una obra que puede parecer ajena o antagónica a su tiempo y a su historia circundantes, y que sin embargo los incluye, los explica, y en último término los orienta hacia una trascendencia en cuyo término está esperando el hombre. (R 659; ch. 116)

The artist who Merleau-Ponty feels most clearly exhibits this quality is Cézanne. In *The World of Perception* he shows how Cézanne rejected the traditional "gaze at infinity,"<sup>122</sup> preferring to focus on illustrating the way in which the world forms itself through our gaze. Notably, the divergence between Cézanne's style and the expectations of his contemporaries ensured that his work was rather unpopular during his lifetime.<sup>123</sup> The above extract offers irrefutable evidence that Morelli believes that access to the centre can be achieved by exercising a form of perception which rejects the 'natural attitude.' Looking at the world in a pre-reflective way, the artist transcends societal boundaries and is, therefore, able to establish an authentic contact. This renewed connection with the most fundamental aspects of being is what Oliveira and Morelli are seeking in *Rayuela*. It is hoped that the foregoing discussion has sufficiently demonstrated that the pathway, which both men attempt to follow, is the adoption of an alternative mode of perception.

The current chapter closes in this way, with a brief survey of how Morelli associates artists with a form of perception which is cleansed of the 'natural attitude,' as an introduction to the fact that Cortázar's entire *oeuvre* is saturated with examples of the power of visual art to stimulate new ways of seeing. The viewer-artwork paradigm is one of the most enduring structures of Julio Cortázar's fiction. Accordingly, the remaining two chapters of this thesis will present an investigation of the theme of visual art as it appears in

---

<sup>122</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty uses this phrase to describe the nature of perspective in classical painting, which he argues is akin to the Newtonian concept of space. He says that objects are painted "in accordance with the perspective they would present when viewed under a gaze directed at a point of the horizon," (Merleau-Ponty, *The World* 17). Merleau-Ponty claims that such paintings maintain a distance between the viewer and the canvas.

<sup>123</sup> See Merleau-Ponty's essay "Cézanne's doubt."

Cortázar's work. Once more, aspects of phenomenology and ontology will provide the theoretical basis for any conclusions drawn.

### Chapter 3

#### Ontological Stagnation: Heidegger, Modern Aesthetics, and the Danger of 'Enframing' in Cortázar's Work

If the protagonist of *Rayuela* ultimately fails to access a form of perception cleansed of the 'natural attitude,' Cortázar persists in his own attempts to develop rich and uninhibited ocular faculties. "Un sueño realizado"<sup>124</sup> is a vignette in which the writer describes the fulfilment, in his twilight years, of a wish keenly held since reading the Jules Verne novel, *Le rayon vert*, at the age of nine. Cortázar confesses that, at sunset, he has often gazed at the horizon, hoping to catch a glimpse of the elusive and ephemeral green ray, which can appear as the sun slips into the ocean. Jaded by repeated disappointment, Cortázar comes to doubt the existence of this optical phenomenon. However, one evening, as he grudgingly watches another sunset with a group of friends, the writer finally witnesses the emergence of the green ray. Contrite for having yielded to the insidious influence of the 'natural attitude,' Cortázar considers this event a sign that he should continue to champion the search for new ways of seeing. Feeling vindicated once again in his life-long conviction that, as Henri Matisse so eloquently expressed, "il y a des fleurs partout pour qui veut bien les voir,"<sup>125</sup> Cortázar closes this short text with the following words: "De alguna manera supe ayer que mucho de lo que definiendo y que otros creen quimérico, está ahí en un horizonte de tiempo futuro, y que otros ojos lo verán también un día" (emphasis added, PI 201).

"Un sueño realizado" thus reveals Cortázar's hope that others will come to perceive the world in new and unexpected ways. A further two short texts reprinted in *Papeles Inesperados* point to the contemplation of art as a potential pathway towards this broader form of vision. In both "Luz negra"<sup>126</sup> and "Otano. 1949,"<sup>127</sup> Cortázar lauds the potential of art to chip away at the

<sup>124</sup> See *Papeles Inesperados* 198-201.

<sup>125</sup> "There are flowers everywhere for those who want to see them."

<sup>126</sup> See *Papeles Inesperados* 397-98. "Luz negra" was first published in *Buñuel. Una relación circular con Antonio Gálvez*, Barcelona, Lunweg Editores, 1994.

<sup>127</sup> See *Papeles Inesperados* 391. "Otano. 1949" was written for the exhibition catalogue *Otano. 1949*; Galería Cantú, Buenos Aires, 5 al 17 de diciembre de 1949.

bastions of the 'natural attitude' by provoking the viewer to question conventional ways of seeing: "Cosa buena es pintar, si sirve para despintarnos de la mala pintura que cubre la realidad enseñada y nos tiene con el alma al duco" (PI 391, "Otano. 1949"). "Luz negra," a piece dedicated to the Catalan artist Antonio Gálvez,<sup>128</sup> is built around a metaphor wherein the 'black light' of Gálvez's images disrupts the supremacy of the 'natural attitude,' here represented as the implacable light of the sun: "Cuando alguien como Antonio Gálvez fija esa negación en imágenes, se diría que la luz negra irrumpe en el inmenso circo de sol para combatir tanta aquiescencia a lo estatuido" (PI 397, "Luz negra"). It is possible that Cortázar's metaphor was in part inspired by the chiaroscuro style typical of Gálvez's art. However, "Luz negra" is more likely an allusion to the title of one of the artist's collections.

Between 1973 and 1992 Gálvez produced a series of seventy-eight images around the theme of madness in our modern world; Gálvez called this collection *Esa falsa luz del día*.<sup>129</sup> In "Luz negra," Cortázar suggests that automatic adherence to convention is the real lunacy of contemporary society. Calling to mind Husserl's identification of the natural sciences as the false yet enduring foundation of the 'natural attitude,' it is noteworthy that Cortázar designates the sun "la estrella madre en el libro terreno de la ciencia" (PI 397, "Luz negra"). "Luz negra" declares that there are other ways to see the world, and that visual art can help to open our eyes to the alternatives. According to Cortázar, Gálvez, with the 'black light' of his artworks, is forging a new Book of the Dead;<sup>130</sup> he is indicating a passage beyond the habits of

---

<sup>128</sup> Antonio Gálvez often collaborated with Julio Cortázar, providing photographs for a number of the writer's 'collage' texts including *Último round* and *Prosa del observatorio*.

<sup>129</sup> See the Antonio Gálvez website. In particular, see the sections *Biografía* and *Colecciones*. *Esa falsa luz del día* is a series of surrealist black and white images made using 'collage' and photomontage techniques.

<sup>130</sup> The *Book of the Dead* is an ancient Egyptian text (in effect, there are a number of such manuscripts) designed to help the dead in their passage through the underworld, and into the afterlife. The Tibetans have a similar funerary text called *Bardo Thodol*, which guides the dead through the bardo, the interval between death and rebirth. Notably, the character of Ronald talks about the *Bardo Thodol* in chapter twenty-eight of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*, wherein death (of la Maga's baby, Rocamadour) and the rejection of convention are central themes. When, in "Luz negra," Cortázar specifically refers to the collected works of Gálvez with the phrase "Libro de los Muertos," it is clear that he considers art as a means of (following his own metaphor) leading us out of the sterile and blinding light of the 'natural attitude' into the fecund darkness on the other side of habit: "Gálvez avanza lentamente en la escritura de su

modern perception to a place where everything is encountered with a renewed sense of wonder:

Para quien sepa mirar, ese libro es un libro de vida, pero ya no la del mediodía deslumbrante y vacío del almuerzo en una ciudad a horario, ya no la del sol bronceador en las playas del verano obligatorio; mitos y fábulas caen como moscas muertas bajo la luz negra que los persigue hasta el fondo de la mentira. Después de ese diluvio de necesarias tintas, las cosas ya no son las de antes cuando volvemos a encontrarlas en las calles de cada día. (PI 397-98, "Luz negra")

Likewise, in the short piece written for the catalogue of the exhibition *Otano. 1949*, Cortázar declares that the works of art presented suggest, to those who view them, new and richer ways of seeing. Here, Cortázar has chosen a different metaphor, but his argument remains the same. In "Otano. 1949" he describes the various elements which combine to form the 'natural attitude,' such as tradition and primary school education, as successive layers of eyelids. Whilst habit dulls the perceptive faculties, the contemplation of a form of visual art which interrogates rather than faithfully reflects objective reality can teach us to see the beauty of the world once again:

Tenemos muchísimos párpados, y en lo hondo, y perdidos están los ojos. ... Los párpados son muy útiles porque protegen los ojos; tanto que al final no los dejen asomarse a beber su vino de luz. Otano, con grandes pinzas, se ha puesto a arrancar párpados. Ay, duele; vaya si duele. Como que hace ver las estrellas. Los ojos son para ver las estrellas. (PI 391, "Otano. 1949")

Indeed, Cortázar claims to have personally experienced the power of art to permanently influence the perspective of the viewer. It is a fact well-documented by Cortazarian criticism, that the author of the aforementioned texts attributed his distinctive literary vision to the enormous impact that the

---

Libro de los Muertos que nos incita, como el de los egipcios o los tibetanos, a un territorio diferente de la realidad, a una ruptura con la falsa legislación cotidiana" (PI 397, "Luz negra").

plastic arts had on him. More specifically, during a series of interviews with González Bermejo, he claims that the style of painting exhibited by artists such as Klee, Matisse, and Picasso, influenced the rhythm of his writing:

Sé que la pintura incidió en mi trabajo de escritor. La gran maravilla de los ritmos de Paul Klee, de ciertos ritmos de Picasso o de Matisse influyeron en mi manera de escribir, indudablemente, aunque en el momento de hacerlo no se me ocurriera pensar en eso. Pero yo sabía que después de haber visto la pintura de Klee hay ciertos tipos de torpezas de escritura en los que no se puede incurrir, hay cierto tipo de bodrio literario que no se puede cometer porque, por la vía del ojo, visualmente ha entrado algo que ya forma parte de un contenido literario. (González Bermejo 110-11)

Perhaps Cortázar's many contributions to exhibition catalogues, coupled with the frequent dedication of his texts to artists, constitute an attempt to repay the debt that he owes to art.<sup>131</sup> Equally, it could be argued that the constant references in Cortázar's work to the world of visual art are indicative of a firm conviction that literature and art have the potential to enrich one another by means of a symbiotic relationship. This certainly seems to be the motivation behind texts such as *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*, *Último round*, *Prosa del observatorio*,<sup>132</sup> *Territorios*, and *Silvalandia*,<sup>133</sup> in

---

<sup>131</sup> "Reunión con un círculo rojo" was inspired by a painting of the same name by the Venezuelan painter, Jacobo Borges, and it was included in the catalogue of an exhibition of the artist's work. The short stories "Orientación de los gatos" and "Graffiti" are dedicated, respectively, to the Mexican artist, Juan Soriano, and the Catalan painter, Antoni Tàpies. In *La fascinación de las palabras: Conversaciones con Julio Cortázar*, Cortázar explains that he penned "Fin de etapa" in response to a request from the Catalan artist, Antoni Taulé, for a prologue to an exhibition of his paintings (Prego 70-6). "Para una crucifixión cabeza abajo" is a powerful essay inspired by Francis Bacon's 1944 triptych, *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, whilst "Viaje a un tiempo plural" treats the sculpture of Virginia Silva. See *Papeles Inesperados* 403-06 and 407-09 respectively. These are just a few examples of Cortázar's many collaborations with artists.

<sup>132</sup> *Prosa del observatorio* is an extremely lyrical work. Therein, Cortázar reflects on the importance of mystery in the universe. He uses the seemingly incongruous examples of the life-cycle of eels and the observatories built by the Maharajah Jai Singh at Delhi and Jaipur as inspiration for these reflections. The text which Cortázar composes is interspersed with photographs of the observatories, predominantly taken by the Argentine writer, but reproduced in the book with the collaboration of Antonio Gálvez.

which Cortázar operates in deep collaboration with a number of artists who specialise in various media. Indeed, Cortázar explains his collaboration with artists by crediting them with helping him to perceive new paths; “tuvieron su manera de invitarme a andar a su lado, me mostraron caminos por los que yo solo no hubiera rumbeado nunca” (*Territorios* 8).

Peter Standish, in his comprehensive study of the Cortazarian canon, entitled *Understanding Julio Cortázar*, traces the increasing juxtaposition of Cortázar’s writing with visual art to the beginning of his collaborative relationship with the Argentine painter and sculptor, Julio Silva (54). In a style utterly alien to conventional works of art criticism, the text that Cortázar produces for his ‘almanacs,’ such as *Territorios*, refuses to analyse or even describe the accompanying artworks. Instead, Cortázar appears to practice a form of free association; deliberately expelling the influence of the ‘natural attitude,’ he allows the images to suggest pure analogies and original fictions. In effect, this system is Husserl’s phenomenological *epoché* transposed to the activity of contemplating visual art. Antonio Urrutia concludes his essay, “Los ‘territorios plásticos’ de Julio Cortázar,” by describing Cortázar’s approach to art, and the way in which he integrated it into his work, in the following terms:

Ni nos describe las obras, ni las enjuicia estéticamente, ni hace filosofía, ni se saca de la manga bonitos y líricos párrafos pretendidamente inspirados en una expresión plástica. ¿Qué hace pues? Entrar a saco en las pinturas que ama, inventar historias, aventuras, establecer analogías. Creo que habría que definir así sus escritos sobre arte: plasmación de un universo analógico. (Urrutia 623)

It seems appropriate to conclude that, through his ‘collage’ texts, Cortázar offers his readers repeated examples of his aesthetic theory in action. Therein, he eloquently demonstrates the inherent potential of art to expand beyond the confines of its material being, and so, to stimulate new ways of seeing. It may be assumed that by making art such an integral part of books

---

<sup>133</sup> *Silvalandia* is a short illustrated book about a land filled with wondrous creatures. As the title suggests, the artwork was provided by Julio Silva. Cortázar wrote whimsical tales to accompany the images.



like *Último round* and *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*, Cortázar is inviting his readers to follow his lead; he hopes that they will engage with the images in a pre-reflective manner and, thereby, access an alternative perspective on the world.

On the whole, Cortázar's 'collage' texts have received disproportionately scant attention from scholars, bearing in mind the considerable position that they occupy in his complete works. However, in 2001 María de Lourdes Dávila made a substantial contribution to redressing the balance when she published her doctoral thesis, *Desembarcos en el papel: La imagen en la literatura de Julio Cortázar*. In the introduction, Dávila declares her intention to help bridge the existing divide in critical praxis between literature and the plastic arts (13).<sup>134</sup> The resulting text is a pioneering study in which Dávila offers discerning comparative analyses of the visual images and "las imágenes retóricas del lenguaje verbal" (13) in a number of Cortázar's works.

After opening *Desembarcos en el papel* with a chapter devoted to what Dávila isolates as the most salient verbal images in *Rayuela* (plus some consideration of references to particular artists, paintings, and artistic movements, in the novel), chapters two and three focus on the texts which resulted from Cortázar's collaborative relationship with Julio Silva. The second chapter examines the interplay of visual and verbal images in *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* and *Último round*, whilst *Territorios* and *Silvalandia* are the subjects of chapter three. Dávila notes that, certainly in the case of the first three works mentioned above, the visual images printed in these books have been severed from their original milieu and re-contextualised by Cortázar's texts (130). Yet, it could be argued that in offering an analysis of this art which is so tightly circumscribed by reference to the accompanying text, Dávila has reduced Cortázar's original expansionary project to something rather narrow. In fact, the pieces which Cortázar penned for *Territorios* are

---

<sup>134</sup> Dávila is justified in her appraisal of current Cortázar scholarship when she complains that there has been a tendency to focus primarily on the textual elements of Cortázar's hybrid works, and to simply list the provenance of the visual images. She convincingly argues that, in examining texts such as *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*, there has been a marked failure to make use of the large number of studies on the theory of "crítica interartística" (12).

intended as just one example of any number of possible responses to the images reproduced therein. Cortázar hoped that his readers would engage with the art included in the 'almanacs' on their own terms, and, in so doing, produce their own meanings. It is not merely coincidental that, in *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*, Cortázar registers his abhorrence of the passive viewer, whom he clearly considers as comparable to the 'lector hembra' as defined in *Rayuela*:

Detesto al lector que ha pagado por su libro, al espectador que ha comprado su butaca, y que a partir de allí aprovecha el blando almohadón del goce hedónico o la admiración por el genio. ¿Qué le importaba a Van Gogh tu admiración? Lo que él quería era tu complicidad, que trataras de mirar como él estaba mirando con los ojos desollados por un fuego heracliteano. (VDOM 2: 166)

The above quotation thoroughly demonstrates the validity of the link currently being drawn between this chapter and the preceding one. Here, Cortázar presents his concept of the ideal approach to various forms of artistic expression, as a natural extension of the open, yet engaged way in which he encourages us to perceive the world as a whole.<sup>135</sup> We should contemplate a Van Gogh painting in the same way that he looked at the everyday world, "con los ojos desollados por un fuego heracliteano."<sup>136</sup> Indeed, the reference to the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, evokes both the universal struggle to see beyond the fog of custom and Oliveira's personal search as represented in *Rayuela*. In the preface to *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: A Guide and Commentary*, Langer recalls a story which Aristotle used to tell about Heraclitus. On hearing that Heraclitus was a man of unparalleled genius, a group of people set out to find him, in the hope of witnessing something extraordinary. Eventually, they discover Heraclitus; he is warming

---

<sup>135</sup> It is perhaps pertinent to recall here that the character of la Maga in *Rayuela* looked at the world and art in the same candid and utterly pre-reflective manner. Compare, for example, her response to Etienne's painting as described in chapter 142, with how she looks at a leaf on the ground in chapter 4.

<sup>136</sup> Cortázar's specific choice of the painter Van Gogh to illustrate this point in *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* is also of some significance; the current study will have reason to appeal to the work of Van Gogh at a later stage, when using Heidegger's philosophy of art to analyse a number of Cortázar's texts.

himself at a stove. The group are severely disappointed by the mundane situation in which they find the philosopher; convinced that Heraclitus is a fraud, they turn to leave. However, as they go, Heraclitus urges that, in future, they consider more closely the ordinary situation which they so swiftly dismissed as irrelevant to, and, unworthy of, reflection. According to Heraclitus, philosophy does not require the rejection of daily life; rather, it should begin from the actual human situation (Langer viii).

This principle finds an echo in *Rayuela*; specifically, in the way Oliveira seeks new ways of seeing by probing the most basic human encounters. It is significant that, during his adventure with the *clocharde*, a desperate attempt to reach the other side of habit, which closes the section of the novel set in Paris, Oliveira repeatedly thinks about Heraclitus (see ch. 36). Given that the current thesis offers a phenomenological reading of a number of Cortázar's texts, it is also fitting that Langer should draw parallels between Heraclitus and phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty. She emphasises that Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world (*Inderweltsein*), the notion that the actual human situation is the starting point for all philosophical enquiry, is a foundational element of both phenomenology and existentialism. It is therefore unsurprising that Heidegger acknowledges the debt which modern philosophy owes to Heraclitus, by including the above story in his "Letter on Humanism."<sup>137</sup>

It is evident from Cortázar's steadfast support of artists, by means of texts like "Luz negra," that he was convinced of the potential of visual art to open a path beyond habitual forms of perception. His collaborative ventures with painters, photographers, and sculptors, are both an invitation to readers to exploit art in the search for new ways of seeing, and, in the form of Cortázar's personal responses to the images, a model for this phenomenological exercise. Yet, there remains a certain ambiguity regarding Cortázar's concept of the specific way in which art works to stimulate alternative forms of perception. Thus, the aim of the remaining two chapters of this study is to uncover the finer details of Cortázar's philosophy of art, by

---

<sup>137</sup> Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" is reproduced in Farrell Krell's *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (146-181). Heidegger's comments on the story concerning Heraclitus can be found here (175-76).

means of a thorough examination of the way in which he represents the moment of contact between viewer and work of art. If, as has been established by chapters one and two of the current thesis, the figure of the gaze and the theme of perception together constitute one of the most enduring aspects of Cortázar's writing, then the contemplation of visual art is the leitmotif which occupies the greatest space within this sphere. In Cortázar's fiction the instances of characters engaged in looking at a work of art are legion. Indeed, the narrative of an entire short story or novel frequently revolves around this act; this is the case in texts such as "Orientación de los gatos," "Fin de etapa," and *Divertimento*.<sup>138</sup> It is, therefore, rather surprising that a study devoted to this theme in Cortázar's fiction has yet to be written.

Excluding Dávila's admirable work on the 'collage' texts, and an essay by Marcy E. Schwartz that looks at Cortázar's contribution to three photographic collections,<sup>139</sup> extant criticism treating the place of visual art in the works of Julio Cortázar can be divided into three main categories. Firstly, there are studies that focus on the frequent allusions that Cortázar makes to particular artists or paintings. In more general studies of the author and his work, a single chapter is sometimes devoted to Cortázar's personal and professional relationship with art. Most typically, current scholarship has used Cortázar's representation of the contemplation of visual art as a springboard to investigate related themes, such as narrative strategy, or the writer's developing political consciousness. María Amparo Ibáñez Moltó argues that Cortázar's numerous references to the world of visual art constitute the natural extension of his passion for, and knowledge of, this subject. She describes the way in which he uses paintings as the "representación artística de su mundo literario, pequeña galería de arte, íntima y evocadora, que Cortázar nos invita a contemplar en su obra" (639). Her essay, "Galería de arte en la obra de Julio Cortázar," provides an exhaustive table in which these

---

<sup>138</sup> All quotations from this novel will be directly followed by the abbreviation *D*, and the page number, in parenthesis. For the short stories, see CC2 (329-30) for "Orientación de los gatos" and CC2 (426-33) for "Fin de etapa."

<sup>139</sup> Schwartz compares and contrasts the contributions that Cortázar made to three books of photography: *Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires* (1968) by Sara Facio and Alicia D'Amico, *París, ritmos de una ciudad* (1981) by Alecio de Andrade, and *Alto el Perú* (1984) by Manja Offerhaus.

references are divided according to artistic medium (architecture, sculpture, painting); Ibáñez Moltó identifies the original artist, the corresponding Cortazarian image, and its function within the text. Whilst “Galería de arte en la obra de Julio Cortázar” is a thoroughly researched study, and an indispensable resource for any scholar interested in the role of art in Cortázar’s fiction, it does not consider those characters that are represented as gazing at a painting or a photograph.

In *Understanding Julio Cortázar*, Standish has produced a rather comprehensive account of the various guises that visual art takes within Cortázar’s literary production. He indicates the importance of artistic references in novels such as *Los premios*<sup>140</sup> and *Rayuela*, explores Cortázar’s collaborative projects with artists (including lesser-known texts, such as *Les Discours du Pince-Gueule*),<sup>141</sup> and frames everything with an insightful discussion of Cortázar’s individual concept of seeing. Standish supports his appraisal of the function of art in Cortázar’s *oeuvre* by referring to the writer’s

---

<sup>140</sup> The principal narrative of this novel is punctuated by nine soliloquies, in which the character of Persio reflects on the drama unfolding aboard a ship called the *Malcolm*. Persio is fascinated by the concept that apparently scattered and discrete elements (a group of people, for example, or a series of painted shapes on a canvas), have the potential to coalesce into an unexpected but meaningful figure. Persio uses both “figura” and “constelación” to refer to this seemingly spontaneous flowering of meaning. Significantly, in association with the notion of the “figura,” the question of multiple perspectives becomes a central concern for Persio. Recognising the essential poverty of a single, narrow viewpoint, Persio uses the all-seeing giant, Argus Panoptes, from Greek mythology, as a metaphor to express his desire to access a multiple, simultaneous perspective: “– El problema, claro, es Argos. Siempre. – ¿Argos? – dijo Claudia – Sí, el polifacético, el diez-mil-ojos, el simultáneo. ¡Eso, el simultáneo! – exclamó entusiasmado Persio-. Cuando pretendo anexarme la visión de Jorge, ¿no delato la nostalgia más horrible de la raza? Ver por otros ojos, ser mis ojos y los suyos, Claudia, tan bonitos, y los de este señor, tan expresivos. Todos los ojos, porque eso mata el tiempo, lo liquida del todo” (195). During his monologues Persio repeatedly invokes a painting by Picasso that, apparently, belonged to the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, and which represents a guitar player. Javier García Méndez declares that these references to Picasso’s art are also symbolic of the quest to break free from habitual forms of perspective: “Las reiteradas referencias que *Los premios* hace a uno de sus cuadros privilegian una de las múltiples facetas de la actividad artística de Picasso: su condición de pionero de la figuración cubista, que supuso la destrucción de la representación clásica, indisoluble de la perspectiva única, y su reemplazo por la pluralidad simultánea de puntos de vista, tarea que Cortázar cumple, en el plano de la escritura, al componer esta novela” (50, note 163). Thus, *Los premios* is comparable to a vast array of other Cortázar texts, in its use of visual art to explore the possibility of new ways of seeing.

<sup>141</sup> Published in 1966, *Les Discours du Pince-Gueule* constitutes Cortázar’s first collaborative venture with Julio Silva. Using the text composed by Cortázar, one of the few instances when the Argentine author wrote in French, Silva then produced a series of accompanying lithographs.

comments in interviews and other sundry pieces. *Understanding Julio Cortázar* currently offers the most valuable examination of this fundamental aspect of Cortázar's work, because Standish recognises that Cortázar's numerous depictions of the moment of contact between the viewer and an artwork must not be excluded from any consideration of the purpose of art in his writing. Moreover, it does Standish credit that he investigates the contemplation of visual art as a narrative structure in its own right, rather than as an adjunct to some other theme. Yet, the wide compass of *Understanding Julio Cortázar* necessarily limits the depth with which Standish treats this topic, and the structure of the book causes his reflections on the relationship between Cortázar and art to be rather scattered.<sup>142</sup>

*Questions of the Liminal in the Fiction of Julio Cortázar* is another full-length study which explores a substantial proportion of the Cortázar texts that are based on the contemplation of visual art. In chapter two, 'Frames of the text,' Moran expends considerable attention on "Las babas del Diablo," "Orientación de los gatos," and "Queremos tanto a Glenda," followed by briefer commentaries on "Recortes de prensa," "La banda," and "Las Ménades." Although Moran offers a perceptive reading of the spectator/participant paradigm as it appears in such stories, and he profitably draws on the theories of Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag in his remarks on Cortázar's portrayal of photography, all of his analyses are directed towards the symbol of the frame and the notion of transgression as reflective of the deconstructed form of narration exhibited by these texts. This tendency to interpret the recurring viewer-artwork pattern as secondary, as merely

---

<sup>142</sup> Standish divides *Understanding Julio Cortázar* according to the various types of work which Cortázar wrote. For example, one chapter is devoted to the short stories, another to the novels, one to the 'collage' texts, etc. Since Cortázar's fascination with visual art spans his entire literary production, Standish comments on its significance at various points in his study. The presence of art as a continuous thread throughout Cortázar's work only serves to emphasise the need for a specialised and cohesive study. The investigations carried out by Standish would surely have had a greater impact had they been condensed into a single chapter. With regard to the depth of analysis which *Understanding Julio Cortázar* provides, it should be noted that Standish provides some thoroughly significant commentary on this theme, despite the fact that his objective was much broader. Moreover, in 2005 Standish returned to this theme in a more focused manner, with his detailed exegesis of the short story "Siestas," and the paintings by Belgian artist, Paul Delvaux, with which Cortázar originally punctuated the text. See Standish's essay "Delvaux and Cortázar."

symbolic of some deeper concern in Cortázar's work, is a common feature of much of the existing criticism.

In "Movement and Stasis, Film and Photo: Temporal Structures in the Recent Fiction of Julio Cortázar," and "Art and Revolution in the Fiction of Julio Cortázar," Lois Parkinson Zamora has produced two of the most discerning studies of the role of art in Cortázar's writing. She concentrates on the viewer-work of art configuration, commenting that Cortázar's fiction "not only alludes to the visual arts but also strives to reiterate their visual structures on the printed page" ("Movement and Stasis" 159). "Art and Revolution in the Fiction of Julio Cortázar" explores the potential of art to challenge the *status quo*; Parkinson Zamora argues that "Cortázar has come to conceive of art as serving a political function" ("Art and Revolution" 88). Delving into the character of Johnny Carter, the troubled jazz virtuoso at the centre of "El perseguidor," Parkinson Zamora demonstrates that Cortázar equated artists with a type of revolutionary impulse. She quotes a section from *Territorios* where Cortázar declared: "[B]y revolutionary we must understand not only those who fight for revolution but those who have inaugurated it in themselves and transmit it through words or sounds or pigment" (qtd. in "Art and Revolution" 84).<sup>143</sup> Parkinson Zamora proceeds to a worthy survey of the way Cortázar presents the latent political function of art in texts such as "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" and "Queremos tanto a Glenda."

"Movement and Stasis, Film and Photo: Temporal Structures in the Recent Fiction of Julio Cortázar" deftly draws on the theory of photography expounded by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*<sup>144</sup> in an examination of how a fluid series of images, in stories such as "Fin de etapa," "Deshoras," and "Queremos tanto a Glenda," is arrested into one final, static picture. In accord with Moran, Parkinson Zamora concludes that the representation of art in Cortázar's fiction is often symbolic of narrative strategy; the exaggerated stasis of the imagery in the texts analysed reflects the fragmented nature of the narration. These studies offer a severely limited, albeit valuable

---

<sup>143</sup> According to footnote 18 of Parkinson Zamora's study, this quotation is taken from *Territorios* 96, and the translation is her own.

<sup>144</sup> Throughout the current thesis, all direct quotations from this text will be followed by the abbreviation *CL*, and the page number, in parenthesis.

contribution towards a greater understanding of the viewer-artwork model on which many of Cortázar's texts are based.<sup>145</sup> Critics such as Standish, Moran, and Parkinson Zamora, have drawn some significant links between the way Cortázar portrays the contemplation of art and other major themes in his fiction, and they have indicated potential paths for further study. However, the continued absence of a substantial critical piece that takes the moment of contact between viewer and artwork as the primary object of study, and that traces its occurrence throughout Cortázar's extensive literary production, is unacceptable. With the final two chapters of this thesis, I hope to correct this lacuna in existing Cortázar scholarship.

The presence of the viewer-artwork paradigm in Julio Cortázar's fiction stretches from early novels, such as *Divertimento* (1949), to his final collections of short stories; *Queremos tanto a Glenda* (1980) and *Deshoras* (1982) are especially replete with texts that revolve around this figure.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, the extent of this theme in Cortázar's fiction is such that it has been judged necessary to devote two chapters to an investigation of its various aspects. The aim of both this chapter and the subsequent one is to undertake a detailed and exhaustive exploration of this evidently important element of Cortázar's work; it is hoped that, in so doing, Cortázar's philosophy of art will be revealed. Chapters one and two have already demonstrated that both Cortázar's fundamental concept of the nature of perception, and his portrayal of the power of the gaze in shaping encounters between individuals, have philosophical equivalents in various aspects of phenomenology. It therefore seems likely that analysing Cortázar's recurring viewer-artwork figure through a phenomenological lens could also prove fruitful. Since phenomenology designates perception as the foundation of the study of essences, it was natural that phenomenological enquiry should extend to a consideration of visual art. Both the production and subsequent consumption of works of art are pursuits so uniquely defined by the act of looking, that they have inspired a number of phenomenologists as a significant subject for investigation.

---

<sup>145</sup> See also the essays by Tittler and Gutierrez Mouat. Tittler argues that the role of visual art in "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" can be read from a historical/political or fictional/mythical perspective.

<sup>146</sup> For example, "Orientación de los gatos," "Queremos tanto a Glenda," "Recortes de prensa," "Graffiti," and "Fin de etapa" are all included in these final collections.



Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in particular, has written at length about the phenomenological implications of visual art. He argues that art may constitute a path to a deeper understanding of the complexities of vision; “from Lascaux to our time, pure or impure, figurative or not, painting celebrates no other enigma than that of visibility” (Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind” 127). According to Merleau-Ponty, the true artistic experience leads us back to “a vision of things themselves” (Merleau-Ponty, *The World* 93). The art object reveals this truth of beings in communion with a subject that has some measure of freedom from the ‘natural attitude’; this subject can be the artist, or the person viewing the artwork. In his philosophical enquiries Merleau-Ponty has chosen to concentrate predominantly on questions concerning the vision of the artist. Perhaps he considers the artist a more worthy object of study because, as he declares in his essay, “Cézanne’s Doubt,” “The artist is the one who arrests the spectacle in which most men take part without really seeing it and who makes it visible to the most ‘human’ among them” (Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt” 69).

“Cézanne’s Doubt” is a poignant piece in which Merleau-Ponty traces the lifelong and frequently misunderstood struggle of the painter, to reproduce on canvas, his perception of the world. Cézanne understood the communion of being between the subject and the object of perception; he used to say: “The landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness” (Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne’s Doubt” 67).<sup>147</sup> Like many great artists, he experienced the primordial contact with the world that phenomenology seeks. Hence, Cézanne’s paintings became a striving towards a truthful reproduction of this moment of pre-reflective contact, when the object of perception emerges or appears to the perceiver.<sup>148</sup> For the purposes of our study, Merleau-Ponty’s writings are significant in their compelling argument that a fundamental link exists between phenomenology and visual art. However, the

---

<sup>147</sup> See also the quotation that opens “Eye and Mind”; taken from J. Gasquet’s text, *Cézanne*, it reveals, in his own words, the nature of Cézanne’s project: “What I am trying to convey to you is more mysterious; it is entwined in the very roots of being, in the impalpable source of sensations” (qtd. in Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind” 121).

<sup>148</sup> Merleau-Ponty argues that Cézanne’s determination to paint objects as they appear in natural vision is the mark of his genius. However, it generated a style that, in its utter contrast to the geometric perspective or the ‘gaze at infinity’ that had predominated since the Renaissance, was cause for ridicule long before the value of his endeavours was recognised (“Cézanne’s Doubt” 64-5).

fact that Merleau-Ponty chiefly directs his attention to the vision of the artist precludes any comprehensive use of his theories in the current investigation of Cortázar's viewer-artwork paradigm. A comparatively small number of Cortázar's texts address questions concerning the vision of the artist. Moreover, in stories such as "Las babas del Diablo" and "Apocalipsis de Solentiname," where the creator of the artwork and the viewer are the same person, it is the act of gazing at the finished image that constitutes the pivotal moment of the text. For this reason, it seems more appropriate to underpin our reading of this major theme in Cortázar's fiction with a phenomenological approach that privileges the work of art and its interaction with the viewer. Here, I argue that there are a number of interesting parallels between the key features of Cortázar's viewer-artwork paradigm, and the philosophy of art developed by phenomenologist Martin Heidegger in his later writings.

The principal tenets of Heidegger's philosophy of art are expounded in his lengthy and rather dense essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935-6).<sup>149</sup> Convinced that modern thought lacks any satisfactory definition of the work of art, Heidegger begins his search for the essence of art by investigating what he describes as its "thingly character" (*PLT* 19). Whilst Heidegger admits that art manifests "something other" (*PLT* 20) than itself, he argues that all artworks evidently possess a 'thingly character': "It seems almost as though the thingly element in the art work is like the substructure into and upon which the other, authentic element is built" (*PLT* 20). In an attempt to bring this 'thingly element' of the work of art into view, Heidegger examines three different concepts of the nature of 'things.' First, he considers the thing as a bearer of properties. Next, Heidegger explores the theory that the 'thing' is nothing more than a set of sense perceptions. Heidegger rejects both of these concepts on the basis that they virtually obliterate the 'thingly character' of the 'thing.' Heidegger finds some promise in his third theory, which designates the 'thing' as formed matter. Certainly, in the creation of the work of art, whether sculpture or painting, the artist imposes a particular form on matter. Nevertheless, Heidegger proceeds cautiously, conscious that this

---

<sup>149</sup> For the purposes of this thesis I use Hofstadter's translation of Heidegger's essay, reproduced in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. All quotations from this essay will be directly followed by the abbreviation *PLT*, and the page number, in parenthesis.

theory is also flawed. Not only does formed matter also occur naturally,<sup>150</sup> but society generally does not consider all objects that have been crafted to be works of art. Whereas the craftsman, like the artist, chooses materials and forms them in a specific way, the nature of the 'things' created differs vastly.

Heidegger applies the term "equipment" (*PLT* 29) to objects such as a hammer or a pair of shoes; he argues that equipment has a tendency towards transparency. According to Heidegger, we only attend to the being of equipment in unusual circumstances; for example, if the hammer we are using for a task breaks or cannot be found. The very purpose of art, on the other hand, is to demand attention by means of its form. Consequently, Heidegger confesses that his investigation of the 'thingly character' of the artwork has brought him no closer to discovering the essence of art.<sup>151</sup> Instead, inspired by the contrasting nature of the being of equipment and that of art, Heidegger turns his attention away from the substance of the artwork towards its function: "We ought to turn toward the being, think about it in regard to its being, but by means of this thinking at the same time let it rest upon itself in its very own being" (*PLT* 31). Thus begins Heidegger's search for what he calls the "work-being" (*PLT* 39) of the work of art.

In order to isolate the aspect of being that differentiates the work of art from equipment, Heidegger chooses a painting that depicts a thoroughly everyday piece of equipment. As the basis for this phenomenological investigation, Heidegger explores a Van Gogh painting of a pair of peasant shoes (*PLT* 33).<sup>152</sup> In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger eloquently evokes the life of the peasant woman who owns the shoes, and their place within the rhythm of her existence. He sees the long daily walk to the fields, the shoes treading the rich earth as the peasant woman toils to collect the harvest, their brief respite on the day of rest. Yet, Heidegger concedes, it is the viewer of Van Gogh's painting, and not the peasant woman, who sees the

---

<sup>150</sup> Heidegger uses the example of a block of granite (*PLT* 28).

<sup>151</sup> In fact, later in "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger returns to the notion of the artwork as formed matter, and it will come to have a significant bearing on his ultimate philosophy of art.

<sup>152</sup> Heidegger concedes that Van Gogh painted a number of pairs of peasant shoes, and he does not specify which canvas he is referring to. Iain Thomson argues that Heidegger based his reflections in "The Origin of the Work of Art" on Van Gogh's 1886 painting of a pair of peasant shoes. See Thomson's essay "Heidegger's Aesthetics."

shoes in this way. For her part, the peasant woman is not conscious of the shoes on her feet as she walks towards the fields. Cerbone nicely summarises the point that Heidegger is making:

[T]he less they are stared at and the more they are instead worn, the more primordial is the peasant's relation to them. But now consider the shoes in the painting: there is here no possibility of taking hold of them, of putting them to use in the manner that real shoes are; moreover, the whole point of the shoes in the painting is to be *looked at* ... , to be taken in visually and so do anything but withdraw ... By holding forth the shoes, so that they do not withdraw but are instead explicitly noticed, the painting announces something about the shoes, so that we notice the shoes and their place in the life of those who wear them. (113)

According to Heidegger, the painting lets us "know what shoes are in truth" (PLT 35). Heidegger claims that, in this way, his phenomenological study of Van Gogh's painting has revealed the nature of art; it is "the truth of beings setting itself to work" (PLT 36):

Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth. This entity emerges into the unconcealedness of its being. The Greeks called the unconcealedness of beings *aletheia*. We say 'truth' ... If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work. (PLT 36)

Yet, the reader of "The Origin of the Work of Art" should be wary of the seeming simplicity of Heidegger's preliminary example of art as "truth setting itself to work" (PLT 39). The use of Van Gogh's painting as a model for Heidegger's theory of the work-being of art is, for two reasons, rather misleading. Firstly, whilst Heidegger has chosen a picture as a means of introducing his concept of the essence of art, it is imperative to point out that his comments are intended to extend to all art forms. Indeed, the two artworks that Heidegger explores later in the essay, in order to refine his

philosophy of art, are not pictorial.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, Heidegger's assertion that the Van Gogh painting reveals the true being of the peasant shoes implies that art discloses the truth of the particular entity depicted. This reading of "The Origin of the Work of Art" misconstrues Heidegger's line of thinking. In fact, the Heideggerian scope of "the truth of beings" (PLT 39) is much more expansive; the work of art installs an understanding of being which "gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves" (PLT 43). Heidegger draws on the example of the Greek temple to develop this conception of the work-being of art, and it is during this section of the essay that he introduces the complex categories of 'world' and 'earth.'

Heidegger declares that the work of art "opens up a *world* and keeps it abidingly in force" (PLT 44). He demonstrates how works of art such as the Greek temple or the Medieval cathedral set up distinct 'worlds'; that is, they created spaces of intelligibility by which people and other entities came to acquire a certain patina of being.<sup>154</sup>

The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than

---

<sup>153</sup> Heidegger examines a poem called "Roman Fountain," by the Swiss poet, C. F. Meyer, and centres much of his later discussion on an unnamed Greek temple at Paestum in Italy. Thomson describes the Van Gogh painting, the Meyer poem, and the temple at Paestum, as "the three pillars of Heidegger's understanding of art" (*Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*). Indeed, Thomson criticises other Heideggerian scholars, such as Julian Young and Hubert Dreyfus, for concentrating on the role of the Greek temple in "The Origin of the Work of Art." He disagrees with their assertion that the Van Gogh painting is anomalous with regard to Heidegger's broader philosophy of art, and he notes that they utterly ignore Heidegger's inclusion of the Meyer poem. Thomson claims that, albeit in differing ways, all three examples are important for Heidegger's developing theory: "To put it simply, the temple motivates and helps develop the details of Heidegger's larger project; the poem implicitly contextualises and explains it; and the painting (and only the painting) directly exemplifies it" ("Heidegger's Aesthetics" n. pag.).

<sup>154</sup> "It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being" (PLT 42) and "[b]y the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. In a world's worlding is gathered that spaciousness out of which the protective grace of the gods is granted or withheld. Even this doom of the god remaining absent is a way in which world worlds" (PLT 45).

the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being. (PLT 44)

Heidegger often refers to how the work of art establishes a 'world' (ie. the manner in which 'world worlds') as a type of opening: "The work as work sets up a world. The work holds open the Open of the world" (PLT 45). At this point in "The Origin of the Work of Art," it seems appropriate to conclude that there is a sense in which the work-being of the artwork is historical. Heidegger describes the 'world' opened up by the work of art as belonging to a particular people, epoch, and/or region: "The work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself. For the work-being of the work is present in, and only in, such opening up" (PLT 41).

Heidegger explains that the work of art can no longer reveal the 'truth of beings' if "world-withdrawal" (PLT 41) or "world-decay" (PLT 41) occur. According to Heidegger, 'world-withdrawal' happens when the work of art is removed from its own "native sphere" (PLT 40), and, for example, placed in a private art collection or a museum. However, 'world-decay' can also occur. The temples at Paestum or Bamberg cathedral remain in their original locations, "but the world of the work that stands there has perished" (PLT 41). The work-being of art disintegrates in the face of both 'world-withdrawal' and 'world-decay'; the work of art simply becomes an object of study or conservation. Yet, when another great artwork is created, it opens a new 'world.' Thus, there is hope in this cyclical nature of art. From a historical perspective, art is potentially revolutionary in its ability to "transform our sense of what is and what matters" (Thomson, "Heidegger's Aesthetics" n. pag.).

If the 'world' of the artwork is associated with disclosure, Heidegger's concept of 'earth' acts as a type of counterpoint, a restraint on the Open of 'world.' Perhaps because Heidegger considers 'earth' the aspect of the work that tends towards concealment, his definition of this term is rather nebulous. It is in attempting to identify the role that 'earth' plays in the work-being of art that the purpose of Heidegger's earlier discussion of the 'thing' as formed

matter becomes apparent. As already indicated above, the work of art focuses attention on the unique way in which it has been formed as matter. The artwork is, at once, grounded in materiality, and yet, thrusts forward its material being:<sup>155</sup> "That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of itself we called the earth" (PLT 46). In the act of rising up through the work, the matter of the art object causes the earth to jut through the particular world that has been set up by the artwork. Given the complexity of the concept of 'earth,' it is worth quoting at length from the specific example of the Greek temple, which Heidegger offers by way of clarification of this aspect of his philosophy:

Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rock's clumsy yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The luster and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first brings to light the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea ... The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*. It clears and illuminates, also, that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth*. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In the things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent. (PLT 42)

Thus, there is a sense in which 'earth' has a dual action; it brings to the fore the material being of the 'world' set up by the artwork, but, at the same time,

---

<sup>155</sup> Heidegger explains this double propulsion in greater detail with the following paragraph: "[T]he temple-work, in setting up a world, does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time and to come into the Open of the work's world. The rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to glow, tones to sing, the word to speak. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone, into the firmness and pliancy of wood, into the luster of metal, into the lighting and darkening of color, into the clang of tone, and into the naming power of the word" (PLT 46).

it prevents this newly created space of intelligibility from completely subsuming all aspects of being. This is what Heidegger has in mind when he describes 'earth' as sheltering or tending towards concealment: "In being revealed in some respects, beings are at the same time concealed in others. Earth, for Heidegger, names this way in which what there is escapes or even resists the various attempts at human understanding" (Cerbone 122). From the sections of "The Origin of the Work of Art" that treat the 'earth,' it seems appropriate to deduce that Heidegger thoroughly associates this element of the artwork with a sense of the mysterious.

Heidegger argues that 'world' and 'earth' are simultaneous and inseparable functions of the work of art:<sup>156</sup> "In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth" (*PLT* 46). He is unequivocal in his assertion that 'world' and 'earth' constitute the two essential features of the work-being of art:

The setting up of a world and the setting forth of the earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work. They belong together, however, in the unity of work-being. This is the unity we seek when we ponder the self-subsistence of the work and try to express in words this closed, unitary repose of self-support. (*PLT* 48)

"The Origin of the Work of Art" describes this "unitary repose" (*PLT* 48) of the artwork as akin to the eye of a storm, a stillness at the very centre of a space of profound agitation. According to Heidegger, the work-being of the work of art is in motion; it is an "essential striving" (*PLT* 49) between 'world' and 'earth.' However, he maintains that this battle between the two essential features of the artwork is not one of discord. Rather, "the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their natures. Self-assertion of nature [is] ... surrender to the concealed originality of the source of one's own being"

---

<sup>156</sup> Cerbone eloquently explains the mutual relationship between 'world' and 'earth' that is the cornerstone of the work-being of the work of art: "The materiality of works of art is by no means an accidental feature of them, according to Heidegger, but essential to how works of art work and what they reveal or make manifest. That is, the materiality of works of art reveals something about the very idea of a world, of what it means for one to be 'opened' and 'sustained', as well as the limits to those notions. The materiality of works of art signals the interplay between world and what Heidegger calls earth" (120).



(PLT 49). Thus, by means of the struggle inherent in the work of art between 'world' and 'earth,' there is a "happening of truth" (PLT 57).<sup>157</sup> Throughout his philosophical treatise, Heidegger equates his understanding of truth with the Greek concept of *aletheia* – "the unconcealedness of beings" (PLT 54).<sup>158</sup> Heidegger claims that the work-being of art generates a type of ontological clearing in which beings are suddenly perceived in new and unexpected ways. The title that Heidegger gave to the collection of essays in which he first published "The Origin of the Work of Art" was *Holzwege*. In a brief preface to the text, the phenomenologist explains that a *holzweg* is a path through the forest, made by woodcutters. These trails eventually appear to come to a dead-end; in fact, they lead into a clearing (*Lichtung*) from which the trees have been removed. In *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* Thomson explains the significance of this metaphor for Heidegger's theory that the work of art reveals the truth of beings:

[A]n encounter with a forest "clearing" from which the trees have been removed – that is, an encounter with *nothing*, initially – makes it possible for us to notice the light through which we ordinarily see the forest. In [Heidegger's] terms, a clearing redirects our attention from entities to being, that usually unnoticed ontological light through which things ordinarily appear. And if we can notice the light through which we see, then we can also notice that things now show up differently in different lights, and so begin to realize that being exceeds any of its particular manifestations and, indeed, makes them all possible. Seeing differently, we might thus say, can turn an apparent dead-end into the occasion for an ontological epiphany. (83-4)

In effect, the philosophy of art that Heidegger outlines in his seminal essay is a *holzweg*, a pathway that leads to new insights. It should be clear from the above précis of "The Origin of the Work of Art" that Heidegger's concept of art is thoroughly removed from traditional aesthetics. Indeed, Heidegger was

---

<sup>157</sup> "Earth juts through the world and world grounds itself on the earth only so far as truth happens as the primal conflict between clearing and concealing. But how does truth happen? We answer: it happens in a few essential ways. One of these ways in which truth happens is the work-being of the work. Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is the fighting of the battle in which the unconcealedness of beings as a whole, or truth, is won" (PLT 55).

<sup>158</sup> See also PLT 36 and 59.

extremely critical of the aesthetic approach to art. He objected to the way in which modern aesthetics isolates the artwork from history, and focuses exclusively on the personal, sensuous experience of the viewer or artist. In the epilogue to "The Origin of the Work of Art,"<sup>159</sup> he warns that "perhaps experience is the element in which art dies" (PLT 79). The philosophical basis for Heidegger's rejection of aestheticism is a fundamental aspect of his later writings on art, science, and technology. Aesthetics presupposes a divide between the art object and the experiencing subject. This concept has become so successfully entrenched in the modern psyche that it is widely considered fact. However, Heidegger maintains that the notion of a subject-object divide is neither neutral nor historically insignificant. Rather, it represents the attempt by contemporary human society to establish "mastery over that which is as a whole" (Heidegger, *The Question* 132).

According to Heidegger, this impulse to control the objective world is not only the foundation of aesthetics; it is also the vital component in the ever-increasing hegemony of science and technology in our society. Furthermore, in science and technology, the subjectivism of aesthetics mutates into what Heidegger calls 'enframing' (*Gestell*). In 'enframing,' the human subject comes to see everything external not simply as objects to be controlled, but as resources to be used (*Bestand*). Ultimately, this concept extends to include the human subject itself as just another object to be exploited. Heidegger believes that this way of looking at the world developed in response to the refusal of mankind to accept any limitation on knowledge:

There is much in being that man cannot master. There is but little that comes to be known. What is known remains inexact, what is mastered insecure. What is, is never of our making or even merely the product of our minds, as it might all too easily seem. (PLT 53)

Iain Thomson reads "The Origin of the Work of Art" as a programme for escaping the narrow and misguided viewpoint of subjectivism in all its

---

<sup>159</sup> The epilogue to "The Origin of the Work of Art" was written at an unknown time between 1936, and 1956, when Heidegger penned the addendum (Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* 6).

forms, and truly reconnecting with the world via that primordial, engaged existence in which we have always lived, but which has become so obscured. Heidegger is hopeful that aesthetics can be transcended from within. If we approach the artwork in such a way that allows the work-being to function, it will disclose new and diverse concepts of being:

Heidegger's defining hope for art ... is that works of art could manifest, and, therefore, help usher in a new understanding of the being of entities, a literally 'post-modern' understanding of what it means for an entity to be, a postmodern ontology which would no longer understand entities either as modern objects to be controlled or as late-modern resources to be optimised. (Thomson, "Heidegger's Aesthetics" n. pag.)

Moreover, art can teach us to embrace this constant regeneration of meaning as something positive; this challenge to our ingrained attitudes is restorative, rather than destructive, of human intelligence.

Presently, the current study will demonstrate that Cortázar's idiosyncratic portrayal of the viewer-artwork paradigm thoroughly evokes Heidegger's concept of the work-being of art as outlined above. Consistently, Cortázar's fiction presents the contemplation of visual art as a potent and mysterious exchange between viewer and artwork, through which there is, ultimately, a happening of truth. Although the subsequent analysis of Cortázar's texts using theories expounded in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is a new contribution to existing scholarship, studies such as Genover's book and Machado's essay have previously applied elements of Heidegger's philosophy to Cortázar's writing. In contrast to the current thesis, Genover and Machado draw on Heidegger's seminal work, *Being and Time*, to examine themes such as authenticity, angst, and the absurd, in Cortázar's fiction. Both scholars focus much of their investigation on *Rayuela*.

In his essay, Machado criticises Genover for failing to recognise that Heidegger and Cortázar held disparate views on authenticity. He points out that, for Heidegger, authentic being is only attainable if a person confronts their own mortality. The German philosopher argues that inauthenticity is

characterised by an emphasis on frivolous concerns, which distract the individual from the inevitability of their own death. Cortázar, on the other hand, often champions a joyous outlook and the cultivation of absurd situations as conducive to an authentic ontological state. Despite this disparity concerning the nature of authenticity, a comparative study of the role of art in the ontology of Heidegger and Cortázar remains a valid one. If Cortázar's concept of authentic being occasionally constitutes a departure from the Heideggerian philosophy expounded in *Being and Time*, his repeated portrayal of a work of art generating a "happening of truth" (PLT 57) reveals a number of evident parallels with "The Origin of the Work of Art."

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger is emphatic concerning the critical role played by the viewer in rousing and sustaining the work-being of the artwork. For this reason, Heidegger labels those who "respond to the truth happening in the work" as "preservers" (PLT 67). Since Cortázar seems more intrigued by the dynamics of looking at art than by questions of artistic creation, it is interesting to note that, for Heidegger, the viewer-presenter is just as essential to the function of art as the artist: "Just as a work cannot be without being created but is essentially in need of creators, so what is created cannot itself come into being without those who preserve it" (PLT 66). The work-being perishes without 'preservers'; art transitions into defunct relic. Consistent with his rejection of modern aesthetics, Heidegger is determined that his 'preservers' not be confused with those who make the preservation and restoration of artworks their *métier*. Rather, the 'preserver' allows the work of art to *be*; as the work-being surges forward the 'preserver' accepts the disclosure of beings offered up by the artwork: "Preserving the work means: standing within the openness of beings that happens in the work" (PLT 67).

The characters at the centre of Cortázar's viewer-artwork configuration predominantly conform to Heidegger's definition of a 'preserver'; approaching the work of art in an attitude of openness, they provoke the work-being of the art object into action. As the 'world' of the artwork subsequently unfurls, the protagonists of texts such as "Fin de etapa" and "Recortes de prensa" absorb the newly disclosed truth of beings. In addition, stories such as "Orientación de los gatos" and "Apocalipsis de

Solentiname” underline the collaborative role of the ‘preserver’ in allowing the work-being of art to function, by contrasting an acquiescent viewer with someone of a more fixed outlook.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, the viewer-artwork paradigm, so prevalent in Julio Cortázar’s fiction, does not merely exhibit equivalences with the positive features of Heidegger’s philosophy of art. Rather, Cortázar’s treatment of the contemplation of visual art occasionally reflects Heidegger’s distaste for aesthetics, and his associated concern that this heightened subjectivism ultimately leads to ‘enframing.’ Accordingly, the remainder of the current chapter will offer an investigation, by way of comparison with Heidegger’s philosophy, of how Cortázar often uses his representation of viewer and artwork as a medium for criticising contemporary attitudes to art.

The delightful vignette, “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas,” is a caustic parody of contemporary art criticism. Therein, Cortázar satirises both the subjective basis of aesthetics and our increasing reliance on hackneyed formulae in appraising works of art. The text offers interpretations of three paintings from the Renaissance canon: *Sacred and Profane Love* by Titian; *Lady with a Unicorn* by Raphael; and *Portrait of Henry VIII of England* by Holbein. In each case, Cortázar seeks to undermine our customary acceptance of the aesthetic experience by means of a hyperbolic pastiche of the personal and emotional response to art. For example, the extent of the narrator’s aversion for *El amor sagrado y el amor profano* is the source of much humour in the text. Titian’s work of art is described as “esta detestable pintura,” the product of “la torpeza de un pintor”; one feature of the canvas “brilla horriblemente,” whilst another “está mal pintada” (CC1 411). It will be recalled that Heidegger describes the subjective experience of aesthetics as detrimental to the work-being of art:

Aesthetics takes the work of art as an object, the object of *aesthesis*, of sensuous apprehension in the wide sense. Today we call this apprehension experience. The way in which man experiences art is

---

<sup>160</sup> See, for example, how the character of Alana experiences a true communion with the works of art in “Orientación de los gatos,” whilst her husband, the narrator, is very sterile in his response to the images. Equally, it is interesting to note that, whilst the photographs of “Apocalipsis de Solentiname” open up a world for the narrator, his girlfriend, Claudine, can only appreciate the pictures on a purely aesthetic level.

supposed to give information about its nature. ... Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. (PLT 79)

In addition, Cortázar exploits the allegorical character of *Sacred and Profane Love* to demonstrate the potential, inherent in the aesthetic approach towards art, for vastly differing interpretations of the identity of the figures portrayed, and the significance of their arrangement. The narrator of “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas” applies a Christian narrative to Titian’s work of art, arguing that the scene depicts the aftermath of the death of the Messiah. According to this reading, the woman clothed in white is Gloria, the central character represents the Devil, and the naked figure on the right is an angel, “encargado de proclamar la resurrección” (CC1 411).<sup>161</sup> Although implausible, this interpretation of *Sacred and Profane Love* is technically defensible in that it remains faithful to the compositional elements of the piece. In this way, Cortázar emphasises the instability of symbolism, and the consequent tendency to impose our individual ideologies on the works of art that we view.

The critique presented in “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas” of Raphael’s painting is equally mocking of conventional aesthetics. Here, Cortázar satirises the practice of appealing to historical context and the biography of the artist, in responding to a work of art. Once more, the emotional response of the narrator to the artwork is overstated; his tone is virtually hysterical as he explains that *Lady with a Unicorn* constitutes a

---

<sup>161</sup> There has been a great deal of historical debate concerning the meaning of Titian’s picture. It is believed that the painting we now know as Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* was commissioned in approximately 1514 by Niccolò Aurelio, secretary to the Venetian Council of Ten, on the occasion of his marriage. The coat of arms on the front of the fountain identifies his family, and the figure dressed in white on the left of the image is thought to be Aurelio’s wife, Laura Bagarotto. This interpretation considers the two naked figures to be the Roman gods of Beauty and Love, Venus with her son, Cupid. Indeed, *Venus and the Bride* has been used as an alternative title for the work. The name, *Sacred and Profane Love*, was first recorded at the end of the seventeenth century, and derives from a reading of the painting that applies the concepts of divine and earthly love to the two female figures. According to this allegory, the woman on the left symbolises fleeting happiness on earth, whilst the figure to the right, holding a flame, represents eternal happiness in heaven. Critics have increasingly rejected this analysis because it attaches a negative connotation to the left-hand figure. In rejecting this reading, it has been argued that Titian believed in contemplating the beauty of creation in order to acquire a heightened awareness of divine perfection ([www.galleriaborghese.it/borghese/en/eamor.htm](http://www.galleriaborghese.it/borghese/en/eamor.htm)).

confession of heresy. He claims that the fixed gaze of the woman depicted betrays some shameful act that is occurring beyond the scope of the painting. It is argued that the unicorn, “animal fálico” (CC1 411), kills the lady; “penetra en su seno majestuoso con el cuerno labrado de impudicia” (CC1 412). The narrator of Cortázar’s text attempts to lend an air of legitimacy to these farcical interpretations by demonstrating his historical knowledge. For example, he refers to the artist by his full name, Raphael Sanzio, which is so uncommonly used, and the female figure in the portrait is correctly identified as Maddalena Strozzi, who modelled for Raphael on a number of occasions. Yet, Cortázar thoroughly undermines this staple of art criticism via the narrator’s treatment of the fact that part of *Lady with a Unicorn* was concealed for many years. The image of the unicorn was only revealed during a 1935 restoration project; it seems that it had been purposely secreted under several layers of paint. The narrator of “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas” attributes this vile act of concealment to “los tres enconados enemigos de Rafael: Carlos Hog, Vincent Grosjean, llamado «Mármol», y Rubens el Viejo” (CC1 411). The clear comic intent of these names, can leave the reader in no doubt that Cortázar’s objective is to disparage the practice of using the artist’s biography to support a specific interpretation of his/her work.

Cortázar’s discussion of the portrait of Henry VIII, which was painted by Holbein, thoroughly parodies the subject-object divide that defines our contemporary attitude towards works of art. Again, the narrator highlights the extent to which aesthetics relies on the subjectivity of the viewer; he does so by opening this section of the text with the phrase: “Se ha querido ver en este cuadro ...” (CC1 412). Here, the verb ‘querer’ is superfluous. Cortázar employs this specific verbal configuration, attaching to it a catalogue of six ostensibly extant interpretations of Holbein’s painting, each one as bizarre as the next,<sup>162</sup> in order to deride our long-standing conviction that the only valid

---

<sup>162</sup> Amongst those images which, according to the narrator of “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas,” have been detected in Holbein’s painting, are an elephant hunt, a map of Russia, and, perhaps most bizarrely, a Javanese polyp “que bajo la influencia del limón estornuda levemente y sucumbe con un pequeño soplido” (CC1 412). To anyone who has seen Holbein’s *Portrait of Henry VIII*, these images will seem all the more incongruous. Yet, perhaps Cortázar is here making an oblique

experience of art is a deeply personal one. Extending this criticism, the final section of “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas” presents an exaggerated portrayal of the work of art as object. The narrator maintains that the vastly different responses to the *Portrait of Henry VIII* are all valid, providing they can claim some basis in the features of the painting. However, Cortázar blatantly undermines this attitude by means of the sheer absurdity of the narrator’s explanation:

Cada una de estas interpretaciones es exacta atendiendo a la configuración general de la pintura, tanto si se la mira en el orden en que está colgada como cabeza abajo o de costado. Las diferencias son reductibles a detalles; queda el centro que es ORO, el número SIETE, la OSTRÁ observable en las partes sombrero-cordón, con la PERLA-cabeza (centro irradiante de las perlas del traje o país central) y el GRITO general absolutamente verde que brota del conjunto. (CC1 412)

Cortázar further mocks the subject-object divide that shapes our concept of aesthetics by insinuating the peculiar perspectives that would unfold were the viewer of Holbein’s royal portrait to “apoyar la mano sobre el corazón del rey” (CC1 412), or “acercarle una vela encendida a la altura de los ojos” (CC1 412). This aspect of “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas” evokes Heidegger’s declaration that aesthetics errs in resolutely differentiating between the viewing subject and the object viewed. Thomson explains:

In Heidegger’s view, the phenomenologically faulty presuppositions of modern philosophy have misled aesthetics into looking for the work of art in the wrong place, at a derived rather than the basic level of human interaction with the world, and thus into mistaking an intense subjective experience of an external object for an encounter with the true work of art. (“Heidegger’s Aesthetics” n. pag.)

Certainly, the primary purpose of “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas” is as a humorous text. Nevertheless, it is telling that

---

reference to *The Ambassadors*, arguably Holbein’s most famous work, in which the image of a skull in the foreground is partially obscured by means of an optical illusion.



Cortázar chose to parody the dynamics of the contemplation of art, and that his observations should be consistent with Heidegger's rejection of modern aesthetics. In his essay, "Heidegger's Aesthetics," Thomson argues that Heidegger's criticism of the customary attitude towards artworks is a crucial aspect of his wider philosophy of art, because he was convinced that "the only way to get beyond aesthetics is first to understand how it shapes us and then seek to pass through and beyond that influence." In this respect, Cortázar's text exhibits a number of further parallels. "Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas" forms part of the *Manual de instrucciones* section of *Historias de cronopios y de famas*, which was published in 1962. The theme that unites the short pieces of which *Manual de instrucciones* is comprised concerns the stagnation wrought by convention, and the merit of seeking out alternative perspectives.<sup>163</sup> In the forward to *Manual de instrucciones*, for example, Cortázar emphasises the difficulty of turning away from habit:

Cómo duele negar una cucharita, negar una puerta, negar todo lo que el hábito lame hasta darle suavidad satisfactoria. Tanto más simple aceptar la fácil solicitud de la cuchara, emplearla para revolver el café. (CC1 407)

With "Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas," Cortázar brings his censure of convention to bear on traditional art criticism; his parody of contemporary attitudes towards art begins with the very title of the text. In announcing its pedagogical intent, the title of "Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas" prompts the reader to reflect on the fundamental presumption of modern aesthetics: that the meaning of a work of art is accessible via careful analysis. Heidegger strongly criticised this tendency to consider art a quantifiable object of study:

---

<sup>163</sup> See my analysis of "Instrucciones para subir una escalera" (CC1 416) in chapter two of the current study. Consider also, "Preámbulo a las instrucciones para dar cuerda al reloj" (CC1 417), a satire in which Cortázar explores how the gift of a watch immerses the recipient in routine to such an extent that the traditional balance of power in the subject-object relationship becomes reversed.

[I]nnumerable aesthetic considerations of and investigations into art and the beautiful have achieved nothing, they have not helped anyone gain access to art, and they have contributed virtually nothing to artistic creativity or to a sound appreciation of art. (Heidegger, *Nietzsche* 1: 79)

This conclusion is the natural corollary of Heidegger's conviction that society is totally misguided in believing that our relationship with art consists of a human subject interpreting a created object. In "The Origin of the Work of Art" he maintains that the work-being of art operates on a more primordial level of human interaction, and that all prescribed methodology prevents any potential happening of truth. It is noteworthy, then, that Cortázar should so systematically undermine the authority of the art critic in "Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas." The tone of the narrator is excessively fervent and dogmatic; yet, Cortázar represents the fervour as misplaced and the dogma as hollow. The text irreverently parodies several linguistic conventions of the discipline of art criticism. Cortázar demonstrates how the use of stock phrases such as "No será necesario explicar que ..." and "No es difícil atisbar aquí ..." (CC1 411), by appealing to a sense of objectivity, creates a sham aura of authority. He further emphasises the shallowness of the jargon that accompanies art criticism by repeating typical platitudes such as "[el] cuadro que es el mundo" (CC1 411).

"Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas" also undermines the sources through which art interpretation seeks legitimacy. If "se ha dicho que representa" (CC1 411) supports an individual reading by reference to collective opinion, "se atribuyó mucho tiempo a ..." (CC1 411) does so by historical precedent. The analysis of Raphael's *Lady with a Unicorn* begins by citing the opinion of an eminent third party, "Saint-Simon creyó ver en este retrato ..." (CC1 411). Cortázar ridicules each of these established methods with the sheer absurdity of the opinions that follow these apparently authoritative statements. Thus, "Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas" encourages the reader to interrogate the foundations on which the hegemony of the art critic is built; it undermines the linguistic authority of art criticism, and casts contemporary aesthetics as a way of contemplating art

that is both institutionalised and hierarchical. According to Martin Heidegger, such conventions act as a barrier to the happening of truth:

[K]nowledge in the manner of preserving is far removed from that merely aestheticizing connoisseurship of the work's formal aspects, its qualities and charms ... As soon as the thrust into the extraordinary is parried and captured by the sphere of familiarity and connoisseurship, the art business has begun. Even a painstaking handing on of works to posterity, all scientific efforts to regain them, no longer reach the work's own being, but only a recollection of it. (PLT 68)

With his novel, *62: Modelo para armar*,<sup>164</sup> Cortázar continues to gently mock this 'sphere of familiarity and connoisseurship.' Appropriately, the figure at the centre of Cortázar's thinly veiled criticism of societal attitudes towards art is a French sculptor named Marrast. Temporarily residing in London, along with a number of the other main characters in the text,<sup>165</sup> Marrast casually defers work on a commission from the council of Arcueil; he has agreed to craft a statue of the Gallic hero, Vercingetorix, for the town square. Meanwhile, he persists in a hopeless relationship with his girlfriend, Nicole; Marrast knows that she has fallen in love with their mutual friend, Juan.<sup>166</sup> He frequently seeks respite from this intolerable situation by wandering the city alone. One day, at the Courtauld Institute of Art, Marrast is captivated by a curious portrait; it depicts a certain Dr Daniel Lysons, D.C.L., M.D., holding the stem of a plant.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>164</sup> For the purposes of this thesis I use the 2007, Punto de lectura edition of *62: Modelo para armar*. All quotations from this novel will be directly followed by the abbreviation *62*, and the page number, in parenthesis.

<sup>165</sup> Calac and Polanco are Argentine; a pseudo-writer and a pseudo-scientist respectively. They are also living in London and form part of the same extensive group of friends, ordinarily based in Paris, which includes Marrast and his girlfriend Nicole.

<sup>166</sup> Nicole has fallen in love with Juan, an Argentine living in Paris and working as an interpreter. For much of the novel he is based in Vienna, where he is working at a conference and accompanied by his occasional lover, Tell. Juan, however, is in love with Héléne, another member of the same group of friends. Nicole knows that Juan is in love with Héléne, and does not appear to have the strength to abandon Marrast, who still loves her dearly.

<sup>167</sup> The portrait of Dr Daniel Lysons (1727-1800) to which Cortázar refers is, in fact, a part of the Courtauld collection, bequeathed in 1947. It was, as Cortázar correctly states, painted by Tilly Kettle (1734-1786) (see [www.artfinder.com/work/portrait-of-doctor-daniel-lysons-dcl-md-tilly-kettle/in/gallery.the-courtauld-gallery](http://www.artfinder.com/work/portrait-of-doctor-daniel-lysons-dcl-md-tilly-kettle/in/gallery.the-courtauld-gallery)).

Lo primero que hizo Marrast, que por algo era francés, consistió en explorar la superficie del retrato (pintado en mala época por Tilly Kettle) buscando una explicación científica, críptica o nada más que masónica; después consultó el catálogo del Courtauld Institute, que se limitaba insidiosamente a proporcionar el nombre de la planta. Era posible que en tiempos del doctor Lysons las virtudes emolientes o revulsivas del 'hermodactylus tuberosis' justificaran su presencia en las manos de un D.C.L., M.D., pero no se podía estar seguro y esto, a falta de mejor cosa por el momento, tenía preocupado a Marrast. (62 48)

With this ironic description of Marrast's initial response to the painting, Cortázar sets in motion a storyline that reflects Heidegger's philosophy of art in a number of ways. The standard gestures that Marrast resorts to here, poring over the painting and then appealing to a supposedly authoritative resource, will be replicated throughout the novel in such a way that allows Cortázar to continually poke fun at the institutionalised contemplation of visual art. Yet, the portrait of Dr Daniel Lysons also provides Cortázar with the opportunity to demonstrate how a work of art has the potential to open up a world, and can, therefore, precipitate a happening of truth.

The above-quoted extract from Cortázar's novel goes on to reveal that Marrast is equally concerned about another matter. He becomes intrigued by an advertisement in the *New Statesman*, placed by a group called Neurotics Anonymous, with the intention of attracting new members. Determining to combine his interest in these two issues, Marrast writes to the address attached to the Neurotics Anonymous announcement, entreating the group to converge on the Courtauld Institute in order to solve the enigma of the portrait of Dr Lysons (62 49-50). A few days later, Marrast returns to the art gallery to witness the impact of his experiment. The subsequent chain reaction allows Cortázar to exploit our conventional relationship with works of art to great comic effect:

Como al pasar le preguntó al menos ceremonioso de los guardianes si la pintura de Tilly Kettle tenía alguna celebridad que él, pobre francés ignorante aunque escultor, ignoraba. El guardián lo miró con alguna sorpresa y condescendió a informarle que, cosa curiosa ahora que lo pensaba, en esos días una buena cantidad de gente se había

obstinado en estudiar atentamente el retrato, por lo demás sin resultados notables a juzgar por sus caras y sus comentarios. La más empecinada parecía ser una señora que había aparecido con un enorme tratado de botánica para verificar la exactitud de la atribución vegetal, y cuyos chasquidos de lengua habían sobresaltado a varios contempladores de otros cuadros de la sala. A los guardianes los alarmaba ese inexplicable interés por un cuadro tan poco concurrido hasta entonces, y ya habían informado al superintendente, noticia que provocó en Marrast un regocijo mal disimulado; se esperaba en esos días a un inspector de la dirección de museos, y se llevaba una contabilidad discreta de los visitantes. Marrast llegó a enterarse con una perversa indiferencia de que el retrato del doctor Lysons había tenido más pública esa semana que el 'Bar des Folies-Bergères' de Manet, que era un poco la Gioconda del Instituto. (62 51-2)

Throughout *62: Modelo para armar*, the anonymous neurotics continue to search for meaning in the portrait of Dr Lysons, through an increasingly intense and narrow examination of the canvas. The frustration of the zealous lady who consults early printed botanical tracts demonstrates the futility of such a rational approach to a work of art. That the members of neurotics anonymous should consider the identification of the mysterious plant a worthy endeavour, is perhaps symptomatic of a more widespread tendency to follow direction in art appreciation. Genuine phenomenological encounters are poorly represented amongst contemporary attitudes to works of art. Rather, the current dynamics of the contemplation of art are typically defined by trends that have been initiated by esteemed institutions. It is significant that while Calac and Nicole await the outcome of the portrait-neurotics anonymous experiment at the gallery, the narrator notes "los raros visitantes seguían casi de largo para precipitarse hacia Gauguin y Manet como era justo y previsible" (62 173-74). Indeed, those scenes in the novel that take place at the Courtauld Institute provide Cortázar with ample opportunity to highlight the absurdity of institutionalised attitudes towards works of art.

For those who work at the Courtauld gallery, the sudden interest in the portrait of Dr Lysons is inexplicable and unwelcome. The attendants are perturbed by this change in the routine rhythms of the museum, and the director is suspicious of this seemingly spontaneous trend. In this way, Cortázar shows that the institutions whose very purpose it is to promote the appreciation of visual art, can be rather inflexible concerning the particular

form which that appreciation should take. This is exactly the criticism that Martin Heidegger levels against those at the helm of the art industry; they typically constitute the very antithesis of his concept of the 'preserver' of a work of art. It is noteworthy, then, that the director of the Courtauld Institute should fear the outpouring of attention for the portrait of Dr Lysons, because it has not been initiated or sanctioned from above by the art business. Marrast further plays on the concerns of the director of the Institute with the unwitting collaboration of Mr Whitlow. On discovering that the director of the Courtauld Institute, a certain Harold Haroldson, is related by marriage to his friend Mr Whitlow, Marrast informs the latter of a disquieting conversation about the portrait of Dr Lysons, which he claims to have overheard in a pub. Marrast, certain that Mr Whitlow will telephone Harold Haroldson to warn him about the threat to the portrait, takes great pleasure in imaging the irrational and excessive response that this news will provoke in the director:

Mejor entrenarse, hermano, en juegos más dignos del ocio del artista, no hay más que imaginar la cara de Harold Haroldson en este mismo momento, se reforzarán las guardias, usted no se mueve de la sala dos, pondremos células fotoeléctricas, hay que pedir créditos, hablaré con Scotland Yard, me subirá la presión, iré a ver al doctor Smith, desde ahora poco azúcar en el café, preferiría que no vayamos al continente querida, es un momento crítico en el instituto, mis obligaciones, comprendes. (62 58)

Indeed, the denouement of the portrait-neurotics anonymous experiment reveals the extent to which the director is genuinely frightened by this apparent aberration in aesthetic appreciation. One day, sensing that the situation at the gallery is building to a climax, Marrast asks Nicole and Calac to go and bear witness to any developments until he can join them at the Courtauld Institute. They notice that ever greater numbers of people are gathering around the portrait of Dr Lysons, and that the three attendants, too numerous for the size of the room and the number of paintings therein, are visibly on edge. One of the attendants appears to be recording, in a notebook, a detailed description of each of those viewing the painting. Ultimately, Harold Haroldson appears in Room Two of the Courtauld Institute. Under his

direction, the attendants remove the portrait of Dr Lysons from the wall, and, under the appalled gaze of the group of neurotics, carry it off until it disappears behind a closed door. Thus, with humour and panache, Cortázar is making a very serious comment concerning the narrow and intransigent nature of institutionalised aesthetics.

Significantly, the absence of Marrast on that decisive day at the Courtauld Institute neatly links the two set pieces of *62: Modelo para armar* which expose the stagnant state of contemporary aesthetics. Having finally sourced, with the help of Mr Whitlow, a suitable stone for his statue of Vercingetorix, Marrast is required to sign some documents in order to have the stone shipped to France. Shortly after Harold Haroldson confiscates the portrait of Dr Lysons, the relationship between Nicole and Marrast, at length, dissolves. Marrast returns to France where he completes the commission for Arcueil. However, the series of events triggered by his contemplation of the painting at the Courtauld Institute inspires Marrast to sculpt a rather innovative effigy of the French hero who resisted Roman rule:

[L]a estatua invertiría radicalmente los elementos tradicionales, y esa innegable novedad plástica y visual expresaría según estaba convencido Marrast una concepción dinámica del héroe galo, que parecía así surgir como un tronco de la tierra, en pleno centro de la plaza de Arcueil, sosteniendo con ambos brazos, en vez de la espada y el escudo infinitamente estúpidos y favorecedores de palomas, la parte más voluminosa de la piedra de hule, ... el inconsciente colectivo no dejaría de recibir el choque por vías subliminales a la vez que en el plano estético se tendría la grata sorpresa de asistir a una estatua que alzaría contra el cielo lo más pesado y aburrido de sí misma, la materia cotidiana de la existencia, proyectando el basamento fecal y lacrimoso hacia el azur en una transmutación genuinamente heroica. Desde luego todo eso sería absolutamente abstracto, pero la municipalidad no dejaría de señalar a los habitantes de Arcueil, mediante una placa adecuada, la identidad del personaje conmemorado. (62 62)

It could be argued that the experiments undertaken by Marrast with his statue and the portrait at the Courtauld Institute respond to the present obligation, as Heidegger understands it, of the artist and/or the viewer, to transcend aesthetics from within. In Cortázar's description of the statue of

Vercingetorix, the heavy emphasis on the material being of the artwork, and the repeated associations with the earth, are reminiscent of Heidegger's philosophy. It will be recalled that "The Origin of the Work of Art" identifies the 'earth' as the aspect of the work-being of art that tends towards concealment. Marrast concedes that the form of his artwork is somewhat obscure. Yet, it is through the specific distribution of matter that the 'world' of the statue attempts to assert itself. Thus, we are reminded that the "unconcealedness of beings" (PLT 54) emanates from the space opened up by this tension between emerging and withdrawing.

However, as Marrast presciently insinuates above, the visual faculties of the people of Arcueil prove to be utterly encumbered by aesthetic convention. Thematically, the passages of 62: *Modelo para armar* that describe the unveiling of Marrast's statue echo those that detail events at the Courtauld Institute. Everyone is outraged and perplexed in equal measure by Marrast's approach to rendering Vercingetorix (62 281-83). Here, Cortázar's intent to ridicule conventional attitudes towards art is clear in the way the townspeople balk at the abstract quality of Marrast's statue, and decry the absence of symbols traditionally associated with Vercingetorix. The narrow and clichéd reaction of *la señora de Cinamomo*,<sup>168</sup> who declares that "El arte es la belleza y se acabó" (62 281),<sup>169</sup> is a well-chosen counterpoint to Marrast's

---

<sup>168</sup> A patron at the Parisian cafe where Marrast and his friends regularly meet, throughout the novel she is held up as the very incarnation of obedience to convention.

<sup>169</sup> According to Heidegger, the notion that art and beauty were synonymous was one of the most resilient and dangerous fallacies of the aesthetic tradition. He considered the concept of beauty as an extension of our modern cult of subjectivism, and he feared the way in which 'enframing' was advancing towards the assurance that aesthetic qualities could be measured scientifically. Thomson explains: "For, once aesthetics reduces art to intense subjective experience, such experiences can be studied objectively through the use of EEGs, MRIs, MEGs, and PET scans (and the like), and in fact aesthetic experiences are increasingly being studied in this way. At the University of New Mexico's prestigious MIND Institute, to mention just one telling example, subjects are given 'beautiful' images to look at and the resulting neuronal activity in their brains was studied using one of the world's most powerful functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging machines" (*Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* 59). For Heidegger, beauty is the way in which an artwork can reveal a new understanding of being: "Beauty is a fateful gift of the essence of truth, whereby truth means the unconcealment of the self-concealing. The beautiful is not what pleases, but what falls within the fateful gift of truth which comes into its own when that which is eternally unapparent [or inconspicuous, *Unscheinbare*] and therefore invisible attains its most radiantly apparent appearance" (qtd. in *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* 63, note 39). See also PLT 81.



allusion, earlier in the novel, to the truly expansive nature of art. In responding to accusations from Austin<sup>170</sup> that the situation at the Courtauld Institute is insignificant, for example, in comparison with political issues, Marrast defends his experiment with the portrait thus: “¿Pero no te das cuenta de que también esto es una manera de impulsar a la humanidad por caminos más vitales?” (62 171). Indeed, it will be demonstrated in the final chapter of this thesis that Cortázar consistently portrays the interaction between Marrast and the portrait of Dr Lysons as opening up a ‘world.’ For the moment, however, the current study will continue to trace the development of Cortázar’s criticism of conventional aesthetics.

If 62: *Modelo para armar* and “Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas” exploit prevailing attitudes towards art for humorous ends, the modern dynamics of contemplation take a more serious and potentially sinister turn in “Simulacros” and “Queremos tanto a Glenda.” With these texts, Cortázar explores the ramifications of an unchecked development of the subjectivism which underlies aesthetics. It is my contention that he does so in a manner which evokes Heidegger’s fears about the increasingly mercenary nature of contemporary ways of seeing. “Queremos tanto a Glenda,” for example, is a chilling account of how the subjectivism that we customarily bring to bear on aesthetic objects can, with great ease and subtlety, cross over into ‘enframing.’

The title story of Cortázar’s 1980 collection, “Queremos tanto a Glenda” is ostensibly a study in fanaticism. It describes the formation of a group of enthusiasts who admire an actress called Glenda Garson,<sup>171</sup> and

---

<sup>170</sup> In fact, Austin was initially part of the experiment with the painting of Dr Lysons. Presumably a member of Neurotics Anonymous, Austin is looking at the portrait when Marrast approaches him to ask the time. The sculptor is motivated by a desire to witness more closely the developments of the situation which he precipitated. Austin begins to learn French with Marrast, and eventually becomes part of the group of friends around which the novel is based. Indeed, Austin plays an integral role in the denouement of several of the main storylines of the text. It is important, then, that his place within 62: *Modelo para armar* has its source in Cortázar’s viewer-artwork paradigm.

<sup>171</sup> The name used in Cortázar’s story is a thinly veiled alias for the real-life British actress, Glenda Jackson. This association is implied by the films named in “Queremos tanto a Glenda,” but is made explicit in another text by Cortázar entitled “Botella al mar” (CC2 421-25). Included in the 1982 collection of short stories, *Deshoras*, “Botella al mar” is a kind of indirect letter to Glenda Jackson. Therein, Cortázar confesses that

traces the steady intensification of their fervour. The mechanics surrounding the inception of the group are somewhat obscure; the text simply states that those who became members of “el núcleo” (CC2 332) recognised in each other a kindred devotion to Glenda Garson. According to the narrator, only those who truly loved Glenda were permitted entry into the fellowship; they were distinguished from those who simply admired the actress:

De club no tenía nada, simplemente queríamos a Glenda Garson y eso bastaba para recortarnos de los que solamente la admiraban ... solamente nosotros queríamos tanto a Glenda, y el núcleo se definió por eso y desde eso, era algo que sólo nosotros sabíamos y confiábamos a aquellos que a lo largo de las charlas habían ido mostrando poco a poco que también querían a Glenda. (CC2 323)

Initially, the activities of the group are limited to attending screenings of Garson’s films, followed by effusive discussions in cafes, which are presided over by two of the original members, Irazusta and Diana Rivero. Eventually, tentative criticisms begin to punctuate these eulogies. The narrator is eager to clarify that the group never blamed Glenda for the faults that they perceived in her films. Rather, through an intense outpouring of love, her fans hold the directors and producers responsible for tainting the perfect Glenda Garson.

Agreeing that it is essential to save Glenda from this ignominy, the fellowship decides to acquire all copies of her films, and make the necessary

---

“el pudor y el cariño” (CC2 421) provoked him to alter her name slightly for the purposes of his fictional text. He explains that, in the wake of a series of uncanny coincidences, he felt compelled to write to Jackson and, thereby, complete the figure opened up by “Queremos tanto a Glenda.” “Botella al mar” is subtitled “Epílogo a un cuento.” According to Cortázar, he had just arrived in San Francisco from Mexico, where he was finalising the publication of the collection which bears the title of the story inspired by Glenda Jackson, when he discovered that her new film was called *Hopscotch*. Cortázar informs Jackson that he was struck by this correspondence with his most famous novel. On seeing the film, he becomes even more convinced that a mysterious circle is drawing writer and actress closer together. Jackson’s character is in love with a spy who is writing a book, called *Hopscotch*, which aims to denounce the activities of a number of Intelligence Agencies. For his own safety, Jackson must help the writer to fake his own death. Cortázar notes the symmetry between this act, motivated by love, and the final undertaking of the group of devotees in “Queremos tanto a Glenda.”

'corrections.' Despite the great deal of time and money required, plus dissenting voices both within and outside the group, their endeavour is at length completed. Shortly thereafter, Glenda Garson announces her retirement from acting. For those who love Glenda, this decision constitutes the very pinnacle of their mission, the ultimate sign of approval from their object of devotion. Consequently, the group is greatly distressed when, sometime later, Glenda Garson declares her intention to return to the screen. Unable to support the possibility of future imperfections that would defile their idol and nullify their earlier work, the fans determine to offer Glenda "una última perfección inviolable" (CC2 337). The text is not explicit, but the implication is that Glenda, the actress, will be murdered in order to preserve Glenda, the icon.

That "Queremos tanto a Glenda" is a cautionary tale about the inherent dangers of fanaticism is incontrovertible. Of particular note is the religious tone of the language which the narrator employs throughout. Editing the offending sections of Garson's films is proclaimed a mission (CC2 333-35), and those who do not love Glenda are labelled "los profanos" (CC2 336). Any dissenting voices within the group are described as "una herejía" (CC2 335), and there are occasional fears of "un cisma" (CC2 335). Indeed, the final image of the text portrays Glenda as a Christ-like figure, sacrificed for the salvation of others:

Queríamos tanto a Glenda que le ofreceríamos una última perfección inviolable. En la altura intangible donde la habíamos exaltado, la preservaríamos de la caída, sus fieles podrían seguir adorandola sin mengua; no se baja vivo de una cruz. (CC2 337)

Yet, the current chapter contends that, within this basic thematic framework of fanaticism, Cortázar has inserted a more subtle commentary on the dangerous direction in which modern ways of seeing are developing. It is significant that the fervour of the group of fanatics should focus on an aesthetic object, and that the text should place so much emphasis on the

dynamics of contemplation.<sup>172</sup> The visual approach that the group adopts towards Glenda Garson and her cinematic output undeniably conforms to Heidegger's definition of the aesthetic attitude. Firstly, the narrator underlines the importance of a thoroughly emotional response to a work of art. Those who love Glenda are identified by "ese aire como perdido de las mujeres y el dolido silencio de los hombres" (CC2 332-33) that takes hold in the aftermath of watching one of her films. The group is emphatic that their love for Glenda elevates them above those who merely admire her, and they are contemptuous of "entusiasmos momentáneos" (CC2 333). As noted by Heidegger, this belief in the significance of an intense subjective response to a work of art presupposes a subject-object divide.

"Queremos tanto a Glenda" deftly traces the increasing objectification of Glenda Garson by her most devoted fans. From the outset, their love projects a perfect image of Glenda. Naturally, the members of the group begin to fear that this subjectively circumscribed image is vulnerable to what they refer to variously as "tacha," "torpezas," or "traiciones" (CC2 334). Recognising that certain scenes do not conform to their concept of Garson, her acolytes resolve to permanently fix their aesthetic experience of the actress by editing a number of her films. With their first endeavour, for example, they are confident that they have achieved the ideal complement to their particular vision; the substitution of one scene for another "devolvía a Glenda el ritmo perfecto y el exacto sentido de su acción dramática" (CC2 334). This imposition of the will of the subject on the being of the art object is an exaggerated instance of the process which, according to Heidegger, underlies all aesthetic encounters. It will be recalled that Heidegger characterises subjectivism as humanity striving to control all aspects of objective reality, to become the being "who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is" (*The Question* 134). Clearly, this is the impulse behind the criticisms of Garson's work that the group gradually begin to voice, and

---

<sup>172</sup> For example, the opening paragraph of "Queremos tanto a Glenda" evokes the specific mood and associated actions of going to the cinema or the theatre. It describes the culmination of the event as "las miradas vertiéndose en la escena o la pantalla, huyendo de lo contiguo, de los de este lado" (CC2 332). Eyes are also depicted as a central aspect of the moment of recognition between those who love Glenda; "mirarnos por fin en los ojos, allí donde todavía alentaba la última imagen de Glenda en la última escena de la última película" (CC2 333).

subsequently act upon. Initially, the fans are careful to maintain a respectful distance between Glenda Garson, the actress, and the misgivings that they harbour about certain aspects of her artistic production:

Sólo poco a poco, al principio con un sentimiento de culpa, algunos se atrevieron a deslizar críticas parciales, el desconcierto o la decepción frente a una secuencia menos feliz, las caídas en lo convencional o lo previsible. Sabíamos que Glenda no era responsable de los desfallecimientos que enturbiaban por momentos la espléndida cristalería de El látigo o el final de Nunca se sabe por qué. Conocíamos otros trabajos de sus directores, el origen de las tramas y los guiones; con ellos éramos implacables porque empezábamos a sentir que nuestro cariño por Glenda iba más allá del mero territorio artístico y que sólo ella se salvaba de lo que imperfectamente hacían los demás. (CC2 333)

At once, this section of the text absolves Glenda of all blame, and yet, with the reference to the increasingly personal love that the fans feel for her, foreshadows the eventual assimilation of the actress by the desires of the group. This extension of the subjectivity of the viewer towards the being of the artist starts almost imperceptibly, as the group works to impose their vision on the aesthetic object. In altering her films, those who love Glenda are convinced that they are acting according to her wishes; “Sólo contaba la felicidad de Glenda en cada uno de nosotros, y esa felicidad sólo podía venir de la perfección” (CC2 334). By the time their mission is complete, the vision of the fans has subsumed the individuality of Glenda Garson; “las pantallas del mundo la vertían tal como ella misma – estábamos seguros – hubiera querido ser vertida” (CC2 336). As such, the final decision of the group to discard Garson requires but a minimal extension of their existing conceptual framework.

“Queremos tanto a Glenda” demonstrates how the subjectivism inherent in contemporary approaches towards art is the precursor to what Heidegger calls ‘enframing.’ According to Heidegger, subjectivism becomes ‘enframing’ when the impulse to control the world of objects develops to such an extent that it culminates in objectifying the human subject. The conclusion of Cortázar’s story, when seen within the context of an intensifying aesthetic

attitude, clearly evokes this concept. Those who love Glenda come to view her films, and, ultimately, her person, as objects on which to impose their subjective will, as resources (Heidegger's *Bestand*) to be optimised in the pursuit and preservation of their aesthetic ideal. In this way, "Queremos tanto a Glenda" explores the relationship between art and what Heidegger identifies as the increasingly technological understanding of being which characterises contemporary society. It is likely that Cortázar's decision to exploit the specific dynamics of the cinematic viewer-artwork paradigm, in order to explore this theme, was a thoroughly deliberate one.

In his seminal essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935),<sup>173</sup> Walter Benjamin examines how the rampant technologisation of society is impacting on our reception of art. Benjamin prefaces his text with the following quotation from Paul Valéry's *Aesthetics, the Conquest of Ubiquity*, which seems to echo Heidegger's observation that the new balance of power instituted by the development of technology will drastically alter the way we perceive the world and the place of art therein:

Our fine arts were developed, their types and uses were established, in times very different from the present, by men whose power of action upon things was insignificant in comparison with ours. But the amazing growth of our techniques, the adaptability and precision they have attained, the ideas and habits they are creating, make it a certainty that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of The Beautiful. In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. (qtd. in WAAMR 1)

According to Benjamin, the aesthetic object is losing the element of authenticity from which it traditionally drew its force. He is convinced, in the manner of Heidegger, that the meaning of art is dictated by the role it plays

---

<sup>173</sup> All direct quotations from Benjamin's essay will be followed by the abbreviation WAAMR, and the page number, in parenthesis. According to Ferris, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin*, Benjamin announced the first version of his essay in December 1935. There was a second version in 1936, plus a French translation (the only form in which the text was published during Benjamin's lifetime). There is a third version dating from 1939 (Ferris 104-5).

during a specific historical period.<sup>174</sup> For example, artworks were once magical objects; they were later appropriated by religion to perform a sacred function. The cult of beauty subsequently developed from the secularisation of art. Yet, Benjamin argues, despite these changes, the aesthetic object has, until recently, retained the qualities of auratic art. Walter Benjamin introduces the concept of aura in an earlier essay, entitled “Little History of Photography” (1931).<sup>175</sup> Aura refers to the notion that the significance of an artwork is forever attached to a particular place and time.<sup>176</sup> Benjamin associates aura with qualities such as uniqueness, distance, and authenticity. However, according to Ferris, the last of these is “less a new development in Benjamin’s understanding of this concept than an attempt to define aura with greater specificity” (105). Indeed, Benjamin’s definition of authenticity in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” with its emphasis on the historical moment, is thoroughly reminiscent of his earlier description of aura:

The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardised by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardised when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.<sup>177</sup> (Ferris 3)

---

<sup>174</sup> “During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organised, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well” (*WAAMR* 4).

<sup>175</sup> See Ferris 92-6.

<sup>176</sup> “What is aura, actually? A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance of a distance, no matter how close it may be. While at rest on a summer’s noon, to trace a range of mountains on the horizon, or a branch that throws its shadow on the observer, until the moment or the hour become part of their appearance – this is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains, that branch” (qtd. in Ferris 94).

<sup>177</sup> Notably, Benjamin argues that mechanical reproduction of an image also negatively impacts the aura of the artwork: “[T]he destruction of the aura, is the signature of a perception whose sense for the sameness of things in the world has grown to the point where even the singular, the unique, is divested of its uniqueness by means of its reproduction” (qtd. in Ferris 94).

According to Benjamin, authenticity in an aesthetic object is indissociable from questions of uniqueness and presence. The authenticity of an artwork stems from its inability to be in more than one place at the same time. Consequently, the quality of authenticity is limited to the original of a work of art. Benjamin claims that authenticity is receding in direct proportion to the increase in artworks that have been produced and reproduced mechanically. Absence of authenticity in art, argues Benjamin, allows for an accompanying lack of reverence. Benjamin considers cinema the epitome of these modern developments in the nature and function of the art object. Firstly, cinematic techniques such as close-ups and slow-motion offer a different concept of experience which allows for more precise analysis. As a result, Benjamin believes that the traditional distinction between the value of art, and that of science or technology, has become untenable:

In comparison with the stage scene, the filmed behaviour item lends itself more readily to analysis because it can be isolated more easily. This circumstance derives its chief importance from its tendency to promote the mutual penetration of art and science. (WAAMR 12)

The narrative of "Queremos tanto a Glenda" is inspired by this inevitable process. The members of the group analyse the work of Glenda Garson with machine-like precision. Her films are collected, edited, and redistributed, by means of an efficient and thoroughly mechanical system. Indeed, their work is carried out in "el laboratorio" (CC2 334), and the narrator confesses that the group bristles at the possibility of Garson returning to the screen because "el horror estaba en la máquina rota" (CC2 336).

Also of note is Benjamin's conviction that the mechanical production and reproduction of film divests this art form of any auratic value. Whereas a painting issues from the skilled hand of an individual, cinematic images are captured by a camera. In contrast with the typically deferential attitude towards paintings, therefore, the cinemagoer feels that no distance separates him/her from the film. Moreover, Benjamin maintains that films cannot seek artistic gravitas by appealing to the quality of authenticity. The simultaneous



screening of a particular movie in a number of different cinemas surrenders the work of art to a vast public, in such a way, that it actively encourages criticism. For this reason, Benjamin compares the cinema with sport: "It is inherent in the technique of the film as well as that of sports that everybody who witnesses its accomplishments is somewhat of an expert" (WAAMR 9). It could be argued that the theory which Benjamin is developing here is reflected in the lack of respect that Cortázar's characters show towards the integrity of Garson's films. The ease and confidence with which the fans assume the role of critic seems fatally linked with the very dynamics of cinema; the ubiquitous image of Glenda (CC2 333), and the all-inclusive nature of the cinematic audience. Interestingly, Benjamin also declares that the intervention of the camera between performance and viewer alienates the actor:

[T]he film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to the audience during his performance, since he does not present his performance to the audience in person. This permits the audience to take the position of a critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor. The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing. (WAAMR 7-8)

Although those who love Glenda vociferously proclaim a profound attachment to the actress, their eagerness to critique and edit her work seems to substantiate Benjamin's claim that the cinemagoer increasingly identifies with the mechanical function of the film camera. Indeed, the observation in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," that "the cult of the movie star ... preserves not the unique aura of the person but the 'spell of personality,' the phony spell of a commodity" (WAAMR 9), is thoroughly prophetic of the denouement of Cortázar's text. This chapter has demonstrated that "Queremos tanto a Glenda" can be read as a warning about the path down which contemporary aesthetics is moving. The story unequivocally criticises the subjectivism which underlies the aesthetic attitude, and our application of Heidegger's concept of 'enframing' has revealed that Cortázar shared the German philosopher's fear that this impulse

to mastery over objects will ultimately extend to the human subject. Heidegger's conviction that 'enframing' is a natural corollary of the increasing technologisation of being finds an echo in Cortázar's depiction of the fans as forming an implacable machine. Indeed, by drawing on Walter Benjamin's observations about the changing nature of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, the above exegesis has shown that the decision to set "Queremos tanto a Glenda" amidst the dynamics of the cinema allowed Cortázar to explore the unfortunate, and arguably dangerous direction in which the relationship between art and technology is developing.

"Simulacros," another short piece from Cortázar's *Historias de cronopios y de famas*, offers a more subtle commentary on the tendency of modern society to perceive everything in terms of a functional value. In this instance, the work of art, with the help of those who created it, manages to resist being subsumed into the cycle of resources to be used by mankind. The conclusion of the text, by emphasising the potential of the artwork to open up a world, to inaugurate a new way of seeing, evokes Heidegger's assertion that by transcending art from within a path beyond our technological understanding of being may be discovered.<sup>178</sup> Yet, this philosophical message is clothed with a substantial measure of the peculiar Cortazarian brand of humour. The story, which is included in the *Ocupaciones raras* section of Cortázar's book, describes the unusual activities of "una familia rara" (CC1 421). The narrator, a member of the family, explains that they live to make things: "lo único que vale es hacer cosas" (CC1 421). One day, they begin to erect a wooden platform in their front garden; the reader soon discovers that the family is building a gallows. Great trouble is taken to ensure that it is a bona fide and serviceable structure:

---

<sup>178</sup> In "Heidegger's Aesthetics" Thomson describes Heidegger's belief that art can lead beyond 'enframing': "'enframing' is Heidegger's famous name for the technological understanding of being that underlies and shapes our contemporary age ... we increasingly come to understand and so to treat all entities as intrinsically meaningless 'resources' (Bestand) standing by for efficient and flexible optimization. It is (to cut a long story short) this nihilistic *technologization* of reality that Heidegger's later thinking is dedicated to finding a path beyond. For Heidegger, true art opens just such a path, one that can guide us beyond 'enframing's' ontological 'commandeering of everything into assured availability.'"

[M]i tío el mayor dibujaba los planos, discutía con mi madre y mi tío segundo la variedad y calidad de los instrumentos de suplicio. Recuerdo el final de la discusión: se decidieron adustamente por una plataforma bastante alta, sobre la cual se alzaría una horca y una rueda, con un espacio libre destinado a dar tormento o decapitar según los casos. (CC1 422)

It is also judged best to build two separate stairways, “para el sacerdote y el condenado, que no deben subir juntos” (CC1 422). The neighbours are horrified by the nature of this familial endeavour; clinging to the garden fence, they watch the construction of the gallows whilst emitting “un coro de protestas y amenazas” (CC1 422). When the family obtain the trunk of a poplar tree on which to erect the rack, the crowd gathered on the footpath try to prevent them from bringing it into the garden. Ultimately, the police are called. However, the family convince the deputy superintendent that their project is harmless, explaining that they are working “dentro de nuestra propiedad, en una obra que sólo el uso podía revestir de un carácter anticonstitucional” (emphasis added, CC1 423). When the scaffold is complete, the family enjoy a meal on the platform before going to bed. The neighbours, perplexed and disappointed by this turn of events, return to their own homes.

It should be clear from the above précis that “Simulacros” depicts a moment of conflict between two distinct ways of seeing. Cortázar portrays the neighbours in a manner which calls to mind Heidegger’s characterisation of modern society; their technological understanding of being prevents them from looking beyond the functional aspect of the object which the family is making. Given the practical purpose and viability of such a structure, the neighbours are, from this perspective, justifiably alarmed. Indeed, Cortázar’s decision to base “Simulacros” around an object whose significance is so rooted in the function it performs was undoubtedly designed to provoke the greatest impact concerning the reversal of traditional modes of perception. There are indications, even in the opening lines of the story, that the family do not partake of the attitude of ‘enframing’ which characterises their contemporaries: “Somos una familia rara. En este país donde las cosas se hacen por obligación o fanfarronería, nos gustan las ocupaciones libres, las

tareas porque sí, los simulacros que no sirven para nada" (CC1 421). Utterly indifferent to considerations of utility, the family produces these simulacra in response to some altogether more obscure impulse.

The acute value which the members of the family attach to their endeavours, despite their insistence that these creations do not fulfil a definite purpose, implies a thoroughly innovative way of looking at the world. This interpretation of "Simulacros," as a work which explores the merit of applying an altered perspective to a conventional object or situation, is further supported by the very title of the text. The narrator confesses that the objects created by the family lack all originality; they are copied directly from famous or typical models. Yet, the copies produced by the family acquire a unique significance; they are likened to carbon copies, "idénticas al original salvo que otro color, otro papel, otra finalidad" (CC1 421). The determination of the family to see in such a way that rejects the primacy of 'enframing' bestows a new meaning on the models which they create.

There is an ethereal quality to the final paragraph of "Simulacros," which alludes to a mysterious communion between the family and the completed work. As though the structure were a work of art, the family perceive and respond to the gallows in a thoroughly instinctive manner. In what they see, there remains a concession to the functional potential of the object they have created. Yet, their enjoyment of the scene is purely a question of perspective. The narrator recalls that, as the family dined together under the hangman's noose, "una brisa del norte balanceaba suavemente la cuerda de la horca; una o dos veces chirrió la rueda, como si ya los cuervos se hubieran posado para comer" (CC1 423). Later, they actively encourage this world, which has been set up by their work of art, to expand further. For example, some members of the family pace up and down the platform, like executioners, while others howl at the moon (one of their number claimed that gallows attract wolves).<sup>179</sup> As though in response to this act of homage, the simulacrum grants the family a visual spectacle which constitutes the zenith of their endeavours:

---

<sup>179</sup> "[M]i tía la menor sostuvo que los patíbulos atraen a los lobos y los incitan a alular a la luna" (CC1 422).

En el silencio que siguió, la luna vino a ponerse a la altura del nudo corredizo, y en la rueda pareció tenderse una nube de bordes plateados. Las mirábamos, tan felices que era un gusto, pero los vecinos, murmuraban en la verja, como al borde de una decepción. Encendieron cigarillos y se fueron yendo, unos en pijama y otros más despacio. (CC1 423)

The neighbours are perplexed and disappointed. Capable only of seeing the world in terms of resources and functions, they are at a loss to understand the activities of this unusual family. For their part, the family are utterly delighted by the way their work of art has opened up a new world, and encouraged them to continue pursuing modes of perception which defy convention. The final lines of "Simulacros" underline this contrast between the disenchanting attitude of the neighbours, anaesthetised by habit, and the riches which the family discover in adopting less conventional ways of looking, "ya nos habíamos ido a dormir y soñábamos con fiestas, elefantes y vestidos de seda" (CC1 423). In this respect, there is hope in the strange family of "Simulacros"; they symbolise the potential that still remains in adopting an alternative way of seeing. In their singular contemplation of the objects they create, there is a foretaste of the key elements which will characterise Cortázar's more typical representation of the viewer-artwork paradigm. It is to an exploration of these positive aspects of this recurring figure of Cortázar's fiction that the current study must now turn.

## Chapter 4

### The Truth of Beings: The Heideggerian Concepts of 'Earth' and 'World' in Cortázar's Viewer-Artwork Paradigm

If Cortázar and Heidegger detected the same peculiar evils in modern dynamics of seeing and, by extension, in contemporary attitudes towards art, Cortázar's repeated depictions of an authentic encounter with a work of art are also redolent of the Heideggerian model. Undoubtedly, the most salient parallel between Heidegger's philosophy of art and Cortázar's recurring viewer-artwork figure is the idea that the work of art opens up a 'world.' In the vast majority of Cortázar's texts where the contemplation of visual art acts as the central axis, there is a distinct, associated element of aperture and/or expansion.

The photographs of "Las babas del diablo" and "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" literally set up their own worlds; utterly dispelling the myth of the sovereignty of the artist, these images shift, transform, and, in the case of the first story, ultimately breach the boundaries of the artwork. Whilst the paintings of *Divertimento* and "Fin de etapa" expand to such an extent that they appear to annex fragments of the outer world, the works of art which the protagonists of "Siestas" and "Recortes de prensa" look at, ostensibly open up self-contained worlds. In "El ídolo de las Cícladas" and "Graffiti," the unfolding of a world is symbolised by the manner in which the art objects self-perpetuate, with each new addition to the series consolidating and intensifying that world.

Yet, this steady union between art and aperture is not confined to those elements of Cortázar's literary production which treat visual art. On the contrary, the motif of artistic expression as expanding or opening up a world is also present in texts that approach the subjects of music and literature. In "El perseguidor," for example, Bruno, the narrator and a jazz critic, describes listening to the music created by the gifted but troubled saxophonist, Johnny Carter, as akin to witnessing an explosion:

[F]ue como una explosión de la música, pero una explosión fría, silenciosa, una explosión en la que cada cosa quedó en su sitio y no hubo gritos ni escombros, pero la costra de la costumbre se rajó en millones de pedazos. (CC1 236)

This impression that, after watching Johnny perform, everything remained the same yet somehow seemed different, recalls Heidegger's discussion of the work-being of art. Heidegger maintains that whereas the 'earth' is stable in its materiality, the 'world' set up by the great work of art bestows a certain look on all things. The above reference to shattering the crust of habit concurs with Heidegger's emphasis on the potential for renewal inherent in art. According to Heidegger, the history of art is a cycle of growth and decay; the work of art opens up a space of intelligibility which eventually succumbs to 'world-decay' and thereby leaves room for the advent of a new order.

In "El perseguidor" Cortázar chooses primarily to focus his exploration of the relationship between art and aperture on the artist, rather than the spectator. This departure from the approach that epitomises those of his texts which treat visual art can be explained by two key factors. Firstly, Bruno is not a suitable candidate for provoking the work-being of the artwork. His reception of music has become circumscribed by his role as a critic. In exploiting art as an object of study, the narrator of "El perseguidor" resembles the practitioners of aesthetics whom Heidegger criticises so severely. Although there are moments in the story when Bruno appears to be on the cusp of openly responding to the work-being of Johnny's art, his attachment to the *status quo*, and his fear that any revision of his assessment of Johnny's music would impact negatively on his already published book, ultimately prevent him from becoming a 'preserver.' In contrast, the protagonists of Cortázar's viewer-artwork paradigm who respond to the truth happening in the work are typically portrayed as being open by nature.

The second aspect that patently differentiates "El perseguidor" from the other Cortázar fictions which show an artwork as opening up a 'world' is the artistic medium in question. Whilst in texts such as "Las babas del diablo" and "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" the 'preserver' and the creator of the artwork are one, the opening of the 'world' is concurrent with the moment of

contemplation, rather than that of production. It seems appropriate to conclude that, with regard to the visual arts, the happening of truth cannot come to pass without the “unitary repose” (*PLT* 48) of the completed work of art. By contrast, jazz improvisation is a singular form of artistic expression in that everything is instantaneous; both the audience and the musician experience the artwork together at the very moment of creation.<sup>180</sup> For this reason, the character of Johnny Carter provided Cortázar with the opportunity to explore the work-being of art from the perspective of the artist.

Johnny Carter accesses another world through his music. Unable to grasp the meaning of the world that opens up before him, and frustrated by his failure to remain on that side of his music, Johnny sinks into a depression. From a hospital bed, after setting fire to his hotel room,<sup>181</sup> he describes for Bruno the world that he entered during a recording session. Whilst improvising from a tune called *Amorous*, Johnny Carter finds himself on a sweeping plain. He realises that the field is punctuated by thousands of half-buried urns which, he knows instinctively, are filled with the ashes of the dead. Johnny begins to excavate an urn that he feels is destined for him; he discovers, however, that it is already full. When, in a state of alarm and exhaustion, Johnny breaks off playing, the world of the urns swiftly dissolves. Everyone present at the recording session detects a transcendental quality in Johnny’s improvisation of *Amorous*; they declare that it is the pinnacle of his musical talent. Johnny demands that the recording be destroyed. Although he explains to Bruno that travelling on the metro has also served as a portal to this alternative realm,<sup>182</sup> it is while playing the saxophone that Johnny most

---

<sup>180</sup> Julio Cortázar had a long-standing and well-documented passion for jazz. See, for example, the essays by Gordon and Soren Triff. As well as devoting a chapter in *Rayuela* to jazz (ch. 17), Cortázar wrote a number of essays about jazz legends, such as Louis Armstrong and Thelonious Monk (*VDOM* 2: 13-22 and 23-8 respectively). Yet, “El perseguidor” remains his most extended tribute to this musical form; the story carries the dedication “In memoriam Ch. P,” and was inspired by the life of the American jazz saxophonist, Charlie Parker (1920-1955). In particular, Cortázar was inspired by what he considered the potential for transcendence inherent in jazz improvisation. See Bary’s article.

<sup>181</sup> This element of “El perseguidor” is certainly inspired by real events from the life of Charlie Parker. See Borello’s essay.

<sup>182</sup> The world that Johnny accesses does not always look the same; for example, he does not see the field of urns while on the metro. Rather, he experiences being with his wife and old friends back in New York. Yet, the world that opens for Johnny Carter



thoroughly experiences the opening of a world. Appropriately, considering the nature of Johnny's vocation, a clear distinction in the quality of time marks the transition from our world to that of the work-being of his art. Johnny recalls that when he was a child, as soon as he learnt to play the saxophone, he was able to inhabit time in a way that allowed him to escape the world of his unhappy home:

- [E]n casa el tiempo no acababa nunca, sabes. De pelea en pelea, casi sin comer ... Cuando el maestro me consiguió un saxo que te hubieras muerto de risa si lo ves, entonces creo que me di cuenta en seguida. La música me sacaba del tiempo, aunque no es más que una manera de decirlo. Si quieres saber lo que realmente siento, yo creo que la música me metía en el tiempo. Pero entonces hay que creer que este tiempo no tiene nada que ver con ... bueno, con nosotros, por decirlo así. (CC1 229)

According to Heidegger, the 'world' set up by a great work of art "gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves" (PLT 43). From the above quotation, it is evident that the 'world' which unfolds for Johnny Carter, as he creates music, stimulates him to perceive anew everything that had been taken for granted. The protagonist of "El perseguidor" becomes increasingly infuriated by people whom he brands "convencidos" (CC1 246), those who are supremely confident in the value and stability of their universe. By means of the aperture provoked by his art, Carter begins to understand the fragility of our current space of intelligibility. He warns Bruno that what we unhesitatingly accept as firm reality is, in fact, utterly porous:

Eso era lo que me crispaba, Bruno, que se sintieran seguros. Seguros de qué, dime un poco, cuando yo, un pobre diablo con más pestes que el demonio debajo de la piel, tenía bastante conciencia para sentir que todo era como una jalea, que todo temblaba alrededor, que no había más que fijarse un poco, sentirse un poco, callarse un poco, para descubrir los agujeros. En la puerta, en la cama: agujeros. En la mano, en el diario, en el tiempo, en el aire: todo lleno de agujeros,

---

during these moments of transcendence alters his perception of the universe of everyday existence.

todo esponja, todo como un colador colándose a sí mismo. (CC1 246)<sup>183</sup>

Johnny Carter dismisses all attempts to naturalise him to contemporary society. Instead, he wilfully continues to stand within “the truth of beings” (PLT 39) that occurs through his music. Indeed, throughout “El perseguidor” Johnny is presented in a manner that recalls Heidegger’s definition of a ‘preserver.’ He is a thoroughly open character, at once childlike and primitive.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, Carter repeatedly states that he is incapable of rational thought.<sup>185</sup> The protagonist of Cortázar’s text is therefore unhampered in both the creation of art and the acceptance of the happening of truth which that art reveals. For the purposes of this study, it is interesting to note that whilst meditating on the character of Johnny, Bruno makes reference to the contemplation of visual art: “No me ha parecido necesario explicarle a la gente que Johnny cree pasarse por campos llenos de urnas, o que las pinturas se mueven cuando él las mira” (CC1 251).

---

<sup>183</sup> This section of Cortázar’s text continues thus: “Pero ellos eran la ciencia americana, ¿comprendes, Bruno? El guardapolvo los protegía de los agujeros; no veían nada, aceptaban lo ya visto por otros, se imaginaban que estaban viendo. Y naturalmente no podían ver los agujeros, y estaban muy seguros de sí mismos, convencidísimos de sus recetas, sus jeringas, su maldito psicoanálisis, sus no fume y sus no beba” (CC1 246). The suggestion being made here by Johnny, that an attachment to the modern scientific attitude engenders a kind of ontological blindness, is reminiscent, not only of the central theme of Cortázar’s novel, *Rayuela*, as explored in chapter two of the current thesis, but also of Husserl’s argument in *The Crisis of European Sciences*, and Heidegger’s comments concerning the dangers of aestheticism, science, and technology in “The Origin of the Work of Art” and *The Question Concerning Technology*.

<sup>184</sup> Johnny’s reaction to the death of his daughter, Bee, is extremely childlike. When Bruno first visits him at his hotel after Bee’s death, there is a distinct impression that Johnny is acting like a spoilt child, demanding the complete attention of everyone present. Yet, his grief is genuine, and at the cafe he cries openly, but not theatrically, for Bee. Cortázar also takes pains to cast Johnny as a rather primitive character. When the reader first encounters Johnny Carter, he is sitting on a chair in his hotel room, naked, with a blanket wrapped loosely around him. Carter is also naked as he runs through the hotel on the night he sets fire to his own room. Furthermore, there are many references in the text to Johnny’s saliva, and his propensity for licking his lips.

<sup>185</sup> In this respect, he is like an inverse doppelgänger of the protagonist of *Rayuela*. Whilst Oliveira is incurably rational in his outlook, Johnny Carter is a thoroughly instinctive character. Nonetheless, both are searching for, are pursuing, the same thing – a direct contact with the truth of being.

Cortázar's essay on the nature of the short story, "Algunos aspectos del cuento," lends further credence to the principal argument of the current chapter. Therein, Cortázar explicitly and extensively demonstrates that a true work of art expands to set up a 'world.' He maintains that the short story, by means of an inherent tension resulting from the necessary compression of time and space, has the power to open up a new 'world' for the reader. Recalling the lasting effect of certain stories by Edgar Allan Poe and Guy de Maupassant, Cortázar concludes that: "Un cuento es significativo cuando quiebra sus propios límites con esa explosión de energía espiritual que ilumina bruscamente algo que va mucho más allá de la pequeña y a veces miserable anécdota que cuenta" (373). Cortázar's words here seem to echo those of Martin Heidegger in "The Origin of the Work of Art" as he explains how Van Gogh's painting of a pair of shoes expands to disclose the life of the peasant who wears them. Cortázar refers to this extension beyond the actual form of artistic expression as "una especie de *apertura*" (371); the story is "la semilla donde está durmiendo el árbol gigantesco" (376). In "Algunos aspectos del cuento" there is also a sense that this explosion of the story beyond its textual confines could potentially, to borrow the words of Iain Thomson, "transform our sense of what is and what matters" ("Heidegger's Aesthetics" n. pag.). Cortázar comes close to Heidegger's portrayal of the 'world' of the artwork as a new space of intelligibility when he describes the effect of a genuine short story as "esa fabulosa apertura de lo pequeño hacia lo grande, de lo individual y circunscrito a la esencia misma de la condición humana" (376).

In addition, Cortázar's description of the internal dynamics of the short story bears a striking resemblance to Heidegger's definition of the work-being of the work of art:

[U]n cuento, en última instancia, se mueve en ese plano del hombre donde la vida y la expresión escrita de esa vida libran una batalla fraternal, si se me permite el término; y el resultado de esa batalla es el cuento mismo, una síntesis viviente a la vez que una vida sintetizada, algo así como un temblor de agua dentro de un cristal, una fugacidad en una permanencia. (370)

The 'batalla fraternal' which, according to Cortázar, is waged between "la vida y la expresión escrita de esa vida," evokes Heidegger's account of the mutually beneficial struggle, the "essential striving" (PLT 49), between 'world' and 'earth.' In effect, the vocabulary which Cortázar employs here is analogous to that chosen by Heidegger when he claimed that "[t]he work-being of the work consists in the fighting of a battle between world and earth" (PLT 49). The two metaphors that appear at the close of the above-quoted paragraph, in their suggestion of movement within something fixed, recall the manner in which Heidegger sets the agitation of the work-being against the "unitary repose" (PLT 48) of the work of art.

Thus, "Algunos aspectos del cuento" reveals a number of patent parallels with Heidegger's philosophy of art. In particular, Cortázar and Heidegger seem equally committed to the concept that the work of art opens up a 'world.' It is appropriate for our exploration of Cortázar's viewer-artwork paradigm that he does not confine his observations in "Algunos aspectos del cuento" to the short story, nor, indeed, to literature. Rather, he recognises a kindred dynamics in photography; his appraisal of this visual art form is worth quoting at some length:

Fotógrafos de la calidad de un Cartier-Bresson o de un Brassai definen su arte como una aparente paradoja: la de recortar un fragmento de la realidad, fijándole determinados límites, pero de manera tal que ese recorte actúe como una explosión que abre de par en par una realidad mucho más amplia, como una visión dinámica que trasciende espiritualmente el campo abarcado por la cámara ... el fotógrafo o el cuentista se ven precisados a escoger y limitar una imagen o un acaecimiento que sean *significativos*, que no solamente valgan por sí mismos sino que sean capaces de actuar en el espectador o en el lector como una especie de *apertura*, de fermento que proyecta la inteligencia y la sensibilidad hacia algo que va mucho más allá de la anécdota visual o literaria contenidas en la foto o en el cuento. (371-72)

Whilst the emphasis in "Algunos aspectos del cuento" is on the apparently unique qualities shared by photography and the short story, it could be argued that all forms of artistic media demand a certain amount of selection and

excision. It follows that, as Heidegger argues, all works of art possess the capacity to open up another 'world.'

It has already been observed that, in approaching the artworks included in his collage texts, Cortázar decidedly avoids any system that pays tribute to traditional aesthetics. In fact, it could be argued that the frequently bizarre texts that issue from Cortázar's interaction with works of art bear witness to the opening of a 'world' in the Heideggerian sense. It is certainly telling that Cortázar chose to give the title of *Territorios* to his 1978 collection of essays on art. "País llamado Alechinsky," in a tone that manages to be equally humorous and reverent, tells how the discovery of a painting by Belgian artist, Pierre Alechinsky, opens up a new 'world' for a colony of ants. Every night they abandon their ant hill and gather wherever Alechinsky's art is to be found. In crawling over the colours and shapes of his artworks, in inhabiting another 'world,' these creatures acquire a new sense of what is and what matters:

[P]ronto aprendimos a ahondar en las apariencias, a meternos por debajo de un verde para descubrir un azul o un monaguillo, una cruz de pimiento o un carnaval de pueblo; las zonas de sombra, por ejemplo, los lagos chinos que evitábamos al principio porque nos llenaban de medrosas dudas, se volvieron espeleologías en las que todo temor de caernos cedía al placer de pasar de una penumbra a otra, de entrar en la lujosa guerra del negro contra el blanco, y las que llegábamos hasta lo más hondo descubríamos el secreto: solo por debajo, por dentro, se descifraban las superficies ... Entrar en nuestras ciudadelas nocturnas dejó de ser la visita en grupo que un guía comenta y estropea; ahora, eran nuestras, ahora vivíamos en ellas, nos amábamos en sus aposentos y bebíamos el hidromiel de la luna en terrazas habitadas por una muchedumbre tan afanosa y espasmódica como nosotras, figurillas y monstruos y animales enredados en la misma ocupación del territorio y que nos aceptaban sin recelo como si fuéramos hormigas pintadas, el dibujo moviente de la tinta en libertad. (*Territorios* 12)

Cortázar prefaces each section of *Territorios* with the subtitle, "Territorio de [name of artist]," and a brief explanation of the genesis of the subsequent text. In "Territorio de Jacobo Borges," for example, Cortázar introduces the story "Reunión con un círculo rojo" with the following words: "El texto *surgió*

*de la contemplación de la pintura que le da su nombre ... Borges pinta un mundo de oscuras amenazas, de entrevisiones donde alienta el otro lado de la tela*" (emphasis added, *Territorios* 56). Thus *Territorios*, both in rejecting traditional aesthetics and in signalling the potential of art to set up a 'world,' shares a number of affinities with Heidegger's philosophy of art.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger is unambiguous with regard to the mutually dependent role played by 'world' and 'earth' in allowing the work-being of art to function. It is intriguing, then, that in those texts where Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure opens up a 'world,' there is often an accompanying element of mystery which evokes Heidegger's concept of 'earth.' For the most part, Cortázar situates this obscure quality in the very materiality or mechanism of the artwork; this is clearly the case in stories such as "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" and "El ídolo de las Cícladas." It is my contention that those of Cortázar's narratives which hinge on the viewer-artwork paradigm articulate a congenial struggle between the setting up of a 'world,' and the closing in of the 'earth.' In witnessing this tension, Cortázar's characters attend to what Heidegger describes as a "happening of truth" (*PLT* 57). It could be argued that, following their vital exchange with a work of art, a new concept of being is revealed to the protagonists of Cortázar's texts; as though an epiphany has occurred, the world and/or their place within it seem to acquire a different look.

In disclosing the "truth of beings" (*PLT* 36) the artworks at the centre of Cortázar's narratives broach the personal and the collective, the primordial and the historical. In stories such as "Recortes de prensa" and "Apocalipsis de Solentiname," the explicitly political resonance of the images is consistent with Heidegger's assertion that the work-being of art is a thoroughly historical phenomenon. Yet, at other times, a departure from Heidegger's philosophy is evident in Cortázar's viewer-artwork paradigm. For example, the truth of beings revealed in "El ídolo de las Cícladas" and "Siestas" is of a rather elemental quality; by means of the work of art, the protagonists come face to face with the most primitive impulses of human nature. Other examples of Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure provoke a much more personal revelation. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that the themes of dissolution and

isolation as seen in texts such as *Divertimento*, *62: Modelo para armar*, "Fin de etapa," and "Las babas del diablo," though often character-focused, may be indicative of a more widespread current in modern society.

In this respect, the reader could be forgiven for feeling that the viewer-artwork paradigm is an uncharacteristically pessimistic feature of Cortázar's writing. The protagonists of these texts have broken free from the restrictions of modern aesthetics, only to find themselves attending to a happening of truth which reveals isolation and the will to power as the truth of beings. Perhaps this negative perspective is a derivative of Cortázar's expanding consciousness of the endemic nature of political atrocities in the world of the twentieth century. Perhaps these stories constitute his interpretation of the potential of modern culture to inculcate alienation. Nevertheless, there remains a sense in which those who experience the work-being of the artwork acquire a new perspective. In the aftermath of their communion with the work of art, the true being of everything is disclosed to Cortázar's protagonists. For the most part, this is an unpleasant epiphany; but it does not follow that it is necessarily an unwelcome one. There is hope that a number of Cortázar's characters will profit from this newly acquired consciousness. Others, such as the female protagonist of "Fin de etapa," simply submit to the truth opened up by the work of art. Yet, it seems important to recognise that one of the later texts in which Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure reappears, is imbued with a resolutely hopeful quality. In "Graffiti," a story from the 1980 collection, *Queremos tanto a Glenda*, the world opened up by the clandestine artwork stands against the tyranny of an oppressive regime. Here, Cortázar is unambiguous in depicting the contemplation of visual art as a potentially revolutionary act that can uncover real value in the truth of beings.

The current chapter will now conduct an exhaustive analysis of the recurring viewer-artwork figure in Cortázar's fiction, paying particular attention to any evident parallels with the concepts of 'world,' 'earth,' and art as a 'happening of truth,' developed by Martin Heidegger. We will begin by exploring the most extensive manifestations of this paradigm; that is, the seminal role which it plays in the novels *Divertimento* and *62: Modelo para*

*armar*. Set in Buenos Aires, *Divertimento* follows the fortunes of a group of friends who congregate at the studio of a painter named Renato. The narrator of the text is one of their number; he is never named, but is enigmatically referred to throughout as "Insecto" (D 15). Other members include the precocious siblings Jorge and Marta Nuri, often collectively called "los Vigil" (D 21), the equable Susana, Renato's sister, and a cat named Thibaud-Piazzini. Together, these characters form the "Vive como Puedas" (D 29), a type of salon dedicated to discussions about art, music, and poetry. That the entire narrative of *Divertimento* will be shaped by questions concerning the contemplation of art is portended by the opening pages of the text. When the narrator arrives at a meeting of the club, Marta immediately exhorts him to come and look at something. Someone has cut a rectangular hole in one of the window blinds. Peering through this frame, the narrator beholds a typically pastoral scene, a field where sixteen black and white cows are grazing. This curious perspective prompts a brief commentary on imagery and vision. Marta is intrigued by the way in which this act of excision creates a perfectly coherent, yet essentially false, perception:

[S]i te fiás solamente de tus ojos, por un momento solamente de tus ojos, y ves esa calcomanía purísima ahí lejos, todo perfecto, el campo verde, las vacas negras y blancas, dos juntas, otra más allá, tres en hilera y recortadas, lo estupendo es la irrealidad de esas figuras tan tarjeta postal. (D 14-5)

The narrator, on the other hand, rejects pure vision. Drawing on his consciousness of the actuality of the scene, he focuses on discerning movement in the images:

Tenían algo de mosaico y cuadro vivo, un ballet idiota de figuras lentísimas y obstinadas; la distancia impedía apreciar sus movimientos, pero fijándose con atención se veía cambiar poco a poco la forma del conjunto, la constelación vacuna. (D 14)



The effect of these conflicting observations is that the reader is encouraged to think about visual imagery in terms of stasis and movement, of distillation and expansion. In this way, Cortázar prepares the ground for one of the fundamental themes of *Divertimento*, the battle between 'earth' and 'world' in Renato's painting.

From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that a number of the central characters are enthralled by a painting that Renato is working to complete. Their fascination is provoked by a mysterious aura that surrounds the canvas, and there is an accompanying sense of anxiety. According to the narrator, Renato's painting has a nightmarish quality: "[E]l cuadro de Renato venía despertándome la exacta sensación de una pesadilla lejana, imposible de ubicar en el tiempo pero extraordinariamente clara y persistente" (*D* 23). Even the artist has a very vague idea about the genesis and meaning of the images he is creating: "[N]o tengo sino una idea muy vaga, una mezcla de recuerdos, un despertar a medianoche con un miedo atroz, una especie de presentimiento del future" (*D* 23). Yet, it is Marta, occasional muse for Renato, who appears most deeply disturbed by the embryonic work of art (*D* 31).

Marta is a sensitive and child-like character, deeply dependent on her brother Jorge. Renato tells the narrator that Marta possesses certain psychic powers; he is consequently surprised by her inability to access the meaning of the painting. It is revealed that a certain Narciso trained Marta to operate as a medium. The narrator is the only member of the group who has never met Narciso. Feeling curious and perhaps somewhat excluded, the narrator proposes inviting Narciso over on the grounds that he may be able to decipher the painting for Renato: "-Tal vez te ayude a ver mejor el cuadro" (*D* 31). Following this exchange, the narrator and Renato join Marta, Jorge, and Susana in the studio for the *Vive como Puedas*.

The painting is in the midst of the group of friends as they pass the evening talking. Although Renato has covered the canvas with a red dressing gown, the presence of the painting remains obtrusive. Marta repeatedly asks Renato to uncover the painting so that she can look at it. With great reluctance, he eventually yields. It is at this point in the narrative that the

reader is granted the first description of the artwork at the centre of *Divertimento* (D 35-8). Renato has only completed an outline of the composition, but a number of key elements are discernible. The canvas is divided vertically by a cobbled street that extends to the horizon. There is an atmosphere of loneliness, and the narrator feels that the “luz incierta” (D 35) of the scene indicates dawn. The left-hand section of the picture is dominated by a large house with a double door and shuttered windows; both windows and door are closed. In front of the house as though walking towards the door, is a figure, almost with their back to the viewer of the artwork. The narrator reflects that this unidentified individual “aparecía como devorada por la mole de la casa” (D 37).

The right side of Renato’s painting shows a kind of embankment that rises up until it is lost beyond the frame of the composition. At the foot of this bank stands the only other figure in the picture. Although Renato has yet to paint the features of this character, the posture suggests that he or she is looking at the other figure who is about to enter the house. Moreover, the right-hand figure is holding a sword and pointing it in the direction of the other individual. The narrator instinctively labels the figure nearest the house as “la víctima – uno pensaba en seguida que era la victim” (D 37). Both figures are dressed in long, billowy robes that completely hide their bodies, and neither figure has clear facial features. However, the narrator registers the distinct impression that the aggressive figure is female: “Aunque la espada ... llevaba a pensar en un hombre, la figura producía una impresión penetrantemente femenina, sin que pudiera precisarse por qué” (D 36). The only completed aspect of the entire composition is a cloud which is situated in the top left-hand corner.

As the characters of *Divertimento* look at Renato’s painting, it becomes evident that a tension is forming between what the canvas reveals and what it conceals, between the opening of a ‘world’ and the closing in of the ‘earth.’ Marta stares intently at the painting, seemingly sensing that it reveals something about her own being. The narrator believes that in Marta’s response to the painting, “su inquietud provenía de no poder definir por sí misma sus sentimientos” (D 40). Her hands begin to shake because she

recognises that the picture exudes a certain aura, but she is unable to take its measure. She informs Renato: “-Y tu cuadro está saturado de una cosa impura que le hace como una niebla” (D 42). This sense of opacity calls to mind Heidegger’s assertion that there is always an element of the work-being of art that resists absolute knowledge. Cortázar indicates that the enigma surrounding the work of art is even beyond the artist. The progress that Renato makes in completing the painting is halting; it is as though the identity of the figures and the significance of the composition have yet to be revealed to him. Significantly, for our application of Heidegger’s theory of art, Renato associates the mystery of the painting with the earth and shadow of the embankment:

Hay algo en ese terraplén que no me gusta. Debe verse bien y al mismo tiempo guardar cierto contacto con la sombra, con algo menos material que el resto. Siempre he tenido la impresión de que el cuadro comunica con el otro lado mediante el terraplén, si es un terraplén. (D 40)

Here, we can discern a number of parallels with Heidegger’s definition of the ‘earth’ of an artwork. According to Renato, the painting exhibits a certain level of independence from his creative act. This evokes Heidegger’s belief that the materiality of the work of art resists the imposition of any conclusive meaning by the artist or viewer. The concept that some element of the work-being of the artwork will always remain undisclosed is echoed in Renato’s references to shadow, an intangible quality, and the other side.

Yet, as Renato’s work of art withdraws in this manner, it simultaneously opens up a new ‘world’ for the viewers. The narrator cautions Marta to treat the painting as a mere picture, to desist in seeking the meaning of symbols. Marta replies that, according to Narciso, symbols are everything (D 41). Seizing once more on the notion that Narciso may be qualified to solve the enigma of the painting, the group of friends invite him to hold a séance at the *Vive como Puedas*. From this juncture in the text, the ‘world’ of the painting increasingly expands beyond the confines of the canvas. In the second part of *Divertimento* the reader is introduced to the Dinar sisters,

Laura and Moña; they are close personal friends of the narrator, but are not acquainted with the other members of the *Vive como Puedas*. Nevertheless, the narrator brings them to the *séance*. When they are introduced to the club, Marta takes a dislike to Laura because she senses that Jorge is attracted to her (*D* 62). At the beginning of the session, it is evident that Renato is still extremely agitated about the painting. After a brief conversation with Laura, the details of which are not disclosed to the reader, Renato allows those present to view his unfinished painting. The narrator notes that further work has been completed only on the house and the embankment. Susana explains: “-No se anima a meterse con las figuras” (*D* 65). Moña comments that she would not sleep in the same room with the picture; she describes the subject matter as stupid. Renato responds that the painting would only be stupid if it revealed its full meaning (*D* 65).

The *séance* begins with the following words: “[P]ronto estuvimos todos envueltos en una luz apagada donde, cosa curiosa, el cuadro parecía más visible que antes” (*D* 66). When Narciso asks if any spirits are present, the Ouija board spells out Facundo Quiroga,<sup>186</sup> and the word “espada” (*D* 67). It transpires that the spirit is a woman named Eufemia. Narciso uses Marta as a medium so that Eufemia can speak through her. In response to Narciso’s questions, Eufemia shouts out that Marta murdered Facundo Quiroga with a sword. Concerned, Jorge turns on the light; Eufemia disappears, and the *séance* ends. The narrator is curious because Susana seems relieved by the outcome of the *séance*. She confesses to him that she is happy because Renato will now know how to finish the painting, and because she had feared that matters would develop in a different direction. When the narrator asks Susana to tell him what she was afraid of, she suddenly becomes evasive. Susana’s relief proves premature when the mystery of the painting remains unresolved, and the ‘world’ it has opened up continues to expand in part three of the novel.

In this section of *Divertimento*, Renato slips into a state of despair. Avoiding his friends, he sleeps all day and goes out on his own at night. Nevertheless, he manages to make a solitary but significant contribution to

---

<sup>186</sup> Juan Facundo Quiroga (1788-1835), federalist Argentine caudillo and governor of La Rioja province.

the painting; he completes the figure about to enter the house. Susana tells the narrator that Renato has painted the victim in his own likeness (*D* 90). She says that he does not believe that the composition is being formed by outside influences, but he is concerned about the symbolism of the images (*D* 91). The narrator replies that Marta seems to be asserting an obscure influence over the work of art, but he adds that she is not to blame. Susana's response here is prophetic of the denouement of the novel, of the ultimate happening of truth which Renato's painting provokes: "-No, no es culpable –concedió Sú-. Los Vigil no son nunca culpables, Insecto. Eso es lo que los hace tan terribles, tan insobornables" (*D* 91).

In part three of Cortázar's novel, the 'world' set up by the painting breaches the boundaries of Renato's studio. Marta, unable to sleep since the night of the séance, calls to see the narrator at his apartment. She asks him to help her look for the house depicted in the painting. Marta does not believe that Renato has ever seen the house, but she is convinced that it exists. She feels that when they find the house, she will understand her role in the significance of the images. After a week of searching, the narrator and Marta discover the house of Renato's painting in Villa Devoto. The house is for rent, so they call the telephone number indicated on the advertising sign. It transpires that the house belongs to Narciso. Marta is bereft because this development seems to support the outcome of the séance, which placed the sword of Renato's painting firmly in her hands. However, the third section of *Divertimento* also sees the 'world' opened up by the artwork advance down another, more unexpected path. When the narrator again calls on the Dinar sisters, he finds that Jorge has anticipated him, and is chatting familiarly with Laura and her mother. The narrator quickly realises that Jorge and Laura have fallen in love (*D* 85-8).

The final two sections of Cortázar's novella hasten towards a resolution of the tension between the 'world' and the 'earth' of Renato's artwork, towards the happening of truth that Heidegger identifies as indissociable from the work-being of art. Marta tells Renato that she has found the house in his painting, and that it belongs to Narciso. Renato appears impervious to the news, but the narrator goes to Narciso's house to

confront him. There, he sees the ectoplasm of Eufemia; he attacks both the spirit and Narciso. The narrator accuses Narciso of engineering the entire situation in a jealous attempt to remove Marta and Jorge from Renato's circle (*D* 125). When the narrator returns to the Vive como Puedas and confesses that he has struck Narciso, Renato's response recalls Heidegger's definition of art as the revelation of the truth of beings: "Entonces pinté lo que debía pintar, Insecto. Creí de veras que me había vuelto loco, pero *estaba pintando la verdad*. Vos acabás de liquidar el resto, lo incomprendible" (emphasis added, *D* 132). At the studio, Renato refuses to show his friends the finished painting, but it is evident that he has arrived at an understanding of the significance of his work. The narrator questions him, and although Renato refuses to clarify his mood, the mode of his conversation suggests an impending dissolution of the Vive como Puedas:

-¿Me querés decir qué es eso del cuadro tapado, todo el chiqué idiota de "pinté lo que debía pintar" y el resto?

-No te hagás el enojado que te queda horrible –se burló Renato sin sonreír-. Todavía quiero pasar una noche alegre con los muchachos y con vos. Es un poco la vela de armas, sabés. Manaña... –Con razón todo está tan cambiado, ahora –murmuró-. Hay que velar la espada, Insecto, porque manaña... Es demasiado cambio, sabés, y uno de esos cambios que no se toleran. (*D* 134)

If the narrator is not yet fully conscious of the truth which Renato's painting is working to reveal, he is sufficiently perceptive to realise that they were mistaken to believe that Marta was the key to the artwork: "Marta no es más que una pobre cosa, ahora. La han abandonado, y se está dando cuenta poco a poco. Marta era una carta falsa en este juego; ya está boca arriba, invalidada, inútil. Pobrecita" (*D* 133). In fact, the mystery of Renato's work of art is resolved in the character of Jorge, Marta's brother.

During the Vive como Puedas the group of friends hear the front door opening and footsteps crossing the living room towards the studio. Laura Dinar enters the room. It is noteworthy that, earlier in the novel, when the narrator is musing about the possible ramifications of bringing the Dinar

sisters to the séance, he predicts that Moña will make a good accomplice, “pero que Laura entraría como por derecho propio en el mundo del Vive como Puedas” (D 59). When invited to sit down Laura declines and simply states: “-Vine solamente para llevarme a Jorge” (D 142). It is worth quoting how the narrator records the various reactions of the members of the club:

No será fácil mi olvido de esa noche, pero nada recuerdo mejor que el movimiento de araña de la mano de Marta en la alfombra, su prehensión encarnizada en la manga de la camisa de Jorge que se enderezaba mirando extasiado a Laura. La mano era nosotros, hasta Susana estaba en la fuerza inhumana de esos dedos que, sin mostrarlo, querían clavar a Jorge en su sitio, retenerlo de nuestro lado por siempre. Pero él, como los heroes en las altas fábulas, se desasíó con un gentil movimiento del brazo, y enderezándose sin esfuerzo fue hacia Laura que no se había movido. —Aquí estoy —dijo sencillamente—. ¿No es estupendo irnos juntos? (D 142)

When Jorge leaves, Marta, devastated at the loss of her brother, consumes too much alcohol and dissolves into inconsolable tears. Guessing that Jorge will have taken Laura back to his house, the now fractured Vive como Puedas decides that Susana will take Marta to sleep at the narrator’s apartment, while the latter will stay with Renato. When the artist uncovers his painting for the one remaining member of the club, the narrator sees that the figure of the victim is Renato, and that the person holding the sword is Jorge: “Pensé que hubo espadas que se llamaron Colada o Excalibur, también podíamos los porteños tener una que se llamara Laura” (D 145).

This denouement calls to mind Heidegger’s declaration in “The Origin of the Work of Art” that “[i]n the art work, the truth of what is has set itself to work. Art is truth setting itself to work” (PLT 39). Since Renato is the core around which the Vive como Puedas gathers, his position as the victim in the painting announces the imminent dissolution of the group. Throughout *Divertimento* Cortázar deliberately misleads the reader into imagining that Marta is the key to the mystery of the artwork. The intervention of Narciso, inspired by his own selfish motives, works to sustain the assumption that the ‘world’ opened up by the painting identifies Marta as a destructive force.

However, all along, the 'world' set up by the artwork was advancing towards a happening of truth down an altogether different path.<sup>187</sup> In discussing the strange aura of the painting with Renato, the narrator learns that, during his absence, Narciso was admitted to their circle. The 'world' of the painting expands as, feeling slighted, the narrator contrives to bring both Narciso and the Dinar sisters to the artist's studio. At this point in the novel, the work of art is already uncovering the fundamentally fractured nature of the group. The narrator unconsciously violates the *Vive como Puedas* by inviting Laura and Moña to the séance. In a narrative which parallels Marta's search for the house, the ensuing romance between Jorge and Laura develops discreetly. In the end, Jorge's departure reveals the truth of his commitment to his friends, and signals the definitive destruction of the *Vive como Puedas*. Lying concealed beneath a sheet, Renato's painting has, in effect, already uncovered this particular truth of beings. Thus, when the artist shows the narrator that the aggressive figure is Jorge, he is justified in having declared: "estaba pintando la verdad" (*D* 132).<sup>188</sup>

It is a testament to Julio Cortázar's enduring fascination with the work-being of art that, almost twenty years after the publication of *Divertimento*, he chose to reprise this motif in another novel, *62: Modelo para armar*. Here, in contrast to the earlier text, the entire plot does not revolve around the work of art. Rather, the events set in motion by the contemplation of a painting slot seamlessly into a larger narrative. Arguably, Cortázar's more restrained use of the viewer-artwork paradigm in this mature novel yields a greater degree of success. As the previous chapter has already demonstrated, *62: Modelo para armar* satirises the conventions of contemporary aesthetics. Yet, with the character of Marrast at the centre, Cortázar's novel also depicts how the portrait of Dr Lysons opens up a 'world' and triggers a happening of

---

<sup>187</sup> Indeed, there are subtle hints throughout the text that foreshadow the ultimate revelation of Jorge as the character who precipitates the dissolution of the *Vive como Puedas*. There is a steady emphasis on the obsessive intimacy and shared qualities of the Nuri siblings. For example, Susana's reference to Marta's talent for devastation accuses Jorge of the same tendency (*D* 91).

<sup>188</sup> Although beyond the remit of the current thesis, a comparative study of Cortázar's text and Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, would be a useful exercise. Undoubtedly, Heidegger's philosophy of art would prove a suitable theoretical framework for exploring a novel in which a portrait of the eponymous protagonist inexorably reveals the essence of his being.



truth. Once more, the presence of an element of mystery in the work of art evokes Heidegger's concept of 'earth.' Marrast is frustrated by the inexplicable presence of an uncommon plant in the hands of Dr Lysons, and through him a 'world' is opened up. In due course, the resulting tension between 'earth' and 'world' discloses a fundamental truth for Marrast. It is noteworthy that Cortázar's representation of the work-being of art in both *62: Modelo para armar* and *Divertimento* is pervaded by the same universal themes of love, friendship, and the possible dissolution of such relationships. Indeed, in the later novel, the work-being of the painting vibrates to the same rhythm as the relationship between Marrast and Nicole; it is described as "una especie de acción paralela" (62 98).

The French sculptor discovers the intriguing work of art at the Courtauld Institute during one of his daily walks around London. He is living in a state of limbo with his girlfriend, Nicole, since having discovered that she is in love with another. Sadness, pity, and civility, now define their relationship; but there are remnants of tenderness, and neither character seems disposed to resolve the situation by leaving. As a temporary escape from this intolerable situation, Marrast fills his day visiting museums and looking at paintings:

[S]e pasaba las tardes en algún museo ... por hacer algo, para irse acostumbrando poco a poco a que Nicole no le preguntara dónde había estado, que simplemente alzara la vista ... y le sonriera con la sonrisa de otros tiempos pero nada más que eso, la sonrisa vacía, la costumbre de una sonrisa donde tal vez habitaba la lástima. (62 50-1)

When Marrast encounters the portrait of Dr Lysons, the mystery surrounding the work of art resonates with his struggle to comprehend the unexpected withdrawal of Nicole's love. In inviting the members of Neurotics Anonymous to help solve the enigma of the *hermodactylus tuberosis*, Marrast is attempting to open up another 'world' beyond the cycle in which he and Nicole are stuck:

Pero el tallo había sido apenas un pretexto para salir desganadamente de ese círculo dentro del cual Nicole pintaba gnomos o andaba con él por las calles, sabiendo que al final, que ni siquiera era un final, habría más gnomos y más silencios apenas rotos por los comentarios corteses y neutrales que podía provocar una vitrina de tienda o una película. A Marrast no lo consolaba que los neuróticos anónimos hubieran encontrado un motivo para salir momentáneamente de sus propios círculos, pero haber desatado esa actividad valía como una compensación vicaria, un sentirse menos encerrado en el suyo. (62 52-3)

However, it soon becomes clear that, although Marrast acts as a catalyst in opening up the 'world' of the painting, the subsequent chain of events is completely beyond his control. The neurotics converge on the Courtauld Institute in increasing numbers, and each develops an intense rapport with the portrait of Dr Lysons. The director of the Courtauld Institute, Harold Haroldson, becomes perturbed by this sudden change in the usual rhythm of the gallery. He increases the number of attendants in the room where the painting is displayed. The matter appears to reach a conclusion when, in the face of fervent protests from the neurotics, Haroldson has the portrait of Dr Lysons removed from the exhibit. Yet, Marrast comprehends that the 'world' opened up by the artwork will continue to expand; it will go on to produce other shifts, of which he will have no knowledge:

Marrast sentía que algo se le escapaba, tan cerca de él como Nicole que también se le escapaba, todo eso ya no tenía nada que ver con la previsión y los desarrollos posibles. Un juego del tedio y la tristeza había alterado un orden, un capricho había incidido en las cadenas causales para provocar un brusco viraje, ... Austin, Harold Haroldson, probablemente la policía, veinte neuróticos anónimos y dos guardianes suplementarios habían salido por un tiempo de sus órbitas para converger, mezclarse, disentir, chocar, y de todo eso había nacido una fuerza capaz de descolgar un cuadro histórico y engendrar consecuencias que él ya no vería desde su taller. (62 183-84)

Marrast predicts that one of these changes will be the removal of the portrait of Dr Lysons from the catalogue of the Courtauld Institute, of which there must be thousands of copies in libraries worldwide (62 184-85). On the other

hand, Marrast acknowledges that the chain reaction unleashed by his contemplation of the painting resists total comprehension; it is “algo que él mismo comprendía tan poco” (62 145). Certainly, the impact that the work-being of the painting has on his relationship with Nicole is unexpected.

The ‘world’ that unfolds following Marrast’s encounter with the work of art introduces the character of Austin into the narrative. Presumably a member of Neurotics Anonymous, the young man appears at the Courtauld Institute to study the mysterious portrait. The French sculptor approaches him in order to verify the results of his experiment, and Austin is subsequently absorbed into Marrast’s circle of friends (62 122-23). As has already been indicated above, the narrative inspired by the painting is intimately linked with the changes in relations between Nicole and Marrast. Since Nicole is too weak to terminate their relationship, she sleeps with the naive Austin in the hope that her actions will convince Marrast to abandon her (62 202-03). Reluctantly, he leaves for France to complete his commission for Arcueil. At the unveiling of his statue, as he listens to a historian eulogise Vercingetorix, Marrast reflects on how the series of events of the preceding months have shuffled the bonds between his friends. The shifts in his world still appear unexpected, incomprehensible even. Yet, as Marrast watches Nicole, he is definitively confronted by the truth of her love for Juan:

[Y] yo no preguntaba ... si eso era también el curso de la historia, si partiendo de unas casas rojas o del tallo de una planta entre los dedos de un medico británico se llegaba verdaderamente a eso que me rodeaba, a que la malcontenta<sup>189</sup> estuviera allí ... y que nada tuviera el menor sentido a menos que lo tuviera de una manera que se me escapaba ... y entonces, malcontenta, carita de azúcar, entonces qué me quedaba más que seguir viéndote de lejos como te veía esa tarde entre los tártaros,<sup>190</sup> sin que me importara el curso de la historia y el laudista<sup>191</sup> y lo tonta que pudiste ser, malcontenta, sin que me importara nada hasta casi al final cuando giraste la cabeza porque eso sí tenías que hacerlo al final para devolverme a la verdad y a este lúgubre banquete, exactamente al final tenías que girar la cabeza para

<sup>189</sup> “La malcontenta” is an epithet that Marrast uses for Nicole throughout 62: *Modelo para armar*. It is a reference to her unrequited love for Juan.

<sup>190</sup> A nickname used for his Argentine friends, Calac and Polanco.

<sup>191</sup> This refers to Austin, who plays the lute. He attends the inauguration of Marrast’s statue with his new girlfriend, Celia, another of the extended group of friends.

mirar a Juan perdido entre la gente, mostrármelo como el historiador estaba mostrando el curso de la historia y como el tallo se doblaba poco a poco entre los dedos que lo habían recibido para sostenerlo verde y erguido y hermodactylus hasta la eternidad. (62 294-95)

It is significant that the happening of truth which this extract conveys is bookended by a double reference to the painting at the Courtauld Institute. In the end, the unconscious but unmistakable way in which Nicole demonstrates her devotion to Juan echoes the simple manner in which Dr Lysons holds forth the *hermodactylus tuberosus*. For Marrast, the 'world' opened up by the work of art has ultimately bathed everything in the light of truth.

Whilst the foregoing discussion has demonstrated that the viewer-artwork paradigm is a considerable feature of Cortázar's novelistic output, the contemplation of a work of art shapes the narratives of his short stories with still greater frequency, and to spectacular effect. It is to this element of Cortázar's literary production that the current chapter will now turn its attention. If the happening of truth provoked by the art at the centre of both *Divertimento* and *62: Modelo para armar* concerns the dissolution of bonds of friendship and love, the photographs and paintings in a number of Cortázar's stories reveal the true isolation of the viewer-protagonist. "Las babas del diablo" and "Fin de etapa" are prime examples of this particular variant of the viewer-artwork model. In both instances, there are elements which evoke Heidegger's philosophy of art.

Due in large part to Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film adaptation, *Blow-Up*, in the anglophone world "Las babas del diablo" remains one of Cortázar's best-known works.<sup>192</sup> The text is narrated by Roberto Michel, a

---

<sup>192</sup> In fact, *Blow-Up* was merely inspired by "Las babas del diablo"; it differs considerably from Cortázar's original text. The protagonist, Thomas, is a professional photographer living in London. The film follows the experiences of Thomas during a single day. At one point, escaping from work and fans, he takes a walk in a park. There, he encounters a young couple, and, inspired, he begins to photograph them from a distance. The woman, played by Vanessa Redgrave, becomes irate when she realises that they are being photographed. She follows Thomas back to his studio, and demands the film from the camera. Intrigued further by this extreme reaction, Thomas decides that he will develop the pictures. To appease the young woman, he hands over a roll of film, but, unbeknownst to her, it is not the one that contains the

Franco-Chilean translator and amateur photographer, living in Paris. In the aftermath of a seemingly traumatic experience, which at one point is likened to death (CC1 214), he struggles to explain the events that began to unfold one Sunday morning as he was out taking photos. Stopping in a little square at the tip of île Saint-Louis, Michel becomes increasingly intrigued by the behaviour of a couple who are talking nearby. He observes that the woman is considerably older than her male companion. Almost immediately, he senses that the young man is thrilled and terrified in equal measure by the woman who is caressing his cheek and whispering in his ear. Michel indulges his voyeuristic impulses; surreptitiously watching the pair, he imagines the humiliating conclusion that this assignation holds in store for the boy.

Ultimately, Cortázar's protagonist raises his camera and takes a photograph of the scene. The woman is furious; she demands that Michel relinquish the roll of film from his camera. He refuses, and the young man takes advantage of the ensuing argument to run off. Then, a man who had been sitting in a car parked adjacent to the square descends from the vehicle.<sup>193</sup> He also wants the camera. Michel ignores the request and walks away. Returning to his apartment, Cortázar's protagonist develops the roll of film. He totally disregards the other images, some of which are stylistically superior, and becomes fixated on the photograph of the couple: "De toda la serie, la instantánea en la punta de la isla era la única que le interesaba" (CC1 221). Michel produces a number of enlargements of the image; he fixes the

---

photos taken in the park. When the negatives are developed, Thomas sees something lying in the grass. He produces a numbers of enlargements and becomes convinced that the figure is a dead body. However, the black and white enlargements are grainy; there is room for alternative interpretations. That evening, the photographer returns to the park, where his suspicions are proven to have been founded, when he discovers the apparent victim of a murder lying in the grass. Frightened, he flees the scene. When Thomas returns to his studio, he discovers that all of the negatives and copies of the photos taken in the park are gone. All that remains is an enlargement of very poor quality. That night, at a party, Thomas tries unsuccessfully to convince his agent to accompany him to the park to bear witness to the crime. The next morning, he goes alone, but the body is gone.

<sup>193</sup> The narrator describes this man as having a face that inspires terror: "Empezó a caminar hacia nosotros, llevando en la mano el diario que había pretendido leer. De lo que mejor me acuerdo es de la mueca que le ladeaba la boca, le cubría la cara de arrugas, algo cambiaba de lugar y forma porque la boca le temblaba y la mueca iba de un lado a otro de los labios como una cosa independiente y viva, ajena a la voluntad. Pero todo el resto era fijo, payaso enharinado u hombre sin sangre, con la piel apagada y seca, los ojos metidos en lo hondo y los agujeros de la nariz negros y visible, más negros que las cejas o el pelo o la corbata negra" (CC1 220).

largest to the wall of his apartment. It is at this point in the text that Cortázar's viewer-artwork paradigm comes to the fore.

The narrative of "Fin de etapa" revolves around the contemplation of a series of paintings that pay homage to the approach of realism. The protagonist, Diana, is a lone traveller. Cortázar assiduously highlights her current state of solitude by contrasting it with memories of a relationship with a man named Orlando. The reader learns that Diana has slipped into a prolonged state of torpor. As she watches a card game from a distance, the protagonist of "Fin de etapa" reflects on her increasing inability to experience genuine emotion:

Eso que ella ya no se sentía con ánimo de hacer, prolongar cualquier cosa bella, sentirse vivir de veras en esa dilación deliciosa que alguna vez la había sostenido en el temblor del tiempo. «Curioso que vivir pueda volverse una pura aceptación», pensó mirando al perro que jadeaba en el suelo, «incluso esta aceptación de no aceptar nada, de irme casi antes de llegar, de matar todo lo que todavía no es capaz de matarme. (CC2 426)

Breaking her journey at a provincial village, Diana wanders into an art gallery. There, she is inexplicably drawn to the paintings in the exhibit.

Indeed, Cortázar expends a considerable portion of both "Las babas del diablo" and "Fin de etapa" in conveying the obsessive quality attached to the way his protagonists look at the works of art. After displaying in his apartment an enlargement of the contentious photograph, Roberto Michel begins to stare at the picture with excessive regularity. Again and again, he interrupts his work on a translation to gaze at the image:

Cada tantos minutos ... alzaba los ojos y miraba la foto ... Entonces descansaba un rato de mi trabajo, y me incluía otra vez con gusto en aquella mañana que empapaba la foto ... la miraba entre párrafo y párrafo de mi trabajo. En ese momento no sabía por qué la miraba, por qué había fijado la ampliación en la pared. (CC1 222)

In "Fin de etapa" Diana is initially intrigued by the hyper-realism of the paintings in the gallery; they are so precise that she wonders if the images have been copied from photographs. Yet, it is the profound sense of isolation and inertia which emanates from these works of art that Diana finds most compelling.

The paintings depict a series of near identical rooms. Contained therein is always a table, usually bare; it is occasionally accompanied by an empty chair.<sup>194</sup> Diana instinctively feels that the rooms all belong to the same house. In a number of the paintings there is a male figure. Each time he is portrayed as at a distance, standing with his back to the viewer of the artwork: "Curiosamente la silueta del personaje era menos intensa que las mesas vacías, tenía algo de visitante ocasional que se paseara sin demasiada razón por una vasta casa abandonada" (CC2 427). The protagonist of "Fin de etapa" becomes increasingly absorbed by the aura of silence which these images exude. Even the colours and use of light in the canvases seem to her to denote a death-like finality:

Y luego había el silencio, no sólo porque Diana parecía ser la sola presencia en el pequeño museo, sino porque de las pinturas emanaba una soledad que la oscura silueta masculina no hacía más que ahondar. «Hay algo en la luz», pensó Diana, «esa luz que entra como una material sólida y aplasta las cosas». Pero también el color estaba lleno de silencio, los fondos profundamente negros, la brutalidad de los contrastes que daba a las sombras una calidad de paños fúnebres, de lentas colgaduras de catafalco. (CC2 427)

---

<sup>194</sup> "Fin de etapa" carries the following dedication: "A Antoni Taulé, por ciertas mesas" (CC2 426). The Catalan artist, Antoni Taulé, once asked Cortázar to contribute a text to one of his exhibition catalogues. Seeking inspiration, the writer filled his home with large reproductions of the artist's works. Cortázar soon found himself penning the opening lines of "Fin de etapa." The paintings that Diana sees in the story exhibit the stylistic and thematic trademarks of work produced by Taulé in the late 1970s. Empty tables and chairs are the archetypal images of Taulé's painting during this period. Interior spaces with a perspective which moves towards the exterior, and human figures with their back turned on the viewer, are also prominent features of his work. Taulé's style was also characterised by violent shafts of light, sharply delineated shadows, and an acute realism ([www.antonitaule.com](http://www.antonitaule.com)).

These works of art exercise such a hold over Diana that she returns to the first room of the gallery to re-examine the details of the images. Moreover, although the gallery displays a number of other works by the same artist, Diana is exclusively interested in the series which depict the bare tables.<sup>195</sup> It is noteworthy that the protagonists of “Las babas del diablo” and “Fin de etapa” both demonstrate such a narrow focus; it is as though the truth of these artworks calls to something fundamental in the characters of Roberto Michel and Diana.

Certainly, Cortázar’s protagonists are initially drawn to these works of art by the presence of the enigmatic. Diana becomes more engaged with the paintings as she struggles to fathom the significance of the images. Every element of the paintings; the bare tables, the aloof human figure, the areas of deep shadow, works to resist appropriation through knowledge. Yet, the inscrutability of these works of art does not rest solely on the images that they represent. We are reminded of Martin Heidegger’s description of the ‘earth’ of an artwork when Diana reflects on the obscure quality of the basic material structure of the paintings:

Se interesó de veras cuando reconoció la materia, la perfección maniática del detalle; de golpe fue a la inversa, una impresión de estar viendo cuadros basados en fotografías, algo que iba y venía entre los dos, y aunque las salas estaban bien iluminadas la indecisión duraba frente a esas telas que acaso eran pinturas de fotografías o resultados de una obsesión realista que llevaba al pintor hasta un límite peligroso o ambiguo. (CC2 427)

In “Las babas del diablo” Michel gazes at the photograph on the wall of his apartment, still trying to decipher the true nature of the relationship between the uncommon couple. Again, Cortázar introduces the implication that the enigma of the image is intimately connected with the essence of the artwork. When the viewer-protagonist meditates on the distance which separates the

---

<sup>195</sup> “[H]abía telas con temas diferentes, un teléfono solitario, un par de figuras. Las miraba, por supuesto, pero un poco como si no las viera, la secuencia de la casa con las mesas solitarias tenía tanta fuerza que el resto de las pinturas se convertía en un aderezo suplementario, casi como si fueran cuadros de adorno colgando en las paredes de la casa pintada y no en el museo” (CC2 427-28).



photograph from the moment that the camera recorded, the reader is confronted by questions concerning the unique and complex nature of photography:

[F]ijó la ampliación en una pared del cuarto, y el primer día estuvo un rato mirándola y acordándose, en esa operación comparativa y melancólica del recuerdo frente a la perdida realidad; recuerdo petrificado, como toda foto, donde nada faltaba, ni siquiera y sobre todo la nada, verdadera fijadora de la escena. (CC1 221)

Here, Michel touches on the inmost mystery of the power of the photograph. The French literary theorist and philosopher, Roland Barthes, sought to identify the source of this singular quality by reflecting on his personal responses to various photographs. The resultant text was published as the peerless *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*.

Looking at photographs of his recently deceased mother, Barthes concludes that the essence of photography can be summarised as “[t]hat-has-been” (CL 77).<sup>196</sup> Photography is distinct from other forms of art, Barthes argues, in that the person or object represented (the referent, in Barthes’s terminology) has undeniably been there, at a given moment in time:

[W]hat I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject (operator or spectator);<sup>197</sup> it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred. (CL 77)

This concept is clearly reflected in the way that the protagonist of “Las babas del diablo” looks at the photograph of the couple. There is a distinct element of pathos in his apprehension that the moment which the camera captured is now irrevocably lost; it has entered the realm of “la nada” (CC1 221). However, there is also an accompanying sense of awe in the presence of an

<sup>196</sup> Barthes similarly states: “Every photograph is a certificate of presence” (CL 87).

<sup>197</sup> Throughout *Camera Lucida* Barthes refers to one who looks at a photograph as the spectator, and to the photographer as the operator.

object which is inexplicably united with infinity. Barthes notes that the viewer of a photograph can sometimes be struck by this unsettling juncture between reality and the void. In *Camera Lucida* he recalls the disturbing experience of having once seen a photo of himself which he did not remember being taken. Significantly, Barthes associates this episode with the themes explored in *Blow-Up*:<sup>198</sup>

And yet, *because it was a photograph* I could not deny that I had been *there* (even if I did not know *where*). This distortion between certainty and oblivion gave me a kind of vertigo, something of a “detective” anguish (the theme of *Blow-Up* was not far off); I went to the photographer’s show as to a police investigation, to learn at last what I no longer knew about myself. (CL 85)

Cortázar reveals his personal sense of the relationship between photography and the unknown in a charming essay entitled “Ventanas a lo insólito” (1978).<sup>199</sup> Therein, he explains that the only photographs that truly appeal to him are those which capture the unexpected, and he describes his knack for detecting the anomaly in an otherwise typical scene. However, Cortázar believes that the mysteries of photography have the potential to run deeper still; he admits to fully expecting that, one day, his negatives will develop into images that are utterly alien to the photographs which he took:

Todo fotógrafo convencional confía en que sus instantáneas reflejarán lo más fielmente posible la escena escogida, su luz y sus personajes y su fondo. A mí me ha ocurrido desear desde siempre lo contrario, que bruscamente la realidad se vea desmentida o enriquecida por la foto, que se deslice en ella el elemento insólito que cambiará una cena de aniversario en una confesión colectiva de odios y de envidias o, todavía más delirantemente, en un accidente ferroviario o en un concilio papal. Después de todo, ¿quién puede estar seguro de la fidelidad de las imágenes sobre el papel? Basta mirarlas de cerca para

---

<sup>198</sup> Barthes does not specify whether he is referring to Cortázar’s story (*Blow-Up* is the title given to the English translation) or to Antonioni’s film adaptation of “Las babas del Diablo.” It is more likely that he is referencing the film. Either way, the implied link with the themes of Cortázar’s text is a significant one for the purposes of the current study.

<sup>199</sup> See *PI* 418-22.

sentir que hay allí algo más o algo menos que desplaza los centros usuales de gravedad. (PI 421-22)

As indicated in “Ventanas a lo insólito,” Cortázar thematises this concept in a short story called “Apocalipsis de Solentiname,” which the current chapter will discuss presently. In the same essay, adopting an attitude not dissimilar to that of Roland Barthes, Cortázar also reflects on the obscure and intimate union between photography and time. He recounts a tale concerning the Romanian painter, Viktor Brauner, who, on arriving in Paris in the hope of honing his talents, approached his compatriot, Brâncuși, to ask for an apprenticeship. In order to assess his aesthetic sensibilities, Brâncuși handed the young man a camera, and told him to photograph whatever appealed to him. According to Cortázar, one of the images created by Brauner shows the facade of a certain Parisian hotel. Many years later, Brauner would lose his left eye during a brawl that occurred in the bar of the same hotel.<sup>200</sup> Cortázar is fascinated by what he would describe as this unexpected ‘figura’ or ‘constelación,’ as though the photograph were a glimpse of some future event, predestined by time itself:

Allí lo insólito jugó un billar complejo, y se deslizó en una imagen que sólo parecía tener finalidades estéticas, adelantándose al presente y fijando (un visor, y detrás de él *un ojo*) ese destino no sospechado. (PI 419)

Cortázar maintains that, where “Las babas del diablo” is concerned, he experienced a comparable brush with fate. If the text was inspired by the author’s frustration at failing to capture the extraordinary in a photograph, his story “despertó en un cineasta el deseo de mostrar cómo una foto en la que se desliza lo inesperado puede incidir sobre el destino de quien la toma sin sospechar lo que allí se agazapa” (PI 419).

---

<sup>200</sup> The Spanish surrealist, Oscar Domínguez, threw a glass which hit Brauner in the eye.

Both Diana and Michel experience the sensation that the essence of the art they contemplate is withdrawing. In “Fin de etapa” and “Las babas del diablo” Cortázar thoroughly locates the mystery of the artwork in the very substance of the painting or photograph. Recalling Heidegger’s definition of ‘earth,’ the distinctive features of the enlarged photograph and the photographic paintings both set forth the material being of the artwork, and yet resist total knowledge: “In the things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent” (PLT 42). Cortázar’s manipulation of the viewer-artwork paradigm in these stories further evokes Heidegger’s philosophy when the works of art encountered by the protagonists begin to show signs of expansion. In “Las babas del diablo” a world is opened up when the narrator enlarges the photograph and places it on display. In so doing, Michel creates a unique space in his apartment, where his gaze engages with the image to produce a happening of truth. The opening of the ‘world’ of the artwork is symbolised by movement in the photographic image. First, the leaves on the tree begin to shake. Then, Michel sees the hand of the woman caress the cheek of the adolescent boy. As he watches the older man get out of his car and approach the couple, Michel realises that the blonde woman has been sent to procure the young boy for another:

[C]omprendí, si eso era comprender, lo que tenía que pasar, lo que tenía que haber pasado, lo que hubiera tenido que pasar en ese momento, entre esa gente, ahí donde yo había llegado a trastocar un orden, inocentemente inmiscuido en eso que no había pasado pero que ahora iba a pasar, ahora se iba a cumplir. (CC1 223)

In looking at the photograph, a ‘world’ has opened up for Michel in which the encounter between the woman and the young man will proceed to its original and inevitable conclusion. Here, we are reminded of Barthes’s definition of the *punctum* as one of the two major components in responding to a photograph.<sup>201</sup> According to Barthes, the *punctum* of a photograph often stems from an unexpected detail, or an odd juxtaposition of images. It

---

<sup>201</sup> The other is the *studium*. According to Barthes, the *studium* of a photograph stems from the overall effect of the image. It is the element of our response which is learned; it draws on historical, political, and ethical culture.

denotes the emotional or instinctual aspect of our reaction to a photographic image. Barthes argues that the *punctum* possesses the power of expansion. He describes his experience of looking at a photograph by Kertész (1921) of a gypsy on a road:

[N]ow what I see, by means of this “thinking eye” which makes me add something to the photograph, is the dirt road; its texture gives me the certainty of being in Central Europe; I perceive the referent (here, the photograph really transcends itself: is this not the sole proof of its art? To annihilate itself as medium, to be no longer a sign but the thing itself?), I recognise, with my whole body, the straggling villages I passed through on my long-ago travels in Hungary and Rumania. (CL 45)

In the same way that the *punctum* of the road expands to show Barthes the dusty countryside of Eastern Europe, the image of the couple, with the old man standing in the background, opens up a world in which Michel perceives the imminent loss of a young boy’s innocence.

Moreover, the various tenses employed by Cortázar’s narrator in the above quotation would seem to support Barthes’s assertion that the true *punctum* of a photograph is often Time. Barthes illustrates this concept by inserting into his essay a photograph of Lewis Payne (1865). The picture was taken by Scottish photographer, Alexander Gardner, when Payne was awaiting execution for the attempted assassination of U.S. Secretary of State, W.H. Seward. Barthes argues that the *punctum* of this image is the knowledge that Payne is about to die. Like the image of the Parisian hotel taken by Viktor Brauner, according to Barthes the overriding impression when contemplating the image of Lewis Payne is “this will be and this has been” (CL 97). Barthes describes this curious power of the photograph as “time defeated” (CL 97). Whilst the protagonist of “Las babas del diablo” watches the ‘world’ of the photograph unfold, he feels utterly powerless as he experiences the sensation of ‘this will be and this has been’:

Mi fuerza había sido una fotografía, ésa, ahí, donde se vengaban de mí mostrándome sin disimulo lo que iba a suceder. La foto había sido tomada, el tiempo había corrido; estábamos tan lejos unos de otros, la corrupción seguramente consumada, las lágrimas vertidas, y el resto conjetura y tristeza. (CC1 223)

The 'world' of the work of art continues to expand, marching inexorably towards a revelation of the truth of beings. In a moment of despair at his inability to intervene, Michel screams at the photograph. The face of the woman turns towards him; the young boy runs off, disappearing beyond the frame of the image. The old man advances towards the photographer with his hands raised, he begins to fill the entire space demarcated by the camera lens. The last thing that Roberto Michel sees, before he covers his eyes and bursts into tears, is the out of focus bulk of the man's body, as though he were about to pass through the photograph and into the apartment.

The 'world' opened up by the paintings in "Fin de etapa" is reflected in Diana's discovery of, and entry into, the abandoned house. The protagonist's progress through the exhibition is arrested when an attendant informs her that the gallery is closing for lunch. She ascertains that only one painting remains to be seen. At the express request of the artist, the third room of the gallery is devoted solely to displaying this picture. The attendant offers to wait while Diana visits the last room, but she politely declines and exits the museum. However, walking through the village, Diana comes upon a house that she recognises as the one represented in the paintings. The sensation that she is residing within the world of the paintings is evident in her response to finding the house:

[S]e sintió como abordando el cuadro desde el otro lado, fuera de la casa en vez de estar incluida como espectadora en sus estancias. Si algo había de extraño en ese momento era la falta de extrañeza en un reconocimiento que la llevaba a entrar sin vacilaciones en el jardín y acercarse a la puerta de la casa, por qué no al fin y al cabo si había pagado su billete. (CC2 429)

Diana walks through consecutive rooms of the house; in each one she encounters the bare tables and the sharp, sidelong shafts of light which she saw in the paintings. She finds the door to the third room shut, “se dijo que la puerta estaba cerrada simplemente porque ella no había entrado en la última sala del museo, y que mirar detrás de esa puerta sería como volver allá para completar la visita” (CC2 430). Diana pushes open the door and is disappointed to discover that this room also contains an empty table and chair. She feels that the atmosphere of the final room is even more barren than the others; the lack of a door leading beyond divests the space of all promise. Diana sits at the table and smokes a cigarette. The protagonist of “Fin de etapa” decides to return to the gallery after lunch to see the painting in the third room. The work of art shows a woman sitting at a bare table in an otherwise empty room. Diana is struck by the listless quality of the woman who leans on the table. She senses that the woman is dead:

Esa mujer estaba muerta, su pelo y su brazo colgando, su inmovilidad inexplicablemente más intensa que la fijación de las cosas y los seres en los otros cuadros: la muerte ahí como una culminación del silencio, de la soledad de la casa y sus personajes, de cada una de las mesas y las sombras y las galerías. (CC2 431)

Diana leaves the village, but an irrepressible urge to return to the ‘world’ opened up by the paintings soon causes her to turn the car around. She goes straight to the house, and quickly passes through the first two rooms. In the third room, Diana sits down at the empty table. Despite the advancing hours of the day, the angle and intensity of the light has not altered. The protagonist of “Fin de etapa” turns her body to avoid the light, thus assuming an identical posture to the woman in the last painting. In the final image of Cortázar’s story, Diana and the smoke rising from her cigarette have become as static as the oil on the canvas.

Cortázar’s distinctive depiction of the encounter between art and the viewer in “Fin de etapa” and “Las babas del diablo” echoes Heidegger’s concept of the same in three fundamental ways. The presence of an unfathomable quality in the art of these two stories, coupled with the way

Cortázar ascribes this aura to the material form of the work, recalls the definition of 'earth' formulated in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Secondly, the act of contemplation in Cortázar's texts generates an aperture which seems analogous to Heidegger's 'world.' In "Las babas del diablo" the images of the artwork move freely, and ultimately expand beyond the boundaries of the photograph. The paintings of "Fin de etapa" open up a 'world' of silent rooms and bare tables, which the protagonist comes to inhabit. According to Heidegger, the tension within a work of art, between the opening of a 'world' and the withdrawing of the 'earth', discloses the truth of beings. For the protagonists of "Las babas del diablo" and "Fin de etapa," their encounter with a work of visual art certainly provokes a happening of truth.

When Roberto Michel gazes at the photograph of the couple, when Diana gazes at the paintings of the desolate rooms, they are each confronted by the truth of their own being. Both characters exist in a state of complete isolation. The current chapter has already indicated that the protagonist of "Fin de etapa" travels alone, and that she is conscious that her capacity for living is ebbing away. Diana has settled into a routine of acceptance, into an attitude of indifference. Ironically, the only thing that seems capable of piquing her interest is the aura of solitude, silence, and death, which emanates from the paintings. The 'world' opened up by the artworks confirms her isolation when she finds the third room as empty as the previous two. Diana's decision to return to the abandoned house and sit at the table in the last room indicates that she accepts the truth of her being; she effectively becomes the dead woman depicted in the final painting.

In a similar fashion, the photograph at the centre of "Las babas del diablo" reveals the alienated condition of Roberto Michel. Like Diana, the protagonist of "Las babas del diablo" appears to lead a rather solitary life. Indeed, it could be argued that photography appeals to Michel because it demands that he maintain a certain distance from the subject. In her book, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag declares that photography is a means of refusing experience; in the drive to capture the essence of life, the photographer becomes disconnected (10). The isolation of the narrator of Cortázar's text is revealed to the reader in his capacity as voyeur. Michel



becomes engrossed in the dynamic between the couple when he realises that the young boy feels uncomfortable. The narrator of "Las babas del diablo" spends a considerable amount of time fantasising about the various possible outcomes, each one injurious to the youth, of the scene which he is witnessing. Although Michel interrupts the seduction by taking a photograph, it is probable that this was not the intended effect. Sontag explains:

Although the camera is an observation station, the act of photographing is more than passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging what is going on to keep happening. To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are; in the status quo remaining unchanged ... to be in complicity with whatever makes the subject interesting, worth photographing – including, when that is the interest, another person's pain or misfortune. (12)

Cortázar's protagonist wants to delve deeper into the lives of others; his desire is that the photograph "atraparía por fin el gesto revelador, la expresión que todo lo resume" (CC1 219). As he gazes at the enlarged photo he acknowledges that his actions were only accidentally honourable.<sup>202</sup> As the images in the photograph begin to move towards a destiny which Michel is powerless to prevent, he is suddenly confronted by his own complicity in the seduction of the boy. When the terrifying old man breaches the confines of the photograph as though pursuing Michel, it is as though the artwork is retaliating against the prying eyes of the narrator. Ultimately, the space of intelligibility opened up by the work of art reveals to Roberto Michel his essential nature as a solitary being, seeking a connection with the world by watching others.

If the ontological epiphany at the conclusion of both "Fin de etapa" and "Las babas del diablo" is of a thoroughly personal nature, in other Cortázar texts the viewer-artwork paradigm introduces more universal themes. In stories such as "El ídolo de las Cícladas" and "Siestas," for example, the contemplation of art opens up a hiatus wherein societal conventions are

---

<sup>202</sup> "En el fondo, aquella foto había sido una buena acción. No por buena acción la miraba entre párrafo y párrafo de mi trabajo" (CC1 222).

suspended, and the primal impulses of ritual and sexuality come to the surface. "El ídolo de las Cícladas" traces the increasing domination of the archaeologist, Somoza, by an ancient statuette unearthed during a dig on a Greek island. His friends, a couple named Morand and Thérèse, are with Somoza when he discovers the artefact, but they become somewhat estranged due to his noticeable desire for Thérèse, and his obsession with the statue. Somoza becomes a recluse, only visited occasionally by Morand.

One night, Somoza explains to his friend that he has at last succeeded in forging an authentic contact with the work of art. Although Thérèse has rarely seen Somoza since their trip to the Cyclades, Morand has asked her to join them at Somoza's home when she finishes work. Through their conversation, it transpires that Somoza dwells in some ancient realm. He hears the sound of ritual flutes and confesses that he is preparing for a sacrifice to the gods. Morand fetches a drink. When he turns around again, he sees that Somoza has fully undressed and is wielding a stone axe. In the ensuing struggle Morand kills Somoza by embedding the axe in his skull. As though the impetus of the sacrificial rite has transferred to Morand, he smears the idol with the blood of his dead friend. Morand hears the sound of ancient flutes. The text concludes as he strips naked and, with the axe in his hand, conceals himself behind the door of the apartment to await the arrival of Thérèse.

In "Siestas" the discovery of a series of paintings awakens the sexuality of a young girl called Wanda. The title of the text refers to the moment of the day when the protagonist has the freedom to push the boundaries set by her four unmarried aunts, with whom she lives, and to explore the changes occurring in her body. Wanda spends the siesta at the home of her precocious friend, Teresita, whose parents are frequently absent. One afternoon, whilst rifling through the drawers of a writing desk belonging to Teresita's father, the girls find a book containing reproductions of works of art. Cortázar originally published this story in his miscellany, *Último round* (345-61). In this original format, the narrative is punctuated by reproductions of four compositions (or fragments thereof) by the Belgian Surrealist painter,

Paul Delvaux.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, in his persuasive essay, "Delvaux and Cortázar," Peter Standish has demonstrated that the descriptions of the images in "Siestas" clearly correspond to a number of other paintings by Delvaux (370-71).

The works of art which Wanda and Teresita stare at, in a state of perplexed fascination, depict, for the most part, naked women.<sup>204</sup> The girls are drawn to these idealised bodies, but they are mystified by the attitude of the figures.<sup>205</sup> These paintings open up a 'world' of new meaning for Wanda and Teresita; they begin to compare developments in their adolescent figures, and to forge avenues towards sexual experience. Standish notes that the theme of *Les extravagantes d'Athènes* (1969) is reflected in the narrative of "Siestas." In the painting by Delvaux, which was originally included in Cortázar's text, a number of young women proudly display their naked bodies to each other. Wanda starts to have a recurring nightmare that a man dressed in black, with an artificial hand, corners her in an alley. She concedes that the attire of the man and the configuration of the alleyway owe much to the influence of the images in the paintings. However, it also transpires that whilst returning from Teresita's house one day Wanda was approached by a man who asked her the time, and may have exposed himself to her. She runs away, but the experience haunts her. Yet, at the end of the text, the 'world' of the paintings seems to have expanded further; Wanda is trapped in a deadend street by a man dressed in black, and Cortázar strongly implies that she will be

---

<sup>203</sup> In his scrupulous essay on the significance of the work of Paul Delvaux in "Siestas," Peter Standish identifies the four paintings included in the text. In order of appearance, they are *Toutes les lumières* (1962), *Le Sacrifice d'Iphigénie* (1968), *L'Été* (1938), and *Les Extravagantes d'Athènes* (1969). See Standish's essay "Delvaux and Cortázar" (369-70).

<sup>204</sup> Although they study one picture of a naked man, they note that he is rather feminine (CC2 36). Most of the men portrayed in these images are dressed, in either a black suit or grey overalls, and they seem largely indifferent to the nude women (CC2 33).

<sup>205</sup> Teresita is shocked by the supreme confidence of these naked women "en plena calle" (CC2 37). The girls are also confused by the indifference of all of the characters, both male and female, to the nudity of others. Standish argues that the aura of the figures in the work of Delvaux is a symptom of the peculiar biography of the painter's sexuality. Delvaux was raised by an overbearing mother, who "inculcated in him respect for herself and a fear of other women, temptresses who lie in wait and who, in return for sexual gratification, provoke man's downfall" (qtd. in "Delvaux and Cortázar" 364). Consequently, Delvaux tended to depict women as supremely confident sexual creatures. His male figures either use women in a thoroughly cold manner, or they are portrayed as asexual beings.

raped. Notably, one of the paintings that Cortázar chose to reproduce in "Siestas," *Le Sacrifice d'Iphigénie* (1938), shows a man dressed in black standing over a semi-naked woman whose pose "might suggest that she has been abused" ("Delvaux and Cortázar" 369).

Thus, through the contemplation of art, the central characters of "El ídolo de las Cícladas" and "Siestas" are opened up to the more elemental side of their being. Somoza, and later Morand, in forging an authentic contact with the idol, access a primordial need for ritual. After looking at a series of paintings by Paul Delvaux, the first sexual impulses of the adolescent protagonist of "Siestas" begin to stir. Our reading of this particular manifestation of Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure is substantiated by an essay he wrote entitled "Viaje a un tiempo plural" (1978).<sup>206</sup> The text was composed as a tribute to the artistic vision of his friend, Virginia Silva, but it provides Cortázar with the opportunity to explore the relationship between art and primordial time. Cortázar argues that in looking at a work of art, the viewer can abandon the chronological order and, as the title of the essay proclaims, enter into 'un tiempo plural' where the primal and civilised sides of mankind coalesce: "El ojo entra en el campo de estas imágenes ... e instantáneamente se pasa del tiempo del reloj a un tiempo donde todo se da como simultáneo, lo mítico y lo histórico" (PI 407).

Cortázar here refers to the contemplation of art in terms that recall Heidegger's description of the opening up of a 'world.' Looking at the sculptures created by Silva affords "[una] apertura hacia nuevas constelaciones morfológicas" (PI 408). In the context of the association which Heidegger draws between art and the revelation of the truth of beings, it is also interesting to note Cortázar's declaration that the work of Silva provokes an epiphany of essences: "En ese múltiple circuito de fuerzas donde todo es o puede ser ... epifanía, nada se da en un solo plano, y la multiplicidad de las esencias se expresa en muchas de sus esculturas" (PI 407-08). Cortázar closes "Viaje a un tiempo plural" with a description of the 'world' that opens up for him when he gazes at the works of art created by Virginia Silva. Considering Cortázar's depiction in "El ídolo de las Cícladas" and "Siestas" of works of art

---

<sup>206</sup> See PI 407-09.

opening channels towards primal impulses, it is appropriate that the conclusion of this essay on the contemplation of art should contain so many references to archetypes and primordial time. In this respect, the final paragraph of "Viaje a un tiempo plural" is worth quoting in its entirety:

Casi siempre la crítica de arte consiste en centrar en la obra la interrogación y el análisis. Prefiero lo contrario, la crítica que la obra ejerce en mí como espectador, su provocación, el juego de espejos mentales y libidinales que suscita, la apertura a pasajes muchas veces vertiginosos que la ligan y me ligan a los arquetipos, a ese tiempo fuera del tiempo donde coexisten y laten las pulsiones profundas de lo humano. El microcosmo de Virginia Silva es un potenciador, un proyector hacia ese tiempo; de él vuelvo con la bella fatiga que sigue al amor y a los viajes, a todo lo que nos excentra para impulsarnos hacia el Centro. (PI 408-09)

Yet, the manner in which art discloses the fundamental being of the protagonists in "El ídolo de las Cícladas" and "Siestas" is not the only Heideggerian feature of these narratives. Following the same pattern as "Las babas del diablo" and "Fin de etapa," the works of art in these stories are characterised by an underlying tension between the flowering and the withdrawal of meaning, between the opening up of a 'world' and the closing in of the 'earth.' In "El ídolo de las Cícladas," for example, the statue is imbued with a patina of the unknown. Discussing the significance of the idol with Morand, Somoza declares: "-No hay palabras para eso. Por lo menos nuestras palabras" (CC1 329). Morand feels increasingly compelled to look at the statue, but he is supremely conscious of the void which separates him from it:

[E]se blanco cuerpo lunar de insecto anterior a toda historia, trabajado en circunstancias inconcebibles por alguien inconcebiblemente remoto, a miles de años pero todavía más atrás, en una lejanía vertiginosa de grito animal, de salto, de ritos vegetales alternando con mareas y sicigias y épocas de celo y torpes ceremonias de propiciación, el rostro inexpresivo donde sólo la línea de la nariz quebraba su espejo ciego de insoportable tensión, los senos apenas definidos, el triángulo sexual y los brazos ceñidos al vientre, el ídolo de los orígenes, del primer terror bajo los ritos del tiempo sagrado, del

hacha de piedra de las inmolaciones en los altares de las colinas. (CC1 332-33)

As indicated in the extract quoted above, the impassive face of the idol, devoid of both mouth and eyes, becomes symbolic of the mystery surrounding the artefact. Later in the text Somoza explains that when he smears the face of the idol with the sacrificial blood “le asomarán los ojos y la boca bajo la sangre” (CC1 334). Even Cortázar’s description of the discovery of the statuette, with its strong emphasis on the earth, recalls Heidegger’s terminology for the elusive quality that is present in every work of art. Morand and Thérèse lean over “el pozo de donde brotaban las manos de Somoza con la estatuilla casi irreconocible de moho y aherencias calcáreas” (CC1 329). It could be argued that the elements of the earth which cling to the statue, initially concealing its features, represent the barrier that exists between the full significance of the work of art and the protagonists of Cortázar’s story. Nevertheless, Somoza immediately accepts the challenge, and makes strenuous efforts to approach the enigmatic essence of the statuette. In the process, the ‘world’ of the artwork begins to open up.

The very evening that the group of friends unearth the statue, Somoza confesses to Morand “su insensata esperanza de llegar alguna vez hasta la estatuilla por otras vías que las manos y los ojos y la ciencia” (CC1 330). In the months following their return to Paris, Somoza dedicates his life to the pursuit of this authentic contact with the work of art. Holed up in his apartment, he obsessively studies the contours of the statuette. Once more, Cortázar introduces an element of expansion; Somoza begins to make replicas of the idol. Morand understands that, with this devotion to repetition, Somoza is already entering the realm of ritual:

Morand ... escuchó con amistosa cortesía los obstinados lugares comunes sobre la reiteración de los gestos y las situaciones como vía de abolición, la seguridad de Somoza de que su obstinado acercamiento llegaría a identificarlo con la estructura inicial, en una superposición que sería más que eso porque ya no habría dualidad sino fusión, contacto primordial. (CC1 331)

In this way, the 'world' of the work of art starts to open up.<sup>207</sup> Somoza explains to Morand that, on the night of the summer solstice, he finally established a genuine contact with the idol (CC1 331). It swiftly becomes clear that Somoza has entered an alternative space of intelligibility, a primeval world where everything acquires significance by reference to ancient customs and a sacrificial rite:

Morand oyó hablar a Somoza con una voz sorda y opaca, un poco como si fuesen sus manos o quizá esa boca inexistente las que hablaban de la cacería en las cavernas del humo, de los ciervos acorralados, del nombre que solo debía decirse después, de los círculos de grasa azul, del juego de los ríos dobles, de la infancia de Pohk, de la marcha hacia las gradas oeste y los altos de las sombras nefastas. (CC1 333)

As Somoza prepares to sacrifice his friend to the god of the idol, he now moves exclusively within the world opened up by the work of art. His only regret is that Morand and Thérèse have not accompanied him on this epic journey.<sup>208</sup> Somoza is unaware that, in gazing so intensely at the statuette during their conversation, Morand has in fact followed him into the world of the ancient artwork.

In "Siestas," the narrative of Wanda's communion with the works of art also moves through phases which recall Heidegger's 'earth' and 'world.' When the young protagonists discover the paintings, they are thoroughly mystified by the significance of the images. Heidegger would argue that the blatant manner in which the painted figures expose their bodies constitutes the 'earth' of the artwork setting itself forth. The remaining elements of the composition, and, potentially, the world beyond the paintings, take on new meaning by reference to these images. Yet, as Heidegger has demonstrated, the 'earth' of a work of art simultaneously withdraws. To the adolescent characters at the centre of Cortázar's story, the nudity of the women in the

---

<sup>207</sup> Somoza informs Morand: "-A cada nueva réplica me acercaba un poco más" (CC1 332).

<sup>208</sup> "-Lo único que hubiera querido es que Thérèse y tú me siguieran, que encontraran conmigo. Sí, me hubiera gustado que estuvieran conmigo la noche en que llegué" (CC1 332).

paintings is intrinsically sexual. On the other hand, the prosaic context in which these naked women move, and the obvious indifference of the male characters depicted, work to contradict the sexual reading which Teresita and Wanda apply to the paintings. Teresita, who repeatedly and forcefully claims to be the more knowledgeable of the two, evades the incongruity of Delvaux's figures by stating: "[E]stán completamente locas, desnudas en plena calle y ningún vigilante que proteste" (CC2 37). Wanda, in contrast, is willing to delve into the enigmatic quality of the works of art. She is constantly drawing parallels between the paintings and the new situations which she is experiencing.<sup>209</sup> In struggling to make sense of the significance of Delvaux's art, Wanda provokes the 'world' of the paintings to open up.

From the very beginning of the text it is clear that, subsequent to her contemplation of the works of art, the lines between Wanda's world and that of the paintings become blurred. In this respect, it is interesting to note that Wanda is intrigued by the unusual sense of perspective in the artworks, which conveys a sense of fluidity between ostensibly separate spheres:

Wanda pensaba en la otra mujer de la lámina que miraba una vela encendida aunque en la habitación de cristales había una lámpara en el cielo raso, y la calle con los faroles y el hombre a la distancia parecían entrar en la habitación, formar parte de la habitación como casi siempre en esas laminas. (CC2 38)

The 'world' of these paintings initially opens up for Wanda in the form of a dream. The nightmare which plagues the protagonist of "Siestas" shares several key features with the works of art that she has been looking at, including the alley that ends in a creeper covered wall and the man dressed in black wearing a bowler hat. Teresita emphatically connects the dream world with the paintings when she tells Wanda "[V]os eso lo soñaste por el álbum de papa" (CC2 33).

---

<sup>209</sup> See, for example, CC2 38-9. Wanda is reminded of *Les demoiselles de Tongres* as she watches Teresita masturbate, and she associates her visit to Dr Fontana, when she is asked to undress and lie down, with the men in the grey overalls from Delvaux's paintings.



Furthermore, the incident with the man whom Wanda encounters in the street, recounted from her perspective in a fog of ambiguity, becomes absorbed into the world of the nightmare and, ultimately, of the artworks. This confusion is evident in the following abstract, where the episode in the street is referred to as "lo otro" (CC2 32):

[L]a pesadilla era también como lo otro, o a lo mejor lo otro había sido parte de la pesadilla, todo se parecía tanto al álbum del padre de Teresita y nada acababa de veras, era como esas calles en el álbum que se perdían a la distancia igual que en las pesadillas. (CC2 32)

The scene with which "Siestas" concludes is narrated in such a way that it is difficult to ascertain whether it is dream or reality. Indeed, it is even conceivable that Wanda has entered the world of the paintings, where the man in black is waiting for her. In any case, it is clear that through the contemplation of art, a new sphere of meaning has opened up for the protagonist of "Siestas," in which she is forced to confront her burgeoning sexuality.

Other examples of Cortázar's recurring viewer-artwork figure are much more historically inscribed. This tendency to introduce historical concerns into his depiction of the contemplation of art undoubtedly coincides with the growth of Cortázar's political consciousness in the latter part of his life. Stories with a decidedly political subtext such as "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" and "Recortes de prensa," for example, date from 1976 and 1980 respectively. In each of these texts, the contemplation of a series of artworks provokes a happening of truth which brings the protagonist face to face with the historical moment and their place within it. Once again, a precedent for this development in Cortázar's viewer-artwork paradigm may be found in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger.

The concept of art expounded in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is essentially historical in nature. According to Thomson, Heidegger subscribed to a doctrine of "ontological historicity" ("Heidegger's Aesthetics" n. pag.); he believed that the manner in which humanity experiences reality changes with

the passage of time. In writing "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger hoped to demonstrate that art can help to explain these changes. He argues that great works of art operate inconspicuously in the background of our historical worlds to give "to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves" (PLT 43). In other words, works of art play a fundamental role in shaping, and then maintaining, the implicit way in which a historical community understands what is and what matters. Heidegger illustrates this point with the examples of the Greek temple and the Medieval cathedral. Each of these works of art "opens up a *world* and keeps it abidingly in force" (PLT 44); they establish categories of being (hero, saint) and significance (glory in battle, original sin) which subtly direct the behaviour of society: "In sum, great art works by selectively focusing an historical community's tacit sense of what is and what matters and reflecting it back to that community, which thereby comes implicitly to understand itself in the light of this artwork" ("Heidegger's Aesthetics").

The fifth essay included in *Ways of Seeing* (83-112), John Berger's groundbreaking study on the dynamics of vision, corroborates this aspect of Heidegger's philosophy of art. Berger examines the extensive tradition of the European oil painting, which, he claims, roughly spans the period from 1500 to 1900, and concludes that this aesthetic trend played a seminal role in establishing and perpetuating a particular historical way of seeing. It is not coincidental that the upsurge in the production of oil paintings is contemporaneous with the advent of systematic trade in Europe. Berger argues that the oil painting was both a reflection of, and an impetus towards, the rapid accumulation of wealth. He defines the central argument of the essay thus:

[A] way of seeing the world, which was ultimately determined by new attitudes to property and exchange, found its visual expression in the oil painting, and could not have found it in any other visual art form. Oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations. It reduced everything to the equality of objects. Everything became exchangeable because everything became a commodity. All reality was mechanically measured by its materiality. (87)

Drawing on a number of carefully selected examples from the oil painting canon, copies of which punctuate the text, Berger explains how the strong emphasis on materialism in the way that European society has come to define being, owes a great deal to the works of art which that historical community traditionally contemplated. According to Berger, the oil painting was ideally suited to the dissemination of this specific understanding of being, because the vivid quality of oil on canvas made the objects portrayed supremely covetable, and potentially attainable. Discussing Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533), Berger notes how the artist has employed his skill to make the objects presented look real. In particular, Holbein has concentrated on painting a range of materials (fur, silk, brocade, velvet, marble) so that they are suggestive of tactile sensations. Berger explains the role of such techniques in perpetuating a perception of reality in which the significance of possession is deeply ingrained:

Oil painting celebrated a new kind of wealth – which was dynamic and which found its only sanction in the supreme buying power of money. Thus painting itself had to be able to demonstrate the desirability of what money could buy. And the visual desirability of what can be bought lies in its tangibility, in how it will reward the touch, the hand, of the owner. (90)

Berger proceeds to a survey of the various manifestations of the oil painting; the formal portrait, the still life, paintings of animals and buildings, the mythological painting, and landscape painting. He concludes that each genre plays the same role; reinforcing a way of seeing which determines what is and what matters by reference to questions of material wealth.

In this way, Berger's analysis of the history of oil painting proves Heidegger's theory that works of art function as ontological paradigms; artworks are, at once, figures of and models for our concept of reality. Heidegger contends that this ability of art, to create and project the ontologies which underlie our worlds, is historically variable. During the course of history, works of art also have the potential to reconfigure the way in which humanity understands the world and our place within it. Heidegger illustrates

this idea most clearly by contrasting the different concepts of being set up and sustained by the Greek temple and the Medieval cathedral. It is the contention of the current chapter that Cortázar's short stories, "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" and "Recortes de prensa," explore how the contemplation of art can reveal to the viewer their place within a particular historical ontology. The works of art at the centre of both texts confront the protagonists with the increasingly global nature of political violence in contemporary society. Moreover, these artworks reveal the truth of the complicity, through inaction, of the protagonists and the wider community in these atrocities. As will be demonstrated below, "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" and "Recortes de prensa" are also consistent with Cortázar's other examples of the viewer-artwork paradigm in their depiction of the opening up of a 'world' and the closing in of the 'earth.'

Written in 1976 while Cortázar was travelling in Central America, "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" is a semi-autobiographical narrative. It recounts the experiences of an author, identified as Cortázar in the first paragraph of the text,<sup>210</sup> during a visit to the Nicaraguan island community of Solentiname, and the uncanny event that occurs on his return to Paris. On arriving in Costa Rica, the narrator is met by the Nicaraguan poet and priest, Ernesto Cardenal, who offers to escort him personally to Solentiname. They interrupt their journey to the island with a brief sojourn at the home of writer José Coronel Urteche. There, the party discuss absent friends, including the poet Roque Dalton, and the narrator is introduced to the mysterious mechanism of a Polaroid camera. When the protagonist reaches the island of Solentiname, he discovers and is instantly captivated by a series of naïf paintings. The canvases depict scenes from life on the island; a baptism in the church, two children sitting on their mother's knee, cows in a field, fishing boats on the lake. Cardenal explains that these works of art are produced by the villagers, and that the proceeds from the sale of the paintings help to sustain the community.

---

<sup>210</sup> In depicting the tedium of press conferences, the narrator of "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" cites three questions which he is repeatedly asked; taken together, they suggest that the narrator of the text is Cortázar: "¿por qué no vivís en tu patria, qué pasó que Blow-Up era tan distinto de tu cuento, te parece que el escritor tiene que estar comprometido?" (CC2 155).

The following day, the narrator attends mass on the island. Listening to the villagers discuss the passage from the bible which recounts the arrest of Jesus, the narrator notices that the islanders identify strongly with the way he had to endure the knowledge of an imminent threat. Before leaving Solentiname, the narrator decides to take a colour photograph of each of the paintings which he so admires. Back in Paris, he has the film developed and uses his slide projector to look at the images. However, instead of the brightly coloured paintings which he expects to see, the narrator of "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" is confronted by scenes of systematic violence, torture, and murder. The images unmistakably represent various parts of Latin America; "la esquina de Corrientes y San Martín" (CC2 158), "ráfagas de caras ensangrentadas y pedazos de cuerpos y carreras de mujeres y de niños por una ladera boliviana o guatemalteca" (CC2 159). One photograph seems to show the murder of Roque Dalton. Without saying a word, the narrator plays the slides for his partner, Claudine, when she returns from work. Unable to bear seeing the horrific images again, he absents himself from the room. On his return, Claudine is effusive in her praise of the photographs; she describes several of the beautiful paintings from Solentiname.

With "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" Cortázar continues his now customary practice of depicting the contemplation of art as the frontline in the struggle between the opening up of a 'world' and the closing in of the 'earth.' Since the works of art in question are photographs of paintings, there is a double momentum towards the mysterious. The text emphasises that the paintings have deep associations with the earth, both in terms of technique and of subject matter. The paintings depict pastoral scenes, and the narrator notes that there is a suggestion of the primordial in the ingenuous way that the islanders have expressed their relationship with the earth; "una vez más la visión primera del mundo, la mirada limpia del que describe su entorno como un canto de alabanza" (CC2 156). Yet, the naïf quality of the pictures is contradicted by their value as a political weapon. The fact that these paintings are sold to sustain a community which stands against the Somoza regime locates the truth of the artworks squarely in the historical moment. Given this contradiction, it could be argued that the full significance of these paintings withdraws from the viewer. Perhaps this sense of mystery is symbolised by

the painting of “el bautismo en una iglesia que no cree en la perspectiva y se trepa o se cae sobre sí misma” (CC2 156).

Moreover, by having the narrator of “Apocalipsis de Solentiname” photograph these paintings, Cortázar introduces another element of uncertainty which is reminiscent of Heidegger’s definition of ‘earth.’ Towards the beginning of the story, the narrator suggests that the material being of a photograph is intrinsically mysterious. At the home of José Coronel Urteche, whilst memories are being captured by a Polaroid camera, the protagonist is perturbed by the “ectoplasmas inquietantes” (CC2 156) that slowly materialise on the square of paper. Recalling the belief expressed by Cortázar in “Ventanas a lo insólito” that photography facilitates the appearance of the unexpected, the narrator of “Apocalipsis de Solentiname” ponders the possibility that a photograph may not always faithfully reflect the image envisaged by the photographer:

[A] mí ver salir de la nada, del cuadro celeste de la nada esas caras y esas sonrisas de despedida me llenaba de asombro y se los dije, me acuerdo de haberle preguntado a Óscar qué pasaría si alguna vez después de una foto de familia el papelito celeste de la nada empezara a llenarse con Napoleón a caballo. (CC2 156)

Yet, when the narrator projects his photographs onto the wall of his apartment, the reader recognises that this tendency towards obfuscation is counterbalanced by the way in which artworks open up a ‘world.’ The protagonist of “Apocalipsis de Solentiname” is confronted by a world of widespread political oppression and systematic violence. He witnesses the summary execution of unarmed peasants by soldiers, the decimation of villages, the brutal torture of a young woman by seemingly refined men, and the flight of women and children in terror. The touristic photographs of a series of beautiful paintings of Nicaraguan country life have expanded to reveal the voiceless suffering of many Latin American peoples. Obviously, the central role played by the uncanny in Cortázar’s literature allows for a more literal representation of how the contemplation of art leads to the opening of a world. For Heidegger, the setting up of a ‘world’ was, rather, the creation of

a new space of intelligibility. Nevertheless, in "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" there is too a sense in which the protagonist has acquired a more acute understanding of the world and his place within it.

As the narrator of "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" contemplates the works of art at the denouement of the text, there is a happening of truth. This revelation of the truth of beings is explicitly historical in nature. It could be argued that the conclusion to Cortázar's story is foreshadowed in the opening lines, when the narrator emphasises the bond between the various peoples of Latin America.<sup>211</sup> This consciousness of the shared fate of Latin American nations assumes a more historical-political connotation during the Mass attended by the protagonist on Solentiname. Noticing that the islanders identify with Jesus in the story of his arrest, the narrator reflects that they discussed the topic,

como si hablaran de ellos mismos, de la amenaza de que les cayeran en la noche o en pleno día, esa vida en permanente incertidumbre de las islas y de la tierra firme y de toda Nicaragua y no solamente de toda Nicaragua sino de casi toda América Latina, vida rodeada de miedo y de muerte, vida de Guatemala y vida de El Salvador, vida de la Argentina y de Bolivia, vida de Chile y de Santo Domingo, vida del Paraguay, vida de Brasil y de Colombia. (CC2 157)

Despite this apparent knowledge of the state of Latin America, the narrator of "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" is more concerned with photographing charming works of art as mementos of his trip to the continent. Indeed, immediately before viewing his images back in Paris, the protagonist of Cortázar's story questions his desire to look at the Solentiname paintings first, and accuses himself of a tendency to prioritise art over reality: "[P]ero por qué los cuadritos primero, por qué la deformación profesional, el arte antes que la vida" (CC2 158).

---

<sup>211</sup> "Los ticos son siempre así, más bien calladitos pero llenos de sorpresas, uno baja en San José de Costa Rica y ahí están esperándote Carmen Naranjo y Samuel Rovinski y Sergio Ramírez (que es de Nicaragua y no tico pero qué diferencia en el fondo si es lo mismo, qué diferencia en que yo sea argentino aunque por gentileza debería decir tino, y los otros nicas o ticos)" (CC2 155).

Yet, it is art which discloses the reality of contemporary Latin America to the protagonist; it impresses upon him, not the detached knowledge of collective political oppression (which he already possesses), but the fundamental truth of the individual atrocities being committed. In gazing at these works of art, the narrator of "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" experiences incomprehension, terror, revulsion, and despair, as though he were a victim of these crimes against humanity: "[T]odo era un solo nudo desde la garganta hasta las uñas de los pies ... En el baño creo que vomité, o solamente lloré y después vomité, o no hice nada" (CC2 159). He is confronted by the reality of the historical moment. Furthermore, it is interesting that this happening of truth is transmitted via images which constitute a composite of artworks with different goals. The Solentiname paintings, created to sustain the island community, expose the truth of the political situation in Latin America. The photographs of these works of art, taken by a tourist who valued them solely as picturesque reminders of his trip, confront the narrator with his complicity in the suffering of Latin America. The narrator of Cortázar's text is made guilty by placing the concerns of art above those of historical reality. Significantly, one of the interview questions, which the narrator refers to at the beginning of the story, asks "¿[T]e parece que el escritor tiene que estar comprometido?" (CC2 155). This opposition between art and historical reality is revisited in "Recortes de prensa," where once more a series of artworks brings the protagonist face to face with the truth of the historical moment and her role therein.

"Recortes de prensa" opens with the late-night visit of an Argentine writer, called Noemí (the narrator of the text), to the studio of a sculptor. This compatriot and one-time friend has asked Noemí if she would contribute a text to accompany his most recent series of sculptures. Noemí responds that it will be necessary to see the works of art before she decides, and this is the purpose of the visit around which the story is built. The sculptor has informed Noemí in advance that the unifying theme of the collection is political violence: "Ya antes, por teléfono, él me había comentado sus trabajos, una serie de pequeñas esculturas cuyo tema era la violencia en todas las latitudes políticas y geográficas que abarca el hombre como lobo del hombre" (CC2 360). As the artist prepares to display his work, the writer and the sculptor



lament that, hailing from Argentina, they are both well qualified to deal with such a subject.

Cortázar introduces his viewer-artwork paradigm into "Recortes de prensa" with a description of how the artist consecrates his sculptures by carefully exhibiting them:

[M]e instaló en un sillón propicio y empezó a traer esculturas; las ponía bajo una luz bien pensada, me dejaba mirarlas despacio y después las hacía girar poco a poco; casi no hablábamos ahora, ellas tenían la palabra y esa palabra seguía siendo la nuestra. (CC2 360)

Noemí responds by engaging in a prolonged contemplation of these works of art. We are reminded of Heidegger's concept of 'earth' when she admires the fact that each sculpture retains an element of mystery:

Me gustó que en el trabajo del escultor no hubiera nada de sistemático o demasiado explicativo, que cada pieza contuviera algo de enigma y que a veces fuera necesario mirar largamente para comprender la modalidad que en ella asumía la violencia; las esculturas me parecieron al mismo tiempo ingenuas y sutiles, en todo caso sin tremendismo ni extorsión sentimental. (CC2 361)

Certain aspects of the works of art seem to be withdrawing from the viewer; it is as though each figure resists total comprehension. Noemí praises this quality as a rare instance of subtlety amongst the typically graphic depictions of violence which abound in modern society. She does not consider that the enigma surrounding the sculptures may be a mark of the very nature of such violence.

Noemí and the sculptor continue to discuss the traumatic existence endured by those who still reside in their homeland. Then, the narrator hands the artist a press clipping (one of two referred to by the title of the story; the

first of these is reproduced in full during the narrative).<sup>212</sup> Taken from *El País*, the text recounts a catalogue of harrowing experiences, suffered over the preceding three years, by a woman living in Buenos Aires. It transpires that Noemí received the extract by post that evening, and that the woman whom it concerns is an acquaintance of the narrator. The sculptor learns that these government-sanctioned atrocities, committed by police and military personnel, include the kidnapping, torture, and murder of her daughter and her husband. Neither body was returned to the family. More recently, another daughter and her son-in-law were detained by the security forces. Despite petitioning the courts, the woman has been unable to discover where they are being held. As the artist reads the press clipping, the narrator gazes at the final sculpture which remains sitting on the table in front of her. For the first time, she notices the ticking of a clock. With this detail, Cortázar signals the opening of a 'world':

[E]l leve sonido me llegaba como un metrónomo de la noche, una tentativa de mantener vivo el tiempo dentro de ese agujero en que estábamos como metidos los dos, esa duración que abarcaba una pieza de París y un barrio miserable de Buenos Aires, que abolía los calendarios y nos dejaba cara a cara frente a eso, frente a lo que solamente podíamos llamar eso, todas las calificaciones gastadas, todos los gestos del horror cansados y sucios. (CC2 362)

The 'world' of the sculptures, a world of cruelty, is expanding; in so doing, it absorbs Noemí and the artist. The true sense of the endemic violence of Buenos Aires seems to filter through the Parisian night air, and into the apartment in which they are conversing.

Eventually, the sculptor returns the press clipping to Noemí, who, remarking on the lateness of the hour, starts for home. She walks towards Place de la Chapelle in the hope of finding a taxi, but instead encounters a young girl. She is sitting on the steps in front of a building, crying with her hands over her face. When Noemí asks the child what is the matter, the girl

---

<sup>212</sup> As an epigraph to "Recortes de prensa" Cortázar includes the following: "Aunque no creo necesario decirlo, el primer recorte es real y el segundo imaginario" (CC2 360).

responds: “-Mi papá le hace cosas a mi mamá” (CC2 365). The young girl leads Noemí through the door of the building, and across a garden, to a summer house. The narrator hears muffled screams coming from inside. When the child silently pushes the door ajar, Noemí witnesses a woman being tortured. A man, sitting on a chair with his back to the door, is slowly and methodically using a cigarette to burn the flesh of the naked woman who is gagged and bound to the bed. The narrator of “Recortes de prensa” lifts a stool and smashes it over the head of the man. As he lies insensible on the floor, Noemí unties the woman. She notices that the child is no longer in the room. The narrator describes her part in what happened next as the actions of someone in a stupor. Yet, she recalls everything in crystal clear detail. The two women lift the man onto the bed; they strip, bind, gag, and proceed to torture him:<sup>213</sup>

[L]o atábamos y lo amordazábamos dentro de ese silencio donde algo parecía vibrar y temblar en un sonido ultrasónico. Lo que sigue no lo sé, veo a la mujer siempre desnuda, sus manos arrancando pedazos de ropa, desabotonando un pantalón y bajándolo hasta arrugarlo contra los pies, veo sus ojos en los míos, un solo par de ojos desdoblados y cuatro manos arrancando y rompiendo y desnudando ... haciendo lo que debíamos, lo que teníamos que hacer. Inútil preguntarse ahora por qué estaba yo en eso, cuál era mi derecho y mi parte en eso que sucedía bajo mis ojos que sin duda vieron. (CC2 367)

Ultimately, the narrator flees the scene. Once back in her apartment, Noemí drinks vodka until she passes out. The following day, she telephones the sculptor. She recounts the incident that occurred after she left his studio, and tells him that it will constitute the text which he requested to accompany his sculptures.

Some days later, Noemí receives a letter from the sculptor, thanking her for the singular text. In a postscript, he teases Noemí regarding her consummate abilities as an actress, and chides her for having felt the need to

---

<sup>213</sup> Although not stated explicitly, it is implied that Noemí actively takes part in the torture of this man: “[A]hora le hacía cosas al papá, pero quién sabe si solamente la mamá” (CC2 367), and “un solo par de ojos desdoblados y cuatro manos arrancando y rompiendo” (CC2 367). At the very least, she is certainly guilty by value of her presence during the enactment of this cruelty.

conceal from him the true source of the story. He includes in the envelope a newspaper clipping from *France-Soir*, which describes an atrocity committed in a suburb of Marseille. Noemí discovers that, in opening the envelope, she has torn and lost part of the extract. Interestingly, considering her earlier appraisal of the sculptures, it is the most graphic details of the report which are missing. However, she ascertains that the body of a man has been discovered tied to a bed. A photograph shows a garden and a pavilion which Noemí immediately recognises. She reads that the neighbours have reported frequently violent arguments between the deceased and his partner; their young daughter is currently missing.

The narrator of "Recortes de prensa" takes a taxi to the street where, a few nights previously, she had encountered the distressed child. She is unable to find the door to the garden, "sencillamente porque ese huerto estaba en los suburbios de Marsella" (CC2 369). The young girl, on the other hand, is sitting on steps in front of a building. When the narrator speaks to her, the child runs into the house, and a woman appears to ask Noemí if she is a social worker come to collect the child. The woman explains that she found the young girl wandering the streets, and that the police have been to identify her. Later, in a café, Noemí transcribes this new ending to her text, and sends it to the sculptor so that it may complement his works of art.

The episode of unspeakable cruelty which occurs in the garden is symbolic of the 'world' opened up by the sculptures. After gazing at these works of art, the narrator of "Recortes de prensa" enters a parallel realm, where she experiences the true horror of torture, and grapples with the complexity of violence. Here, as in "Apocalipsis de Solentiname," Cortázar reveals doubts concerning the true value of the contribution made by art to the struggles of real life. Noemí and the sculptor work at expressing artistically, something of which they have only secondhand experience. In the following exchange, the sculptor confesses guilt at his role as artist, and expresses a desire to forge an authentic contact with the theme of his works:

-Yo estoy aquí, a miles de kilómetros, discutiendo con un editor qué clase de papel tendrán que llevar las fotos de las esculturas, el format y la tapa.

-Bah, querido, en estos días yo estoy escribiendo un cuento donde se habla de nada menos que de los problemas psicológicos de una chica en el momento de la pubertad. No empieces a autotorturarte, ya basta con la verdadera, creo.

-Lo sé, Noemí, lo sé carajo. Pero siempre es igual, siempre tenemos que reconocer que todo eso sucedió en otro espacio, sucedió en otro tiempo. Nunca estuvimos ni estaremos allí, donde acaso... (CC2 363-64)

The sculptor declares that he and Noemí inhabit a different time and space to those who suffer such violence as that reported in the extract from *El País*. He is unaware that, in gazing at his works of art, Noemí has begun to move into such a world.

It has already been indicated above that the ticking of a clock signals the transition of Noemí into the 'world' of the artworks. Consistent with Heidegger's definition of the 'world' of the work of art, the space opened up by the sculptures in "Recortes de prensa" confronts the narrator with an altered system of values. On witnessing the systematic torture of a woman, Noemí instinctively commits a violent act by striking the torturer with a chair. Driven by some unknown impulse, she then assists the rescued woman in the torture and murder of the man. Noemí has reacted in a way that seems utterly inconsistent with the condemnations of brutality which she uttered in the studio of the sculptor. In the aftermath of the incident, when she returns to her own world, the narrator is sickened by her behaviour; she tries, in vain, to obliterate her memory of the role she played in the atrocity.

It could be argued that a happening of truth has taken place. The 'world' opened up by the works of art has disclosed the essential nature of violence. Through her involvement in the torture of another being, Noemí comes to the realisation that good versus evil is too simple, and too objective a definition of this enduring aspect of humanity. As Noemí struggles to come to terms with her subverted morality, she is haunted by memories of both the episode in the pavilion, and the newspaper clipping from *El País*:

[A]hora la mamá le hacía cosas al papá, pero quién sabe si solamente la mamá o si eran otra vez las ráfagas de la noche, pedazos de imágenes volviendo desde un recorte de diario, las manos cortadas de su cuerpo y puestas en un frasco que lleva el número 24, por informantes no oficiales nos hemos enterado que falleció súbitamente en los comienzos de la tortura, la toalla en la boca, los cigarillos encendidos ... Cómo saber cuánto duró, cómo entender que también yo, también yo aunque me creyera del buen lado, también yo, cómo aceptar que también yo ahí del otro lado de manos cortadas y de fosos comunes, también yo del otro lado de las muchachas torturadas y fusiladas esa misma noche de Navidad. (CC2 367-68)

This seamless blending of the art 'world' with historical reality recalls Heidegger's definition of 'world' as a space of intelligibility which is historically inscribed. It emphasises that the government-sanctioned torture of Buenos Aires citizens, and the brutal murder of a man in Marseille, are two simultaneously occurring instances of horrific violence; they are taking place in our time and in our space. Consequently, the works of art at the centre of "Recortes de prensa" reveal to Noemí the truth of the prevalence of global violence in the twentieth century. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the sculptor's intention was to show "la violencia en todas las latitudes políticas y geográficas que abarca el hombre como lobo del hombre" (CC2 360).

The foregoing exegeses of "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" and "Recortes de prensa," as texts which explore how works of art can reveal historical truths, are further substantiated by the central argument of Cortázar's essay, "Para una crucifixión cabeza abajo" (PI 403-06).<sup>214</sup> Written in 1978, conspicuously in the interim between the composition of the two stories under discussion, this short text considers the power of Francis Bacon's masterpiece, *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944).<sup>215</sup> The composition is a triptych; in a manner that is suggestive of torture, each of the three paintings depicts a vaguely anthropomorphic figure in various states of deformation. Cortázar's essay focuses largely on the right-hand piece of

<sup>214</sup> According to a footnote on page 403 of *Papeles Inesperados*, the original publication details of this text are as follows: *L'Arc*, Aix-en-Provence, no.73, Julio-septiembre de 1978.

<sup>215</sup> Bacon had originally intended to place this triptych at the base of a large painting of a crucifixion, but he never completed the larger work.

the triptych; it shows the tortured figure emitting the most horrifying scream. When *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* was first exhibited in 1945 it provoked a strong reaction, but Bacon maintained that it was never his intention to shock the sensibilities of society. As an epigraph to his essay, Cortázar reproduces the following response, given by Bacon in an interview with David Sylvester:

You could say that a scream is a horrific image: in fact, I wanted to paint the scream more than the horror. I think, if I had really thought about what causes somebody to scream, it would have made the scream that I tried to paint more successful. Because I should in a sense have been more conscious of the horror that produced the scream. In fact they were too abstract. (qtd. in *PI* 403)

In “Para una crucifixión cabeza abajo” Cortázar argues that, despite the protestations of Bacon, this work of art has succeeded in confronting the viewer with the essence of horror. Consistent with his representation of the viewer-artwork paradigm throughout his fiction, and with our application of Heidegger’s philosophy to the same, Cortázar maintains that, in the space between the viewer and Bacon’s painting, a ‘world’ opens up: “No hay por qué dudar de las afirmaciones de Bacon ... El problema se plantea del otro lado del cuadro, en esa zona donde el espectador la enfrenta y vive lo que el artista niega: el horror del alarido en el suplicio” (*PI* 403). Thus, the work of art, irrespective of the intentions of the artist, reveals to the viewer the truth of beings.

Significantly, in view of the references made to Heidegger’s historical understanding of the work-being of art in our reading of “Apocalipsis de Solentiname” and “Recortes de prensa,” Cortázar declares in “Para una crucifixión cabeza abajo” that art can disclose the ontological truth of a historical society:

Allí donde el artista procede con el máximo rigor a su creación, otra cosa lo está esperando para expresarse también en ella y por ella, algo que cabría llamar la dominante histórica de su tiempo. Bacon parece

sorprenderse de que sus críticos ... vean su pintura como subtendida por el horror. No advierte ... que la historia que nos circunda ha encontrado en él a uno de sus cronistas, y que la lectura de esa crónica entraña la extrapolación de la obra en sí, su proyección como espejo del tiempo que nos incluye. (PI 404)

Given Heidegger's belief that the work of art reveals the essence of beings in opening up a 'world,' and the frequent incidence of an element of aperture in Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure, it is interesting to note, in "Para una crucifixión cabeza abajo," the subsequent reference to expansion beyond the frame of the painting, and the role that it plays in the happening of truth:

¿Cómo mirar entonces una pintura que nada tiene de imaginaria, cómo encerrarse en su mera dimensión plástica cuando a pesar de la voluntad explícita de su creador la vemos rebasar hasta la náusea los límites de la tela e invadir como un repugnante mar de sangre y de vómitos su verdadero territorio, el del mundo y el tiempo desde donde estamos mirándola? Su belleza formal, su admirable fuerza la arrancan de la anécdota pictórica para volverla historia. (PI 405)

In a paragraph that recalls how the artworks of "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" and "Recortes de prensa" expand to reveal the truth of political oppression in contemporary Latin America, Cortázar explains why *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* has particular resonance for him. Referring to the litany of reports of the most heinous violations of human rights occurring in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Bolivia, Cortázar says of Bacon's painting: "No soy yo quien elige aquí este cuadro de Francis Bacon: la actualidad y la persistencia del horror lo eligen por mí" (PI 404). In this way, the truth revealed by a work of art may be rooted in the historical moment.<sup>216</sup>

---

<sup>216</sup> Cortázar's conviction that the work-being of art is rooted in the historical moment not only echoes Heidegger's philosophy, it also calls to mind one of the principal themes of Albert Camus's novella, *La Chute* (*The Fall*, 1956). According to the protagonist-narrator, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, the Van Eyck painting known as *The Just Judges* reveals a truth of beings which is particularly pertinent to post-war society. In this panel of the Ghent altarpiece known as *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (1432), a group of judges gather to worship the Lamb of God, symbol of the innocence



Yet, Cortázar concludes "Para una crucifixión cabeza abajo" on a hopeful note. He reasons that, since works of art resonate in diverse ways with different historical communities, if one day mankind desists in the practice of torture, the impact of Bacon's triptych will alter: "Creo que esta pintura que hoy miramos desde el horror contiene ya su reverso, su caída en los archivos de la historia" (PI 406). Borrowing from the terminology of Martin Heidegger, we might say that when world-decay comes to pass, the work-being of the painting will cease to function. However, art need not wait for a change to occur in a given society. On the contrary, works of art may lead the way in revolution and renewal. Indeed, have we not already discussed Heidegger's theory that great art engenders historical communities, that it "gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves" (PLT 43)? Cortázar's short story, "Graffiti" (1980), seems to depict such a transitional moment, when a small group of people first come to stand within the truth that is happening in new works of art. Recalling Cortázar's view of the significance of *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, expressed in the final paragraph of his essay, it is evident that he firmly believed in this revolutionary potential of art:

[E]s bueno que haya sido pintada, que posea un poder que a nosotros nos toca asumir y llevar a sus consecuencias últimas; sólo así habrá alcanzado su verdadero sentido, como todo lo que nace, consciente o inconscientemente, de la rebelión del hombre de luz contra el hombre de tinieblas. (PI 406)

It is appropriate, then, that "Graffiti" is one of Cortázar's most politically charged fictional texts. The setting for the story is an unnamed city. References to strict censorship, curfew, constant fear, and rampant police brutality, may lead the reader to suspect that the action takes place in the Buenos Aires of the 1970s, but such infringements on civil rights could equally apply to life under any authoritarian regime. Chiefly employing a second-person narrative, "Graffiti" tells the tale of a love affair, conducted solely

---

and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Clamence argues that the truth of beings which this work of art reveals is the absence of innocence in the world, and the tendency of mankind to sit in permanent judgement on one another.

through the medium of art, between two strangers. The protagonist of the text is a young man who creates drawings on the surfaces of the city. In so doing, he risks his life if he is discovered by the authorities. All images which have not been sanctioned by the government are banned, and a passerby who as much as glances at graffiti is likely to receive violent retribution from the police. The works of art crafted by the young man are not consciously political; they are mainly colourful and abstract images. Nonetheless, within hours of appearing, each artwork is removed from the walls of the city by the authorities: "Poco les importaba que no fueran dibujos políticos, la prohibición abarcaba cualquier cosa" (CC2 397). The reader is informed that the protagonist begins making graffiti, "por aburrimiento, no era en verdad una protesta contra el estado de cosas en la ciudad" (CC2 397). Yet, even if the images are not explicitly political, their very existence is a challenge to the world which is demarcated and strictly controlled by the regime.

The protagonist has been inspired to produce art as an antidote to the stifling society in which he lives. Part of the attraction in creating the graffiti is that it proves to the young man that he can still, occasionally, break through the atmosphere of fear on which the world of the regime is built. When he chooses a time and place to draw, he momentarily recovers his personal freedom (CC2 397). In a manner that recalls Heidegger's discussion of the 'world' of an artwork, the narrator of "Graffiti" suggests that after making his drawings, a 'world' of hope opens up for the protagonist: "[E]n el tiempo que transcurría hasta que llegaban los camiones de limpieza se abría para vos algo como un espacio más limpio donde casi cabría la esperanza" (CC2 397). Furthermore, by placing these images in the public domain where they can be seen by others, the protagonist of "Graffiti" offers this new 'world' to those who are capable of looking beyond the *status quo*.<sup>217</sup> Before long he receives

---

<sup>217</sup> Here, we are reminded of Cortázar's discussion in "Para una crucifixión cabeza abajo" concerning the truth of *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*. He maintains that the impact of the artwork changes depending on whether it is exhibited in a sterile environment, such as a museum, or in the civic sphere: "Que la pintura de Francis Bacon, orgullo de los museos que acopian la cultura de Occidente, los pulverice simbólicamente desde su marco, es tarea que conierne a quienes juzgan y optan en un territorio donde impera la otra fachada del sistema, donde los museos son la mentira o la caridad del poder, donde la sangre de bermellón y el alarido hábilmente sugerido tratan de superponerse y ocultar la verdadera sangre y los verdaderos gritos. Si alguien propusiera hacer un poster con este cuadro de Bacon y

confirmation that, despite the power of the regime, there are still those who are willing to respond to the happening of truth in his works of art.

The protagonist of "Graffiti" is in the habit of returning to his artworks. Avoiding all police patrols and barely glancing at the images, he walks by, gauging the reaction of ordinary citizens and enjoying the anger of the authorities. One day, he discovers that someone has drawn a picture directly beside one of his own. Initially, the young man assumes that it is coincidence; "sólo la segunda vez te diste cuenta de que era intencionado" (CC2 397). From the colours and shapes of the graffiti, the protagonist infers that the unknown artist is a woman. He imagines what she looks like, he admires her, and is worried for her safety. As he gazes openly at her drawing (for a moment carelessly forgetting the constant presence of the police), the protagonist of "Graffiti" is overjoyed that, in this environment of suspicion and alienation, alternative lines of communication have been established. A space of happiness, and of hope for a better future, opens up for the protagonist: "Empezó un tiempo diferente, más sigiloso, más bello" (CC2 398).

This new 'world' continues to expand as the young lovers exchange images. The works of art draw them closer together. Trying to orchestrate an encounter with his accomplice, the protagonist goes out at all hours of the day and night to read the walls of the city. One night the protagonist of "Graffiti" discovers that, in a departure from her usual role of reciprocating his works of art, the young woman has initiated contact with a drawing of her own; "sentiste que ese dibujo valía como un pedido o una interrogación, una manera de llamarte" (CC2 398). He returns at dawn and, narrowly avoiding the police, responds with an image that only she will know how to read. However, as soon as he returns to his apartment, he realises that he has made a mistake. As the protagonist had done previously with his own artworks, the woman will return to her drawing in search of his answer and, in doing so, will place herself in danger. Over the next few days, the young man diligently

---

fijarlo en las paredes de Santiago o de Buenos Aires, la réplica sería la muerte; en una galería de arte – es decir, territorio específicamente estético -, acaso algún ministro inauguraría la exposición con las vacuas palabras presumibles" (PI 405). Cortázar's comments here evoke Heidegger's theory of 'world-withdrawal' – the notion that the work-being of art is neutralised when the artwork is removed from its original environment, and studied objectively as an artefact.

watches the street where the graffiti are located. On the second day, in an attempt to draw her out, he chooses a wall nearby to draw a white triangle surrounded by oak leaves.

That night the protagonist is in a shop on the corner, trying not to arouse suspicion, when he hears sirens. Running towards the wall where he created his last graffiti, he sees a young woman being kicked and forced into a police van. Beside his image, there is a half-completed work of art:

[L]os trazos de ese naranja que era como su nombre o su boca, ella ahí en ese dibujo truncado ... quedaba lo bastante para comprender que había querido responder a tu triángulo con otra figura, un círculo o acaso una espiral, una forma llena y hermosa, algo como un sí o un siempre o un ahora. (CC2 399)

It is evident from this extract that the young woman was trying to condense and express the truth revealed by their artworks. It could be argued that 'un sí o un siempre o un ahora' indicates that the 'world' opened up by the graffiti, despite the best efforts of the authorities to destroy it, is present and will extend into the future. This world has a double significance. On a personal level, the works of art have given new meaning to the lives of those who communicate through them. In this respect, "Graffiti" is a love story.

However, the 'world' opened up by these artworks also has a political significance, because it exists in contravention of, and as an alternative to, the world of terror sustained by the oppressive government. In suggesting that the final drawing by the young woman includes a reference to her name and her mouth, the narrator of "Graffiti" emphasises the survival of her individuality and her voice. Following the arrest, the protagonist confines himself to his apartment, where he surrenders to self-recrimination and fear at the fate of the young woman. However, the 'world' opened up by their reciprocal works of art refuses to disappear. The urge to create another drawing is too great, even vital; eventually he submits:

[E]n el mismo lugar, allí donde ella había dejado su dibujo, llenaste las maderas con un grito verde, una roja llamarada de reconocimiento y de amor, envolviste tu dibujo con un óvalo que era también tu boca y la suya y la esperanza. (CC2 399)

The following morning he discovers a tiny image, located high above his own drawing and half-concealed in the corner of the garage door. Unmistakeably the work of the young woman, this graffito conveys her fate in the aftermath of the arrest; “viste el óvalo naranja y las manchas violeta de donde parecía saltar una cara tumefacta, un ojo colgando, una boca aplastada a puñetazos” (CC2 400). Again, it is notable that this work of art includes an image of a mouth. The brutal destruction of the mouth and eyes of the young woman symbolises the attempt by the regime to suppress dissenting voices and alternative viewpoints. If the contemplation of art helps to open up a ‘world’ which threatens the continued existence of the space of silence and fear created by the government, then the tools of that rebellion must be eliminated.

Suddenly, the narrative voice shifts into the first-person; the reader realises that the narrator of the story is the young woman. Despite, or perhaps because of, the atrocity committed against her, the young woman uses this final work of art to express her wish that the ‘world’ opened up by the graffiti continues to flourish: “De alguna manera tenía que decirte adiós y a la vez pedirte que siguieras” (CC2 400). She implores the young man to continue creating works of art on the city streets, so that the truth of the images may inspire others to find a way beyond the unfortunate understanding of being that prevails at present. In this way, “Graffiti” concludes with a note of hope. Indeed, it is appropriate that the current chapter should complete this exhaustive analysis of the viewer-artwork paradigm in Cortázar’s fiction with a discussion of this story. If the works of art at the centre of texts such as “Fin de etapa” and “Apocalipsis de Solentiname” reveal a rather disheartening truth, the broader message conveyed by Cortázar’s representation of the contemplation of art is that it constitutes a potentially revolutionary activity. In gazing at a work of art, we can acquire a new understanding of what is and what matters.

### Conclusion: From Ways of Seeing to Ways of Being

It has been the intention of the current thesis to offer conclusive proof that the motif of perception in the fiction of Julio Cortázar shares a number of striking parallels with phenomenological ontology. Underpinning my exegeses of the relevant texts with a selection of phenomenological and ontological theories, I have demonstrated that Cortázar's portrayal of the dynamics of vision is consistently framed by questions of being. Each of the foregoing chapters explores a different manifestation of Cortázar's enduring fascination with ways of seeing, and traces its unique link with ontological concerns. Chapter one starts the process of restoring the figure of the gaze to its rightful place at the centre of Cortázar's literature. Careful analysis of the distinctive way in which Cortázar configures the act of looking, and the effect of being looked at, has exposed his keen interest in states of being. Under the gaze of the Other, the protagonists of stories such as "Ómnibus," "Axolotl," and "Final del juego," suffer an ontological transformation. It has been established that Cortázar's typical depiction of the gaze, as a decisive element in human relations, is consistent with the phenomenological ontology of Jean-Paul Sartre in a number of fundamental ways. Drawing on Sartre's categorisation of modes of being, as expounded in *Being and Nothingness*, the opening chapter of this thesis set out to prove that some of Cortázar's most famous narratives can be fruitfully reassessed as paradigms of the transition from being-for-itself to being-for-others.

Chapter one offers substantial textual evidence in support of the argument that the central role played by the gaze in many of Cortázar's short stories is redolent of Sartre's definition of 'the look' as the linchpin of being-for-others. Perceiving a sudden decentralisation of their universe, Cortázar's characters react to the gaze of the Other with a mixture of shame, fear, and a sense of enslavement. In this way, texts such as "Axolotl," "Final del juego," and "Ómnibus," chart the movement of the protagonists from a state of being akin to Sartre's being-for-itself into being-for-others. The denouements of the Cortazarian narratives examined in chapter one find the principal characters trapped, objectified, absorbed into the power of the Other; they are entirely

separated from their own free subjectivity. Similarly, my reading of “Después del almuerzo” focuses on how the actions of the narrator-protagonist are governed by the gaze of the Other. I claim that this particular manifestation of being-for-others, however, revolves around questions of normality. In this regard, Michel Foucault’s theories concerning the power of the gaze to induce standardisation of behaviour have provided valuable support for my analysis of Cortázar’s text.

Given the initial findings of chapter one, it seemed assured that Sartre’s philosophical evaluation of our concrete relations with others would also find an echo in Cortázar’s fiction. The function of the gaze in defining the relationships between the protagonists of “Orientación de los gatos” and “Las caras de la medalla” inspired an interpretation of these stories as, respectively, examples of Sartre’s first and second attitudes towards others. In the closing pages of chapter one I contend that, by means of the narrator’s struggle to assimilate the freedom of his wife, “Orientación de los gatos” evolves into a paradigm of Sartre’s concept of love. It has been shown that, on the other hand, “Las caras de la medalla” is a study in desire. In accordance with Sartre’s theory, Javier’s wish to transcend Mireille’s transcendence must, by the very nature of being-for-others, remain unfulfilled.

Chapter two advances the theory that Cortázar frequently portrays alternative modes of perception as a way of accessing a more authentic ontological state. My appraisal of pieces such as “Instrucciones para subir una escalera” and *Los astronautas de la cosmopista* has uncovered the writer’s unwavering belief in the value of transgressing conventional ways of seeing. Yet, this theme is treated most extensively in *Rayuela*, where, I argue, Cortázar contextualises questions of perception in a manner that echoes phenomenology. Employing an extensive selection of evidence from the novel, chapter two demonstrates that the object of the protagonist’s search is consistently represented as the adoption of an altered perspective. Oliveira is blinded to the essence of experience by his attachment to an exclusively rational vision, based on inherited concepts. By isolating a series of comparable features, I have indicated that Oliveira’s habitual mode of

perception corresponds to the 'natural attitude' as defined by Edmund Husserl.

The second chapter of the current thesis also explores how the character of la Maga is presented, in contrast to her lover, as someone who sees in an utterly intuitive way. Her example convinces Oliveira that a form of perception free from the constraints of the 'natural attitude' allows the perceiver to establish an authentic contact with the phenomena of the world and, thereby, acquire a sense of ontological unity. Towards the end of chapter two, my discussion centres on the writer, Morelli. I provide textual proof in support of the contention that he is equally convinced that the advances of society are closing off access to the richest and most fundamental aspects of human perception. His work is a search for this lost way of seeing, by attempting to erase habitual forms and the influence of inherited concepts from his writing. I close this section of the thesis by implying that, through Morelli, Cortázar proposes that art might offer a solution to the stagnation wrought by the 'natural attitude.'

Chapters three and four of my thesis confirm, by assessing a broad cross-section of Cortázar's work, that the contemplation of visual art constitutes a considerable and recurring motif in his fiction. I endeavour to demonstrate that the various manifestations of this viewer-artwork paradigm share several key features which bespeak an affinity with Martin Heidegger's concept of art. In chapter three, a survey of a selection of Cortázar's texts evidences a lasting, nonconformist attitude towards the reception of visual art. I maintain that his criticism of conventional aesthetics bears a number of similarities with the fears that Heidegger expressed concerning modern trends in art appreciation. With *62: Modelo para armar* and "Instrucciones para entender tres pinturas famosas," Cortázar satirises the expectation that the viewer will experience an emotional communion with the artwork, and the imposition of a rigid protocol on the process of contemplating art. Although seemingly incompatible, these bastions of art appreciation, in fact, originate from the very same foundation of modern aesthetics – the prevailing concept of being as the opposition between subject and object. Chapter three has explored how Cortázar's mockery of this aesthetic attitude recalls Heidegger's



declaration that the subjectivism on which our approach to art is based prevents the work-being of the artwork from functioning.

In this section of the thesis, I also show that both Cortázar and Heidegger warn that by categorising the interaction between a viewer and a work of art as the moment when a subject confronts an object, aesthetics has set mankind on an unfortunate, even dangerous path. My exegesis of "Queremos tanto a Glenda" reveals how Cortázar's depiction of the contemplation of art therein is consistent with Heidegger's concerns about a way of seeing that leads to 'enframing.' Cortázar's story perfectly illustrates Heidegger's theory that, from the perspective of this false hegemony and misguided ontology, we justify the imposition of our will on everything; on equipment, on art, and ultimately, on other people. The purpose of "Simulacros" is to contrast this barren and joyless perception of the world, uniquely prescribed by questions of utility, with a richer outlook. Towards the end of this penultimate chapter, I contend that Cortázar's portrayal of the family at the centre of this story suggests that a more open approach to art may usher in a new understanding of being. In this way, my reading of "Simulacros" neatly links the major findings of chapters three and four of the thesis.

The final chapter of my thesis demonstrates how Cortázar repeatedly represents the contemplation of art as a medium for ontological revelation. Martin Heidegger defines art as "truth setting itself to work" (*PLT* 39). Drawing on the concepts of 'world' and 'earth' defined by Heidegger in his seminal essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," chapter four proves that Cortázar's viewer-artwork figure, as it appears in stories such as "Siestas," "Las babas del diablo," and "Recortes de prensa," is characterised by opposing impulses towards revelation and concealment. It has been argued that the resulting tension in the work of art uncovers a truth of beings. My analysis of the appropriate texts indicates that, for Cortázar, this truth is at times specific to the protagonist; at others, it assumes a more universal character. I have also shown that Heidegger's claim that great works of art set up new spaces of meaning, which give "to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves" (*PLT* 43), is reflected in Cortázar's faith in the revolutionary

potential of art. The particular manifestation of the viewer-artwork paradigm in stories such as "Graffiti," coupled with opinions expressed by Cortázar in critical texts like "Luz negra" and "Otano. 1949," substantiate my argument that the Argentine author adhered to the belief that art can engender a new way of seeing, and, ultimately, a new way of being.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this thesis constitutes an innovative and insightful addition to existing Cortázar scholarship. The application of a series of phenomenological and ontological models to the theme of vision in Cortázar's fiction is certainly a fresh approach. This study set out to prove that some of Julio Cortázar's most famous narratives can be fruitfully reassessed through the lens of phenomenological ontology, and I trust that it has achieved its aim. It has clearly demonstrated that the principles which underlie Cortázar's treatment of perception strongly resemble key ideas developed by Jean-Paul Sartre, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger. At the very least, the current thesis makes a substantial contribution to the necessary process of restoring the theme of perception to its rightful place at the centre of the Cortazarian canon.

## Bibliography

"Antoni Taulé." <http://www.antonitaule.com/peintures/annee/1979/>.

"Antonio Gálvez: Página web personal." <http://www.antoniogalvez.net/>.

"Art Finder." <http://www.artfinder.com/work/portrait-of-doctor-daniel-lysons-dcl-md-tilly-kettle/in/gallery.the-courtald-gallery/>.

*Books Abroad: An International Literary Quarterly. Texts by and on Julio Cortázar and World Literature in Review.* Vol. 50. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976.

"Borghese Gallery." [www.galleriaborghese.it/borghese/en/eamor.htm](http://www.galleriaborghese.it/borghese/en/eamor.htm).

"Coloquio internacional: Lo lúdico y lo fantástico en la obra de Cortázar." Université de Poitiers, 1986.

"Cortázar habla de "El perseguidor" y Charlie Parker." [www.geocities.com/juliocortazar\\_arg/sobreperse.htm](http://www.geocities.com/juliocortazar_arg/sobreperse.htm).

"Fundación Juan March: Biblioteca de Julio Cortázar." <http://www.march.es/bibliotecas/cortazar/>.

Adorno, Theodor W. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture.* Ed. J. M. Bernstein. London: Routledge, 2008.

Aesop. "Aesop's Fables." <http://www.aesopfables.com/aesopse1.html>.

Alazraki, Jaime. *Hacia Cortázar: Aproximaciones a su obra.* Barcelona: Anthropos, 1994.

Alazraki, Jaime and Ivar Ivask, ed. *The Final Island: The Fiction of Julio Cortázar.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978.

Alegría, Fernando. "Rayuela, o el orden del caos." *Revista Iberoamericana* Sept-Dec, no. 35 (1969): 459-72.

- Alonso, Carlos J. ed. *Julio Cortázar: New Readings*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Armstrong, Philip. *Shakespeare's Visual Regime: Tragedy, Psychoanalysis & the Gaze*. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000.
- Aron, Edith. *55 Rayuelas*. Trans. Paula Kuffer. Barcelona: Belacqva, 2007.
- Aronne Amestoy, Lida. *Cortázar: La novela mandala*. Buenos Aires: Fernando García Cambeiro, 1972.
- Atherton, Margaret. *Berkeley's Revolution in Vision*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Bacon, Francis. "The New Organon: Of True Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature." [www.constitution.org/bacon/nov\\_org.htm](http://www.constitution.org/bacon/nov_org.htm).
- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhaïlovich. *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004.
- Baldwin, Thomas, ed. *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Barnes, Hazel E. "Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being." *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*. Ed. Christina Howells. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992. 13-38.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 2000.
- Bary, Leslie. "Rayuela - Cortázar, Julio - jazz como art form - Swing - Bebop - improvisación." [www.henciclopedia.org.uy/autores/Bary/RayuelaJazzII.htm](http://www.henciclopedia.org.uy/autores/Bary/RayuelaJazzII.htm).
- Beckett, Samuel. *Proust, and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*. London: Calder, 1976.

Belsey, Catherine. *Critical Practice*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

<http://design.wishiewashie.com/HT5/WalterBenjaminTheWorkofArt.pdf>.

Bennett, Maurice J. "A Dialogue of Gazes: Metamorphosis and Epiphany in

Julio Cortázar's 'Axolotl.'" *Studies in Short Fiction*, vol. 23, (1986): 57-62.

Berger, John. *About Looking*. London: Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1980.

———. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin, 1972.

Blake, William. "Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses."

[http://www.english.uga.edu/~nhilton/Blake/blaketxt1/Marginalia/M\\_reynolds.htm](http://www.english.uga.edu/~nhilton/Blake/blaketxt1/Marginalia/M_reynolds.htm).

———. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975.

Boldy, Steven. *The Novels of Julio Cortázar*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980.

Borello, Rodolfo A. "Charlie Parker: 'El perseguidor.'" *Cuadernos*

*Hispanoamericanos* 364-366 (1980): 573-94.

Brennan, Teresa and Martin Jay ed. *Vision in Context: Historical &*

*Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Brody, Robert. *Julio Cortázar: Rayuela*. Ed. J. E. Varey and A. D. Deyermond.

London: Grant & Cutler, 1976.

Burgos, Fernando, ed. *Los ochenta mundos de Cortázar: ensayos*. Madrid: edi-

6, 1987.

Burke, James F. *Vision, the Gaze and the Function of the Senses in Celestina*.

Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, 2000.

- Calvino, Italo. *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*. Trans. William Weaver. London: Vintage, 1997.
- Camus, Albert. *The Fall*. Trans. Robin Buss. London: Penguin, 2006.
- Castro-Klarén, Sara. "Cortázar, Surrealism, and Pataphysics." *Comparative Literature* 27.3 (1975): 218-36.
- Catalano, Joseph S. *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's "Being & Nothingness."* New York: Harper, 1974.
- Cerbone, David R. *Heidegger: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2008.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Last Painting or the Portrait of God." *"Coming to Writing" And Other Essays*. Ed. Deborah Jenson. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991. 104-31.
- Cortázar, Julio. *62: Modelo para armar*. Madrid: Punto de lectura, 2007.
- . *Adiós, Robinson y otras piezas breves*. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 1995.
- . "Algunos aspectos del cuento." *Obra crítica 2*. Ed. Jaime Alazraki. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 1994. 365-85.
- . *Argentina: años de alambradas culturales*. Ed. Saúl Yurkievich. Barcelona: Muchnik Editores, 1984.
- . *Cartas 1937-1963*. Ed. Aurora Bernárdez. 3 vols. Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2000.
- . *Cartas 1964-1968*. Ed. Aurora Bernárdez. 3 vols. Vol. 2. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2000.
- . *Cartas 1969-1983*. Ed. Aurora Bernárdez. 3 vols. Vol. 3. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2000.
- . *Cartas a una pelirroja*. Ed. Evelyn Picón Garfield. Colección tratados de testimonio. Madrid: Orígenes, 1990.

- . *Cuentos completos*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Madrid: Alfaguara, 2004.
- . *Cuentos completos*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Madrid: Alfaguara, 2004.
- . *Diario de Andrés Fava*. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 1995.
- . *Divertimento*. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2006.
- . *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1976.
- . *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1976.
- . *Libro de Manuel*. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2005.
- . *Los astronautas de la cosmopista o un viaje atemporal París-Marsella*. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2008.
- . *Los premios*. Ed. Javier García Méndez. Madrid: Cátedra, 2005.
- . *Los reyes*. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 1996.
- . *Nicaragua tan violentamente dulce*. Barcelona: Muchnik Editores, 1984.
- . *Obra crítica 1*. Ed. Saúl Yurkievich. 3 vols. Vol. 1. Madrid: Santillana, 1994.
- . *Obra crítica 2*. Ed. Jaime Alazraki. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 1994.
- . *Obra crítica 3*. Ed. Saúl Sosnowski. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 1994.
- . *Papeles inesperados*. Ed. Aurora Bernárdez and Carles Álvarez Garriga. México: Alfaguara, 2009.
- . *Prosa del observatorio*. Barcelona: Lumen, 1972.
- . *Rayuela*. Ed. Andrés Amorós. Decimosexta Ed, Letras Hispánicas. Madrid: Cátedra, 2003.
- . *Silvalandia*. Buenos Aires: Argonauta, 1984.
- . *Territorios*. Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1979.

- . *Último round*. Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 2005.
- . *Viaje alrededor de una mesa*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Rayuela, 1970.
- Cortázar, Julio, Carol Dunlop, and Silvia Monrós-Stojaković. *Correspondencia*.  
Barcelona: Alpha Decay, 2009.
- Csep, Attila. "Rayuela y el Budismo Zen." *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* Oct-Dic, no. 364-366 (1980): 456-62.
- Curutchet, Juan Carlos. *Julio Cortázar, o la crítica de la razón pragmática*.  
Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1972.
- Dávila, María de Lourdes. *Desembarcos en el papel: la imagen en la literatura de Julio Cortázar*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2001.
- Davis, Bret W. ed. *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen, 2010.
- Do Carmo, Alonso M. Rabí. "Dobles e imágenes especulares en Julio Cortázar: a propósito de 'Lejana,' 'La isla a mediodía,' y *Rayuela*."  
[http://sisbib.unmsm.edu.pe/bibvirtualdata/publicaciones/san\\_marcos/n24\\_2006/a08.pdf](http://sisbib.unmsm.edu.pe/bibvirtualdata/publicaciones/san_marcos/n24_2006/a08.pdf).
- Downing, Lisa. *The Cambridge Introduction to Michel Foucault*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.
- Farrell Krell, David, ed. *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Fernández Retamar, Roberto, ed. *Revista Casa de las Américas: Edición dedicada a Julio Cortázar*. Vols. 145-146. Buenos Aires: Nuestra América, 2004.
- Ferris, David S. *The Cambridge Introduction to Walter Benjamin*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.
- Flam, Jack D. *Matisse on Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.



- Flynn, Thomas. *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Forster, E. M. *A Room with a View*. New York: Penguin, 2000.
- Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1974-1975*. Ed. Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni. Trans. Graham Burchell. London: Verso, 2003.
- . *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin, 1991.
- Fröhlicher, Peter. *La mirada recíproca: estudios sobre los últimos cuentos de Julio Cortázar*. Bern: Lang, 1995.
- García Canclini, Néstor. "La inautenticidad y el absurdo en la narrativa de Cortázar." *Revista de Filosofía* 16 (1982): 65-67.
- Genover, Kathleen. *Claves de una novelística existencial (en Rayuela de Cortázar)*. Madrid: Plaza Mayor Ediciones, 1973.
- Giacoman, Helmy F. ed. *Homenaje a Julio Cortázar: variaciones interpretativas en torno a su obra*, Colección homenajes. New York: Las Americas, 1972.
- Glendinning, Simon. "Heidegger." *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, Ed. Berys Gout and Dominic Mc Iver Lopes. London: Routledge, 2001. 107-18.
- Gnutzmann, Rita. *Rayuela*, Guías de lectura. Madrid: Alhambra, 1989.
- González Bermejo, Ernesto. *Conversaciones con Cortázar*. Barcelona: Edhasa, 1978.
- Gordon, Samuel. "Algunos aportes sobre crítica y jazz, en la lectura de 'El perseguidor'." *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 364-366 (1980): 595-608.

- Guignon, Charles B. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.
- Gutierrez Mouat, Ricardo. "Las babas del diablo: exorcismo, traducción, voyeurismo." *Los ochenta mundos de Cortázar: ensayos*. Ed. Fernando Burgos. Madrid: edi-6, 1987.
- Hamlyn, D. W. *Sensation and Perception: A History of the Philosophy of Perception*. London: Routledge, 1961.
- Harris, Mark D. "Existence, Nothingness, and the Quest for Being: Sartrean Existentialism and Julio Cortázar's Early Short Fiction." *Latin American Literary Review* 37.74 (2009): 5-25.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1973.
- . *Nietzsche*. Vol. 1: The Will to Power as Art. London: Routledge, 1981.
- . *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- . "The Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper, 1971. 17-85.
- . *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper, 1971.
- . *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper, 1977.
- Henderson, Carlos. *Estudios sobre la poética de Rayuela*. Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1995.
- Hernández de Castillo, Ana. *Keats, Poe, and the Shaping of Cortázar's Mythopoesis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981.

- Hicks, Emily D. *Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- Hockney, David. *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*. London: Thames, 2001.
- Howells, Christina, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.
- Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Ed. John Wild. Trans. David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008.
- Hussey, Barbara L. "Rayuela: Chapter 55 as Take-(Away)." *Modern Latin American Fiction*, Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990. 149-58.
- Hutier, Jean-Benoît. *Huis Clos: Jean-Paul Sartre, Profil D'une Œuvre*. Paris: Hatier, 1997.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. London: Vintage, 2007.
- . *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*. London: Vintage, 2004.
- Ibáñez Moltó, María Amparo. "Galería de arte en la obra de Julio Cortázar." *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 364-366 (1980): 624-39.
- Johnson, Galen A. ed. *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993.
- Johnson, Kendall. *Henry James & the Visual*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Joyce, Paul and David Hockney. *Hockney on Art: Conversations with Paul Joyce*. London: Little, 1999.

- Keown, Damien. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Kern, Stephen. *Eyes of Love: The Gaze in English & French Paintings & Novels 1840-1900*. London: Reaktion, 1996.
- Lagmanovich, David, ed. *Estudios sobre los cuentos de Julio Cortázar*. Barcelona: Ediciones Hispam, 1975.
- Laing, R. D. *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Langer, Monika M. *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: A Guide and Commentary*. London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Lawrence, D. H. *The Rainbow*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2001.
- Lichtblau, Myron. *Rayuela y la creatividad artística*. Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1988.
- Mac Adam, Alfred. *El individuo y el otro: crítica a los cuentos de Julio Cortázar*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones La Librería, 1971.
- . "New Forms of Perception." Rev. of *Rayuela*, by Julio Cortázar. *The New Leader*, 23 May 1966: 24-26.
- Machado, Roberto Pinheiro. "El concepto de inautenticidad en Heidegger y Cortázar." *Revista Letras* 66 (2005): 111-26.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. London: Routledge, 1986.
- Matthews, Eric. *Merleau-Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Cézanne's Doubt." *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. and trans. Galen A. Johnson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993. 59-75.

- . "Eye and Mind." *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. and trans. Galen A. Johnson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993. 121-49.
- . *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge, 1962.
- . *The World of Perception*. Trans. Oliver Davis. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Meyers, Jeffrey. *Painting and the Novel*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975.
- Montanaro, Pablo. *Cortázar: de la experiencia histórica a la revolución*. Santa Fe, Argentina: Homo Sapiens, 2001.
- Montes-Bradley, Eduardo. *Cortázar sin barba*. Barcelona: Debate, 2005.
- Moran, Dermot. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Moran, Dominic. *Questions of the Liminal in the Fiction of Julio Cortázar*. Oxford: Legenda, 2000.
- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Penguin, 2008.
- Parkinson Zamora, Lois. "Art & Revolution in the Fiction of Julio Cortázar." *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. 76-96.
- . "Movement and Stasis, Film and Photo: Temporal Structures in the Recent Fiction of Julio Cortázar." *Modern Latin American Fiction*, ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990. 159-77.
- Peavler, Terry J. *Julio Cortázar*. Boston: Twayne, 1990.
- Peri Rossi, Cristina. *Julio Cortázar*. Barcelona: Ediciones Omega, 2001.
- Picon Garfield, Evelyn. *¿Es Julio Cortázar un surrealista?* Madrid: Gredos, 1975.
- Polt, Richard. *Heidegger: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press, 1999.

- Praet, Danny and Aagje Monballieu. "Reversals of Fire: The Philosophy of Heraclitus as Thematic Subtext of Julio Cortázar's 'All Fires the Fire'." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 88.8 (2011): 945-63.
- Prego, Omar. *La fascinación de las palabras: conversaciones con Julio Cortázar*. Barcelona: Muchnik Editores, 1985.
- Priest, Stephen, ed. *Jean-Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Riberi, Mario Alejandro. "El elemento gnoseológico en *Rayuela* de Julio Cortázar." MA thesis. University of Dublin, Trinity College, 1997.
- Rimbaud, Arthur. "La lettre du voyant."  
[http://www.toutelapoesie.com/poemes/rimbaud/la\\_lettre\\_du\\_voyant.htm](http://www.toutelapoesie.com/poemes/rimbaud/la_lettre_du_voyant.htm).
- Roy, Joaquín. *Julio Cortázar ante su sociedad*. Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1974.
- Russell, Michael J. "Sartre's Theory of Sexuality." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 19.2 (1979): 36-45.
- Russell, Matheson. *Husserl: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- Sábato, Ernesto. *El túnel*. Ed. Angel Leiva. Madrid: Cátedra, 1995.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. London: Methuen, 1977.
- . *Essays in Aesthetics*. Trans. Wade Baskin. London: Owen, 1964.
- . *In Camera and Other Plays*. Trans. Kitty Black and Stuart Gilbert. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Schaeffer, Jean-Marie. *Art of the Modern Age: Philosophy of Art from Kant to Heidegger*. Ed. Thomas Pavel and Mark Lilla. Trans. Steven Rendall. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

- Schliesser, John. "Antonioni's Heideggerian Swerve." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 26.4 (1998): 278-87.
- Schmidt-Cruz, Cynthia. *Mothers, Lovers, and Others: The Short Stories of Julio Cortázar*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2004.
- Schwartz, Marcy E. "Cortázar under Exposure: Photography and Fiction in the City." *Latin American Literature and Mass Media*. Ed. Edmundo Paz-Soldán and Debra A. Castillo. New York: Garland, 2001. 117-38.
- Shafer, José P. *Los puentes de Cortázar*. Buenos Aires: Nuevohacer, 1996.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. London: Penguin, 2002.
- Soren Triff, Eduardo. "Improvisación musical y discurso literario en Julio Cortázar." *Revista Iberoamericana* LVII, no. 155-156 (1991): 657-63.
- Sosnowski, Saúl. "Pursuers." *Modern Latin American Fiction*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990. 137-47.
- Standish, Peter. "Delvaux and Cortázar." *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* LXXXII, no. 3-4 (2005): 363-74.
- . *Understanding Julio Cortázar*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001.
- Suzuki, D. T. *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. London: Rider, 1991.
- Szasz, Thomas S. *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*. New York: Harper, 1974.
- Thomson, Iain "Heidegger's Aesthetics." Stanford University, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger-aesthetics>. N. pag.
- Thomson, Iain D. *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011.
- Tittler, Jonathan. "Los dos Solentinames de Julio Cortázar." *Los ochenta mundos de Cortázar: ensayos*. Madrid: edi-6, 1987. 85-91.

Urrutia, Antonio. "Los 'territorios plásticos' de Julio Cortázar."

*Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 364-366 (1980): 618-23.

Wells, H. G. *The Door in the Wall and Other Stories*. West Valley City: Waking Lion, 2006.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992.

Young, Julian. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.

———. *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Yovanovich, Gordana. *Julio Cortázar's Character Mosaic: Reading the Longer Fiction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Yurkievich, Saúl. *Julio Cortázar: mundos y modos*. Barcelona: Edhasa, 2004.

Zampaglione, Héctor. *El París de Rayuela: homenaje a Cortázar*. Barcelona: Lunwerk, 1998.