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**An exploration of the esoteric and music in  
the novels and short stories of Julio  
Cortázar.**

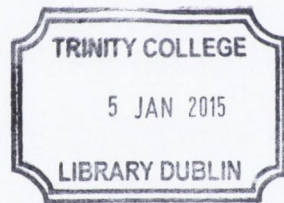
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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

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2014



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## Summary

Far from being polar opposites, esoteric elements and musical motifs complement one another in enriching our construal of the prose fiction of Julio Cortázar. Although numerous studies deal with discrete esoteric themes in Cortázar's works, none marries these motifs with his treatment of music therein. In the current study, I aim to examine Cortázar's novels diachronically, focussing predominantly on the arcane. I also cast a glance at the influence of music, specifically in the form of tango, classical music and, to a greater degree, jazz throughout his work.

The esoteric can be divided into three principal categories, ranging from the spiritual and magical to the scientific. Motifs of spiritism, dreams, surrealist art, death, fate, rites, metaphysical quests, games, Alchemy, Quantum Theory and Neuroscience are interlaced throughout the labyrinth of Cortázar's novels. I appraise the arcane strands which permeate his short stories by focussing on time, reincarnation and spiritual possession. Within these three categories I contrast short stories which contain musical elements with those which contain no musical components. Throughout both his novels and stories, Cortázar has probed, challenged and re-forged the esoteric in a most extraordinary manner. Moreover he has 'recreated' music linguistically throughout his texts. It is my intention to show the way in which Cortázar's prose posits music as a potential key to life's great mysteries, paradoxically revealing it to be the ultimate enigma - both god and demon, heaven and hell.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis owes its existence to all of those who supported and believed in me throughout this arduous odyssey. I am eternally grateful for the incredible assistance of the Department of Hispanic Studies, Trinity College Dublin. In particular, I would like to single out Professor Ciaran Cosgrove for his patience, understanding, encouragement and insight – he has been an inspiration like no other. To my fellow Postgraduate students and colleagues within the Department, I say thank you for your unwavering support and solidarity. Finally, to my family and friends – you know who you are - words fail me in how much you have been my rock. Thank you.

For Jo and Chris, of course!

## Contents

Introduction.....	7
Chapter One - <i>Divertimento, El Examen</i> and <i>Los Premios</i> .....	39
Divertimento .....	40
El Examen.....	52
Los Premios .....	88
Chapter Two - <i>Rayuela, 62: Modelo para armar</i> and <i>Libro de Manuel</i> .....	113
Rayuela .....	113
62: Modelo para armar.....	159
Libro de Manuel.....	191
Chapter Three - Time, Reincarnation and Spiritual Possession .....	200
Time .....	202
Reincarnation .....	225
Spiritual Possession .....	242
Conclusion .....	264
Bibliography .....	269



## Introduction

Notwithstanding significant studies which examine specific esoteric themes in Cortázar's prose, none furnishes us with a comprehensive treatment of the convergence of the esoteric with music. The current study aims to disentangle the web of arcane elements suffusing both the novels and short stories of Julio Cortázar, and shine a light on the extent to which music in particular enriches our understanding of the esoteric therein. The following questions demand consideration: which forms of esoterica and music intrigue him; how are these interests manifest throughout his oeuvre; and how is our understanding of the esoteric enhanced by the depiction of music in his texts?

Tantalizingly elusive, the term 'esoteric', akin to the works of Julio Cortázar, is richly suggestive and fraught with contradictions. Strictly speaking, esoteric signifies 'within' or 'hidden', and esoteric knowledge implies that which is specialized or hidden in nature, available only to a narrow circle of 'enlightened' individuals. Esoteric practices often engage with the supernatural in order to gain knowledge or power over destiny. Esotericism is not a single tradition but a vast array of often unrelated movements such as astrology or Buddhism, for instance. The esoteric or occult may frequently, though not exclusively, coincide with the supernatural and the metaphysical. As we shall see, a rich tapestry of ghosts, vampires, time-travellers *inter alia* populate Cortázar's universe, while life's ultimate mysteries are probed by a number of his protagonists. The term 'occult' which is a synonym of the esoteric has acquired pejorative connotations such as 'Satanic worship', for instance. This is unfortunate as, in the original usage of the term in Henry Cornelius Agrippa's work, *De occulta philosophia* (first published 1533), occult philosophy simply meant that the universe is articulated by a network of secret correspondences, which are 'occulted' or invisible and

inaudible to the senses. This reticulation would chime somewhat with Cortázar's own concept of constellations or 'figuras' as we shall explore. Enigmas, absences or hidden presences all evoke the esoteric in their manifold forms as does a preponderant fascination with dreams, death, fate and codes in Cortázar's prose.

From the twentieth century onwards, Western society's understanding of the term 'esotericism' has also come to mean any knowledge that is difficult to understand, such as theoretical physics. It is arguable that disciplines such as Neuroscience or Particle Physics focus on the measurable, whilst traditions such as alchemy and Kabbalah, for instance, attempt to chart that which is not measurable. However, these subjects and beliefs may share more in common than initial impressions would suggest. Indeed, in his work *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, the anthropologist, James George Frazer conjectures that human belief progressed through three stages: primitive magic which was replaced by religion, which in turn was replaced by science.<sup>1</sup> These three disparate strands of the esoteric are echoed by the exploration of the esoteric in Cortázar's work, particularly in his most famous novel, *Rayuela*.

-One leitmotif which unites the magical, the spiritual and the scientific is the concept of time. Time is a mystery which has taxed the keenest of minds since its inception. Time-travel and the ability to stop time, phenomena which we examine in the short stories represent coveted supernatural powers. Mircea Eliade's theory of sacred time distinguishes between time which occurs during religious rites, for instance, and ordinary time and posits that through the paradox of rite, profane time and duration are suspended.<sup>2</sup> In the twentieth century, Einstein challenged hitherto theories on time by proving that space and time should

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<sup>1</sup> James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (Sioux Falls: Nuvision, 2004), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Mircea Eliade, Willard R. Trask, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 68-80.

be considered in relation to each other. At variance with Newton's implicit assumptions that space and time were flat, in Einstein's universe space and time may be stretched and warped by matter.<sup>3</sup> Time is relative in a number of manners. For instance, two people observing the same event may perceive it as happening at two different times, according to the distance of each from the event in question.<sup>4</sup> The myth of absolute time was essentially dissolved by Einstein's revolutionary theories.

Martin Heidegger avers that the horizon of Being – the context which allows us to understand Being – is time.<sup>5</sup> To be is to exist temporally in the interval between birth and death.<sup>6</sup> Our self is therefore bound up with our time.<sup>7</sup> This notion that our time or self ends with our death<sup>8</sup> is clearly subverted by the hypothesis of reincarnation, which implies that the self does not end but is reborn after our death. Indeed in Cortázar's prose, we shall see that our whole concept of self is challenged, not just by reincarnation, but also by the concept of spiritual possession which displaces the self within this lifetime. Time, reincarnation and spiritual possession represent multiple facets of the conundrum of self.

Julio Cortázar was certainly a product of the time in which he lived, as much as he was moulded by the places in which he resided. Nevertheless, although he was born, died and spent the majority of his adult life in Europe, Cortázar was unequivocally Argentine.<sup>9</sup> His century was the twentieth century, his own beginning coincided with the outbreak of the First

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<sup>3</sup> Albert Einstein, Nigel Calder, *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory* (New York : Penguin Books, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Albert Einstein, Nigel Calder, *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, Joan Stambaugh, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1996), 343-44. Heidegger lived from 1889-1976 and courted controversy owing to his sympathies towards Nazism.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, Stambaugh, *Being and Time*, 343-44.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, Stambaugh, *Being and Time*, 343-44.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, Stambaugh, *Being and Time*, 343-44.

<sup>9</sup> Even when his novels are set in Europe and the characters are not Argentine, the Spanish they use generally has an Argentine flavour. For instance, they use the *voseo* form.

World War, when he was accidentally born in Brussels on 26th August 1914<sup>10</sup>. Cortázar spent his first four formative years in Europe before returning with his parents and younger sister to live in Buenos Aires.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after this, Cortázar's father abandoned the family and the children were raised by their mother, aunt and grandmother. Later Cortázar attended teacher training college and taught in secondary schools as well as at university level.<sup>12</sup> In 1944, while teaching French literature at the University of Cuyo in Mendoza, he published his first short story, 'Bruja' in the 'Correo Literario' journal.<sup>13</sup> When Juan Domingo Perón became president of Argentina in 1945, Cortázar chose to leave his university post rather than running the risk of being sacked.<sup>14</sup> In 1948, Cortázar qualified as a public translator of both French and English. Cortázar later earned his living by translating scientific and technical documentation for organizations such as UNESCO and the International Atomic Agency in Vienna, in addition to translating works of literature. In 1949, Cortázar wrote his first extant novel, *Divertimento*, which was only published posthumously.<sup>15</sup> Having won a scholarship from the French government to study in Paris, he left Argentina definitively in 1951. His initial exile from Argentina was voluntary, but later he found himself unwelcome in his own homeland because of his outspoken political views and his active opposition to human rights abuse throughout Latin America. His first visit to Cuba in 1961 marked the beginning of his

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<sup>10</sup> Cortázar's father was a diplomat stationed in Europe when war broke out and the family was unable to return to Argentina at that time.

<sup>11</sup> Omar Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras : [conversaciones con Julio Cortázar]* (Buenos Aires : Alfaguara, 1997), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Cortázar says, 'Preferí renunciar a mis cátedras antes de verme obligado a "sacarme el saco" como les pasó a tantos colegas que optaron por seguir en sus puestos.' Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 11.

In his work, *Understanding Julio Cortázar* (181), Peter Standish notes, 'Cortázar had been alienated by personal experience, having resigned his teaching post at the Universidad de Cuyo in protest at the advances being made by nationalists at the expense of university autonomy'.

<sup>15</sup> Although, as reported by Prego Gadea in *La fascinación de las palabras*, 9, he also claimed that he had written a novel aged nine.

political engagement as well as his lifelong love affair with Cuba.<sup>16</sup> Cortázar's *magnum opus*, *Rayuela* was published two years later in 1963. Aside from Cuba, he undertook a number of visits to Latin America, notably to Chile in 1971 at the invitation of Salvador Allende, as well as to Nicaragua, initially on a clandestine visit in 1976 and later following the Sandinista victory in 1979.<sup>17</sup> Cortázar was granted French citizenship on 24th July 1981 and died in Paris on 12 February 1984.<sup>18</sup>

Alongside his notable Latin American contemporaries, Cortázar defined a generation. Poet, dramatist, author, critic, translator - Cortázar was first and foremost a voracious reader. The litany of writers whose works exerted a profound impact on him is vast, but a parsed list must include Cocteau, Gide, Joyce, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Keats, Poe *inter alia*. He was also an ardent follower of Carl Jung, who wrote extensively on esoteric matters such as dream interpretation, alchemy and the Tao, subjects which interested Cortázar greatly. Significantly synchronicity plays a pivotal role in Cortázar's view of life, given that even his childhood was replete with inexplicable coincidences which only he appeared to regard as normal.<sup>19</sup> It is said that Jung was greatly inspired by Manly P. Hall's unique collection of esoteric works,<sup>20</sup> thus echoing Jung, the current thesis draws heavily from Hall, in particular his prestigious study, *An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy: Being an Interpretation of the Secret Teachings Concealed within the Rituals, Allegories, and Mysteries of All Ages*.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 13. Also, according to Alfred Mac Adam in 'Julio Cortázar and music', 45, in the 1960s Cortázar became an avid collector of Cuban music.

<sup>17</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 14-17.

<sup>18</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 17-18.

<sup>19</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 146.

<sup>20</sup> As reported in Gary Lachman. *Jung the Mystic: The Esoteric Dimensions of Carl Jung's Life and Teachings*. (New York: Penguin, 2010), 155.

<sup>21</sup> Manly P. Hall. *An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy: Being an Interpretation of the Secret Teachings Concealed within the Rituals, Allegories, and Mysteries of All Ages*. (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1977), 82.

Cortázar was also not alone in this period in having an interest in the arcane, as the New Age movement, which drew on both Eastern and Western spiritual and metaphysical traditions, burgeoned in the second half of the twentieth century. Cortázar claims that while he was living in Europe that he had started to read metaphysical works on Vedanta and Zen which inspired him to write *Rayuela*.<sup>22</sup> He practised the I-Ching on a regular basis and shared with his literary contemporaries such as Octavio Paz a love for Surrealism and Buddhism.<sup>23</sup> Cortázar's first decades in France coincided with the so-called Boom, when Spanish American novelists were plunged into the limelight and exerted considerable influence internationally. Among the novelists of the Boom, a number of names stand out: Mario Vargas Llosa, Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez and of course, Julio Cortázar.<sup>24</sup> The novels of the Boom marked a new wave of experimentation as well as a new Spanish American voice.<sup>25</sup> The Boom began with the Cuban Revolution in 1951, but it came to an abrupt end in 1971 (with the imprisonment of the Cuban poet, Heberto Padilla for expressing what were deemed 'deviant views').<sup>26</sup> As Randolph D. Pope explains, the novel of the Boom 'relied on a Cubist superposition of different points of view, it made time and lineal progress questionable, and it was technically complex'.<sup>27</sup>

Alongside *Rayuela*, one of the seminal novels of the Boom was García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad*, which not only fuses magic with realism, but finds magic permeating quotidian life. In *Cien Años de Soledad* disparate images such as the gift of vaticination and the quasi Biblical genesis of Macondo right through to its apocalyptic end, all swirl

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<sup>22</sup> Bermejo, *Conversaciones*, 1978 ,64

<sup>23</sup> Stephen M.Hart. *A Companion to Latin American Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk UK: Tamesis, 2007), 103.

<sup>24</sup> Roberto González Echevarría, Enrique Pupo-Walker, *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature. The Twentieth Century*. Vol. 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 220.

<sup>25</sup> Echevarría, Pupo-Walker, *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, 230.

<sup>26</sup> Echevarría, Pupo-Walker, *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, 228.

<sup>27</sup> Echevarría, Pupo-Walker, *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, 231.

throughout in a veritable *pot-pourri* of esoterica. The ghost of Melquíades, who supposedly dies false deaths and is rumoured to possess superhuman powers, haunts the text. Time is circular and patterns, such as characters' names, are repeated frequently. Past, present and future merge.

No list of writers, particularly contemporary writers whose work influenced Cortázar considerably, would be complete without reference to Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986). A number of themes where Borges's magisterial short stories would converge with Cortázar's own works would be the double, dreams, death and the role of fate *inter alia*. Borges's interest in a wide variety of religious traditions has stoked the curiosity of critics. Among the esoteric topoi explored by Borges which overlap with those employed by Cortázar, the Kabbalah and Buddhism stand out.<sup>28</sup>

Legend has it that reading Meyrink's novel *The Golem* stoked Borges's curiosity in the Kabbalah.<sup>29</sup> A golem is an artificially created human being that is infused with a numen or spirit by supernatural means. Borges's own poem, 'El Golem' draws on this tradition. In the poem rabbi Judah experiments with permutations and combinations of letters until he finally utters the sacred name over a puppet which he brings to life.<sup>30</sup> This simulacrum eventually learns to sweep the synagogue, but never learns to speak. As the rabbi gazes on the golem which is a pale imitation of his creator, he wonders how God must feel when he beholds his own creation, the rabbi. In a similar vein, Cortázar toys with the notion of demiurgy in his stories. For instance, Cortázar's first story, 'Bruja', recounts the tale of Paula,

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<sup>28</sup> A small selection of esoteric works written on Borges would include John Dominic Crossan, *Raid on the Articulate: Comic Eschatology in Jesus and Borges* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); a study of Sufism (Islamic Mysticism) in Giovanna De Garayalde, *Jorge Luis Borges: Sources and Illuminations* (London: Octagon, 1978.); Edna Aizenberg, *The Aleph Weaver. Biblical, kabbalistic and Judaic Elements in Borges* (Potomac: Scripta Humanistica, 1984) ; Jaime Alazraki, *Borges and the Kabbalah: And Other Essays on His Fiction and Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) ; Beatriz Borovich, *Los Caminos De Borges: La Kábala, Los Mitos Y Los Símbolos* (Buenos Aires: Lumen, 1999). This is not an exhaustive list. The sheer volume would certainly eclipse anything written about Cortázar and his esoteric influences.

<sup>29</sup> W. H. Bossart, *Borges and Philosophy: Self, Time, and Metaphysics* (New York: P. Lang, 2003), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, 'El Golem' in *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emece, 1974) , 885-87.

who conjures her ideal man, Esteban *ex nihilo*. Having created her perfect life, Paula feels the exhaustion of God on the seventh day of creation, and dies shortly thereafter.

Not dissimilar to Cortázar, spiritual possession and reincarnation intrigue Borges. In his monograph, *Borges and the Kabbalah: And Other Essays on His Fiction and Poetry*, Jaime Alazraki references Borges's discussion of the Kabbalistic concept of transmigration known as Ibbür: 'el cabalista de Jerusalén, Isaac Luria, que en el siglo xvi propaló que el alma de un antepasado o maestro puede entrar en el alma de un desdichado, para confortarlo o instruirlo. Ibbür se llama esa variedad de la metempsicosis'.<sup>31</sup> Ibbür is regarded as the most positive form of possession which occurs when a righteous soul occupies a living person's body for a time, with or without the consent of the host. The purpose of Ibbür is usually to fulfil an important task or religious duty. As Alazraki says, 'Thus, according to Luria (the leading figure of the Safed School), each soul retains its individual existence only until the moment when it has worked out its own spiritual restoration. Souls which have fulfilled the commandments are exempted from the law of transmigration'.<sup>32</sup>

Although transmigration means the passing of a soul into another body after death, here Ibbür is closer to temporary control of another being. Essentially, spiritual possession and reincarnation are flip sides of the same coin. Borges's short story, 'Los Teólogos' suggests that certain sects believe that most humans must undergo reincarnation: 'como Pitágoras, deberán transmigrar por muchos cuerpos antes de obtener su liberación'.<sup>33</sup> The notion that until the soul has fulfilled its purpose, it is condemned to the endless cycle of death and rebirth, mirrors one of the main tenets of Buddhism.

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<sup>31</sup> Jaime Alazraki, *Borges and the Kabbalah: And Other Essays on His Fiction and Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 25.

<sup>32</sup> Alazraki, *Borges and the Kabbalah*, 25.

<sup>33</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *Obras Completas De Jorge Luis Borges*. Michigan: Emecé, 1965. 41.



In his work, *Borges' Esoteric Library: Metaphysics to Metafiction*, Didier Tisdell Jaén discusses the extent to which Borges draws on pantheism, the idea that the world is no more than a projection of the transcendental realm and says,

From such varied sources, Borges derives suggestive ideas for his metafiction: from the Buddhist perception of the world as a dream of Buddha, for which the world is a stage; to gnostic labyrinths of worlds and gods as projections of other worlds and gods; to the Neo-Platonist and cabalistic notions of the world as an intellectual or verbal emanation of the divine; to Arthur Schopenhauer's vision of the world as representation of the Will.<sup>34</sup>

Although Borges was at pains to point out that he was not a Buddhist, he did study Buddhism and used it in his fiction.<sup>35</sup> He also gave lectures on Buddhism and co-authored *Qué es el budismo*<sup>36</sup> with Alicia Jurado. In his essay 'Nueva Refutación del Tiempo', Buddhism colours his philosophy on time, which he believes is both circular and illusory:

El tiempo es como un círculo que girara infinitamente ... Un tratado budista del siglo V, el *Visuddhimagga (Camino de la Pureza)*, ilustra la misma doctrina con la misma figura: "En rigor, la vida de un ser dura lo que una idea. Como una rueda de carruaje, al rodar, toca la tierra en un solo punto, dura la vida lo que dura una sola idea" (Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy*, I, 373). Otros textos budistas dicen que el mundo se aniquila y resurge seis mil quinientos millones de veces por día y que todo hombre es una ilusión, vertiginosamente obrada por una serie de hombres momentáneos y solos.<sup>37</sup>

In 'El tiempo circular' Borges elaborates on the doctrine of the eternal return and holds the view that there is a repetition of similar but not identical cycles.<sup>38</sup> Borges's beliefs regarding time are often contradictory and counter-intuitive. Although he refutes the existence of time, and denies the existence of a single form of time, in which all events are linked together, he vindicates time's existence when he professes: 'El tiempo es la sustancia de que estoy

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<sup>34</sup> Didier Tisdell Jaén, *Borges' Esoteric Library: Metaphysics to Metafiction* (Lanham: University of America, 1992), 79-80.

<sup>35</sup> Jaén, *Borges' Esoteric Library: Metaphysics to Metafiction*, 79-80.

<sup>36</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, Alicia Jurado, *Qué es el budismo* (Madrid: Alianza, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> Borges, *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emece, 1974), 770.

<sup>38</sup> Borges, 'El tiempo circular' (part of 'Historia de la eternidad') in *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emece, 1974), 431-443.

hecho'.<sup>39</sup> Borges's revelation that he is made of time contains echoes of Heidegger's contention that time is being.

Borges's perspectives on the putative inexistence and circularity of time in his short stories overlaps with Cortázar's short stories as shall become evident. One study which is instrumental to the current thesis is Zheylya Henriksen's *Tiempo sagrado y tiempo profano en Borges y Cortázar*<sup>40</sup>, where Henriksen examines time in the works of both Borges and Cortázar using Mircea Eliade's theory of sacred time as a framework. As mentioned, Eliade's theory underscores the passage from real time into mythical time and differentiates between time which occurs during religious rites, for instance, and profane or ordinary time.<sup>41</sup> As Henriksen says, quoting Eliade: 'Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, 'in the beginning'.<sup>42</sup> Hence sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable. This would also tie in with Borges's views on the circularity of time. Curiously Henriksen omits 'La Noche Boca Arriba', which to my mind embodies the hypothesis of 'sacred time' more compellingly than any of Cortázar's other short stories. Citing René Jara, Henriksen explores the way in which the imposition of mythical time in Hispanoamerican literature represents a struggle: 'la lucha por reconquistar el paraíso aquí en la tierra, por ver el porvenir en el presente, por recuperar los orígenes que están en nosotros mismos'.<sup>43</sup> Myth, archetype, rituals and symbols are necessary in order to gain access to primordial time, a paradise for which humankind must

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<sup>39</sup> Borges, *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emece, 1974), 771.

<sup>40</sup> Zheylya Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado y Tiempo Profano en Borges y Cortázar* (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1992).

<sup>41</sup> Eliade, Trask, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 68-80.

<sup>42</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 13.

<sup>43</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 10.

strive.<sup>44</sup> Significantly, Henriksen sees the novel, *Rayuela* as an attempt to transcend the profane and progress to this paradise lost of sacred time.<sup>45</sup>

An alternative, enlightening perspective on the 'sacred' within Cortázar's works is provided by Ignacio Solares in *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*.<sup>46</sup> Solares traces the development of Cortázar's putative religious beliefs from his early twenties to his thirties and demonstrate how Cortázar relates art to God.<sup>47</sup> There is a tension between this religious belief and his bid to escape from traditional religion. I would take issue with Solares's emphasis on the impact of religion on Cortázar in explicitly Christian terms.<sup>48</sup> Solares examines Cortázar's belief that he can overcome death by depriving death of its favourite weapons: time and pain.<sup>49</sup> Vedanta is useful to this end as it destroys the concept of individual identity which engenders pain, time and death itself.<sup>50</sup> Buddhism removed the fear of the void from Cortázar, in view of the fact that in Eastern cultures, death is a metamorphosis, not an end.<sup>51</sup> Solares considers how, according to Quantum Physics, we each create the universe with our thoughts and Vedanta shows that we are each other's illusion.<sup>52</sup> Time and space, as we conceive of them, do not exist. I would diverge from Solares's view that religious sentiment motivated Cortázar's political militancy.<sup>53</sup> Although admittedly, in his summary, Solares acknowledges that Cortázar would be furious with his religious interpretation of his beliefs

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<sup>44</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 110.

<sup>46</sup> Ignacio Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar* (Guadalajara: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Cortázar disliked institutional religion (Solares 20-25). However, according to Solares, in his early work, Cortázar dabbles with the idea of God (29).

<sup>48</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 33.

<sup>49</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 56.

<sup>50</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 56.

<sup>51</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 58.

<sup>52</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 61-63.

<sup>53</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 95.

and work.<sup>54</sup> In addition to religion, Solares addresses an array of pertinent themes such as vampirism<sup>55</sup>, dreams and magic throughout Cortázar's works.<sup>56</sup>

Akin to Solares, Saúl Sosnowski underscores the overlapping of primitive magic and poetry for Cortázar, in his work, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*.<sup>57</sup> Sosnowski's study synthesises the poetic quest with primitive man's intuition and sense of magic, and highlights the mythical stratum throughout Cortázar's works.<sup>58</sup> I would concur with his view of Cortázar's mythical quest as an attempt by humankind to recuperate its oneness with the universe and his vision of the writer as a medium who is guided by intuition and magic.<sup>59</sup> Sosnowski holds that many of Cortázar's ideas coincide with Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who asserts that primitive humans are mystical beings who believe that occult forces are at work.<sup>60</sup> According to Sosnowski, Cortázar demonstrates that intuition adds a belief in another reality, a reality which is 'supra-real', to man's perception of empirical reality.<sup>61</sup> It is the predominance of a scientific vision of reality which has divided empirical reality from human consciousness.<sup>62</sup> Sosnowski follows the thread of a mythical vision of reality throughout Cortázar's novels and contends that Cortázar has consistently reiterated his commitment to humanity and the human condition, as well as his belief that humanity's primordial quest is ontological.<sup>63</sup> Sosnowski argues that Cortázar's works exemplify the notion that the acceptance of laws which integrate a mythical vision allows humanity to re-establish a

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<sup>54</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 109-111.

<sup>55</sup> Solares traces Cortázar's belief in vampires. (Solares 76-77). Cortázar felt that he himself was a vampire and was thus immortal. Nevertheless, he objected to emotional vampirism which manipulated and drained the spirit of others.

<sup>56</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Saúl Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Noé, 1973).

<sup>58</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*.

<sup>59</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*, 12-14.

<sup>60</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*, 15-16.

<sup>61</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*, 75.

<sup>63</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*, 162.

connection with the universe as the mythical mind abolishes the Western dichotomy of the irrational versus the rational.<sup>64</sup> I would concur with Sosnowski's *précis* that:

La persistencia del motivo de la búsqueda mítica en la narrativa de Cortázar evidencia que estamos frente a un perseguidor que 'metiéndose hasta las cachas' en la realidad o conjurando mundos de estatuillas y estrellas lejanas, anhela el retorno del reino del hombre sobre la tierra.<sup>65</sup>

Myth also forms the basis for *Keats, Poe, and the Shaping of Cortázar's Mythopoesis* by Ana Hernández del Castillo, which analyzes the triad of writers in terms of psychological theory, specifically the Jungian Archetype. Boldy's monograph on Cortázar, *The Novels of Julio Cortázar* traces the metaphysical, psychological and socio-political implications of the novels, focussing on man's loss of unity with himself and with the world which surrounds him. The 'other', in the form of monsters or doubles, is repressed. Recurrent patterns or *figuras* are explored in terms of classical myth, modern psychology, and linguistic theory, in a bid to predict or understand reality.<sup>66</sup>

One of Cortázar's foremost critics is Alazraki, whose collections of critical essays give a panoramic vista of Cortázar's oeuvre. In *Hacia Cortázar: aproximaciones a su obra*, Alazraki succeeds in offering a wealth of scholarly insight into Cortázar's relation to surrealism, existentialism and postmodernism alongside sources and influences, such as alchemical motifs and Zen Buddhism, as we shall see.<sup>67</sup> Alazraki's *En busca del Unicornio: los cuentos de Julio Cortázar: elementos para una poética de lo neofantástico*, which aims to re-define the role of the fantastic in Cortázar's work, also delivers some particularly

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<sup>64</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*, 163.

<sup>65</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*, 169.

<sup>66</sup> Steven Boldy, *The Novels of Julio Cortázar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>67</sup> Jaime Alazraki, *Hacia Cortázar: aproximaciones a su obra* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1994), 217.

sophisticated insights that are germane to the current thesis.<sup>68</sup> In this work Alazraki attempts to specify the literary and philosophical contexts which moulded Cortázar's works. He draws distinctions between the marvellous and the fantastic, and provides a description of how the neo-fantastic works in a selection of Cortázar's short stories.<sup>69</sup> Alazraki uses Tzvetan Todorov and Caillois as point of reference for both the marvellous and the fantastic. For Caillois, the universe of the marvellous is naturally populated by unicorns and dragons.<sup>70</sup> Todorov proposes a definition of the fantastic which claims that in a world which is ours, a world without vampires or devils, an event occurs which cannot be explained by the laws of this familiar world.<sup>71</sup> The fantastic occupies the space of uncertainty or vacillation. Cortázar claims that his literature is not like traditional fantastic literature, as the eruption of the other occurs in his work in a prosaic manner, without warning or an eerie atmosphere beloved of gothic literature.<sup>72</sup> If for fantastic literature, horror and fear comprise the route of access to the other, the neo-fantastic does not need fear.<sup>73</sup> Alazraki demonstrates that Cortázar's search for a more authentic reality encounters a response in the aforementioned neo-fantastic, a theory which, taking its cue from Jean-Paul Sartre, posits that the only fantastic object is man.<sup>74</sup> The other emerges as a portal to a hidden reality.

Alongside the aforementioned critics acknowledged here, it should be emphasized at the outset that the critic on whose interventions I have drawn most heavily is, perhaps inevitably, Cortázar himself. The breadth and depth of his articles, essays and interviews on

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<sup>68</sup> Jaime Alazraki, *En Busca Del Unicornio: Los Cuentos De Julio Cortázar: Elementos Para Una Poética De Lo Neofantástico* (Madrid: Gredos, 1983).

<sup>69</sup> Alazraki, *En Busca Del Unicornio: Los Cuentos De Julio Cortázar*, 18-25.

<sup>70</sup> Alazraki, *En Busca Del Unicornio: Los Cuentos De Julio Cortázar*, 18.

<sup>71</sup> Alazraki, *En Busca Del Unicornio: Los Cuentos De Julio Cortázar*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> Alazraki, *En Busca Del Unicornio: Los Cuentos De Julio Cortázar*, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Alazraki, *En Busca Del Unicornio: Los Cuentos De Julio Cortázar*, 28.

<sup>74</sup> He quotes Jean-Paul Sartre, who said with respect to the fantastic in Kafka and Blanchot: 'han dejado de depender de seres extraordinarios: para ellos no hay más que un solo objeto fantástico: el hombre' (Alazraki *En Busca Del Unicornio* 41).

his works offer us a cornucopia of allusions to his literary and arcane preferences and sources of inspiration. On musical matters, a selection of texts has proven to be indispensable to the current thesis. As mentioned, the current thesis focuses solely on classical Western music, tango and jazz within his work. Joscelyn Godwin's *Music and the Occult: French Musical Philosophies, 1750-1950* provides alternative perspectives on the role of the occult within Western classical music. Godwin explains:

“Speculative music” derived from the medieval category *musica speculativa*, denotes that part of music theory that has nothing to do with practice, but is concerned with identifying the principles of music. It is the esoteric part of music theory, and as such readily absorbs ideas from theosophy, Hermeticism, and the occult sciences. The topics treated in speculative music include the harmonies of the angelic orders, the zodiac and planetary spheres, the elements, the soul, and the human body; the hidden correspondences of nature; the secrets of number; the power of sound; and the moral responsibilities of a music that wields this power.<sup>75</sup>

As shall become apparent, the bulk of these metaphysical attributes are pertinent to Cortázar's depiction of music, particularly in *Los Premios* in addition to short stories such as ‘Las Ménades’, ‘Clone’ and ‘Manuscrito hallado junto a una mano’.

José Vicente Peiró's monograph, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*<sup>76</sup>, with its bold cross-fertilization of Cortázar's texts and the music alluded to therein, reflects Cortázar's instinctive catholicity. This critical work not only compares and contrasts Cortázar's treatment of tango, jazz and classical music, but also catalogues and contextualizes the

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<sup>75</sup> Godwin, *Music and the occult*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Jose Vicente Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 2006).

musical motif within the narratives. Taking my cue from Peiró's critique, I will discuss blues and jazz together and will not distinguish between them as they are interdependent within Cortázar's work.<sup>77</sup> It is noteworthy that in his study Peiró contends that Cortázar does not have a favourite genre of music, but that he did have favourite compositions and musicians.<sup>78</sup> Drawing inspiration from George Steiner's essay 'Lenguaje y Silencio', Peiró stresses that both music and the word are united by their bid to rupture silence.<sup>79</sup> Peiró highlights the dual aspect of music as both the acoustic material and the creative mental idea.<sup>80</sup> For Peiró, the Muses, from which the term music is derived, convey the innate forces of inspiration or God.<sup>81</sup> Peiró draws attention to the extent to which music embodies a metaphysical reality within Cortázar's oeuvre and the notion that music suggests a magical or mystical reality.<sup>82</sup>

Alongside jazz, Cortázar's characters are transformed in life and in death by tango, which Peiró depicts as both the national musical product of Argentina and a music which signifies a fusion of races and cultures.<sup>83</sup> Tango bonded Cortázar with Argentina, inspiring him to collaborate on the recording of a compilation of tangos and poetry called *Trottoirs de Buenos Aires*.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, for Alfred Mac Adam, the tango—especially the songs performed by Carlos Gardel—represents a form of identity for Cortázar.<sup>85</sup> Mac Adam explains:

What makes the singer great, writes Cortázar, is that when Gardel sings a tango, his style expresses the style of the people (pueblo) who loved him. The sorrow or anger at being abandoned by a woman are concrete sorrow and anger, aimed at Juana or Pepa, and not that total aggressive pretext it's easy to

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<sup>77</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 40.

<sup>78</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 106.

<sup>79</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 17.

<sup>80</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 17.

<sup>81</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 21.

<sup>82</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 49.

<sup>83</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 56.

<sup>84</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 82.

<sup>85</sup> Alfred Mac Adam, 'Julio Cortázar and music', *Literature and Arts of the Americas*, 34:63, 43-50.



discover in the hysterical singer's voice of our times, so well attuned to the hysteria of his listeners.<sup>86</sup>

Gardel takes Cortázar back to the garden of his youth and he connects the tango with his emotional development and personal life of that epoch.<sup>87</sup>

Prior to discussing the crucial role played by jazz in Cortázar's work and life, it is useful to take a look at jazz itself. Jazz is a devilishly difficult concept to pin down as it has undergone radical changes in meaning and in terms of the music it seeks to denote.<sup>88</sup> From jazz's emergence in the early twentieth century, a number of its distinctive styles flourished. These styles include: New Orleans jazz dating from the early 1910s right through to the 1920s and 1930s; big band Swing jazz from the 1930s and 1940s; bebop from the mid-1940s; cool jazz which came to the fore in the late 1940s in New York City; and free jazz and *avant-garde* jazz which first developed in the 1950s and 1960s. As shall become apparent, both Swing and improvisation are of crucial importance to Cortázar.

Generally the structure of jazz has three main components: rhythmic, formal, and harmonic.<sup>89</sup> A performance starts with the statement of a pre-composed tune, (called the 'head') which constitutes the 'theme' part of theme and variations.<sup>90</sup> The head is then followed by improvised variations on the theme, which generally reflect the structure and harmony of the original theme quite closely.<sup>91</sup> Jazz musicians build improvised solos that 'tell stories'.<sup>92</sup> For Cortázar, improvisation is what distinguishes jazz from classical Western

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<sup>86</sup> Mac Adam, 'Julio Cortázar and music', 45.

<sup>87</sup> 'Cuando pongo un disco de Gardel estoy viendo el patio de mi casa, toda mi familia; ese disco hace pasar imágenes, figuras.' José Luis Maire *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar* (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 2013), 125.

<sup>88</sup> Walton M. Muyumba, *The Shadow and the Act: Black Intellectual Practice, Jazz Improvisation, and Philosophical Pragmatism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009), 18.

<sup>89</sup> This is with the exception of free jazz which eschews most or all of the traditional structure of jazz. Stuart Smith, *Jazz Theory* 4th ed. (2008), 81.

<sup>90</sup> Stuart Smith, *Jazz Theory*, 11.

<sup>91</sup> Stuart Smith, *Jazz Theory*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Muyumba, *The Shadow and the Act: Black Intellectual Practice*, 18.

music. He juxtaposes the richness of jazz ‘takes’ with the relative impoverishment of the tango, which is rarely if ever improvised. For Cortázar, these ‘takes’ embody one of the most sublime experiences of jazz: ‘Una de las experiencias más bellas en el jazz es escuchar eso que llaman los *takes*, es decir, los distintos ensayos de una pieza antes de ser grabada y observar cómo siendo siempre la misma es también otra cosa’.<sup>93</sup> As jazz has no written score, Cortázar also draws comparison between improvisation and the spontaneity inherent in surrealism’s automatic writing:

el jazz es la sola música entre todas las músicas, con la de la India, que corresponde a esa gran ambición del surrealismo en literatura, es decir, a la escritura automática, la inspiración total, que en el jazz corresponde a la improvisación, una creación que no está sometida a un discurso lógico y preestablecido, sino que nace de las profundidades y eso, creo, permite ese paralelo entre el surrealismo y el jazz.<sup>94</sup>

Although we tend to think of improvisation as the spontaneous creation of music, it is not as spontaneous as it may at first appear, given the dedicated practice required to develop improvisational skills. As Paul Berliner discusses in his work, *Thinking in Jazz*,

The spontaneous and arranged elements of jazz presentations continually cross-fertilize and revitalize one another. Precomposed background lines or riffs, which add interest to the performance and, as musical landmarks, help soloists keep their bearings over a progression, also provide material that soloists can incorporate into their extemporaneous inventions. Conversely, supporting players, without external direction, can adopt a soloist’s interesting phrase extemporaneously as the basis for a new accompanying riff.<sup>95</sup>

José Luis Maire’s *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar* is a compilation of interviews, letters, articles and primary texts by Cortázar which touch on jazz and maps Cortázar’s life-long interest in jazz.<sup>96</sup> Some of Cortázar’s views on jazz may appear to be somewhat inconsistent. Given Cortázar’s predilection for improvisation, it is ironic that his least

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<sup>93</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 122.

<sup>94</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 41.

<sup>95</sup> Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 383.

<sup>96</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*.

favourite type of jazz was free jazz, which emphasizes collective extemporization. Cortázar cites his friend, the French jazz musician, Michel Portal, who claims, ‘que los músicos saben que dentro de un largo “take” de “free jazz”, cinco minutos son buenísimos y los demás es relleno’.<sup>97</sup>

Cortázar listened to all types of jazz from his teen years onwards and just as he is drawn towards the tango of the 1920s to the 1940s, he also prefers the classical jazz of New Orleans and Chicago:

Con el tango a mí me sucede que estoy situado en la época de los años veinte a los cuarenta. Lo que viene después lo puedo escuchar con interés pero no me toca, no me llega. De la misma manera que el jazz, el viejo jazz de New Orleans y el llamado jazz de Chicago en el fondo es mi jazz de Chicago, y cuando llega la hora y tengo ganas de escuchar jazz, de tres veces dos saco a Duke Ellington, Armstrong, saco los viejos cantantes de blues.<sup>98</sup>

Prior to his definitive departure to Paris in 1951, Cortázar was devastated at having to sell all of his jazz records with the exception of one: ‘Me llevo a París *un solo disco*, metido entre la ropa; es un viejísimo blues de mi tiempo de estudiante, que se llama *Stack O’Lee Blues*, y que me guarda toda la juventud’.<sup>99</sup>

As mentioned, Swing is instrumental to our understanding of Cortázar’s relationship with jazz. It is important to note that the term ‘Swing’ has a number of meanings. Swing in one sense is an easy flowing music with a vigorous rhythm. It is a style which many jazz bands adopted in the early 1930s. Jazz’s unique rhythmic character ‘is generated mainly in the melodic, or eighth-note, layer, which gives jazz its characteristic “Swing”’.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, jazz’s special relationship to time is also defined as ‘Swing’.<sup>101</sup> The essence of

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<sup>97</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 39

<sup>98</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 125.

<sup>99</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 29-30.

<sup>100</sup> Stuart Smith, *Jazz Theory*, 10.

<sup>101</sup> Joachim Ernst Berendt, *The New Jazz Book: A History and Guide* (London: P. Owen, 1964), 278.

Swing is that the acceleration or slowing down of the piece is barely noticeable to the listener. But at all times the musician must respect the number of bars given for the improvisation and always finish in accordance with all the other musicians in the band. So in a way, the musician is given a certain amount of license within the piece, but is always restrained by its basic structure. Time becomes elastic, but always within its own limits. On the one hand, Cortázar expresses a certain aversion towards the Swing of the big band era: ‘No me acostumbraba nunca al “Swing” o a los “big bands”. La excepción sería Duke Ellington’.<sup>102</sup> This aversion appears to be rooted in his dislike of the commercial aspects of Swing music, which was commandeered by white musicians and Hollywood. He claims, ‘Sospecho a veces que los musicólogos estiman el jazz en términos de *Swing*, tal vez porque este fue llevado a la popularidad por *intérpretes* blancos, y porque Hollywood y el disco le abrieron grandes las puertas, todo lo cual tiene su influencia’.<sup>103</sup> Cortázar suggests that his own short stories are hallmarked by the rhythms of Swing. Indeed jazz’s very concept of Swing allows not only the musician to speed up and slow down time, but is used by Cortázar to determine the tempo of his short stories:

Yo creo que el elemento fundamental al que siempre he obedecido es el ritmo ... Yo creo que la escritura que no tiene un ritmo basado en la construcción sintáctica, en la puntuación, en el desarrollo del periodo, que se convierte simplemente en la prosa que trasmite la información con grandes cheques internos – sin llegar a la cacofonía - carece de lo que busco en mis cuentos. Carece de esa especie de swing ... He tratado de que la frase no solamente diga lo que quiere decir, sin que lo diga de una manera que potencie ese decir, que lo introduzca por otras vertientes, no ya en la mente sino en la sensibilidad ... El mensaje entra en la inteligencia, pero con *swing*, el ritmo que hay en la construcción (y esa es la parte musical) entra en el lector por una vía subliminal, de la que él no se da cuenta.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 56.

<sup>103</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 63.

<sup>104</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 281-282.

As discussed by Ortiz, Cortázar also compares the release of tension at the end of the short story with the concentration of forces resolved at the end of a Mozart Quintet.<sup>105</sup>

It is telling that when Cortázar was asked which records he would take to a desert island, he initially chooses a number of jazz recordings:

Si me haces escoger cinco discos para la isla desierta sería difícil decir - diez sería mejor - llevaría conmigo uno de Jelly Roll Morton, uno, dos o tres del viejo Armstrong, uno del viejo Ellington de los años veinte y treinta, lo que averigua que no he cambiado mucho.<sup>106</sup>

Then, curiously he says that if compelled to choose between jazz and classical music records, he would opt for the latter:

Si volvemos a la isla desierta, si yo tuviera que escoger entre discos de música clásica y los del jazz, tomaría los clásicos. Me daría pena, pero lo haría ... Porque para mí alguna música clásica, por ejemplo los últimos cuartetos de Beethoven, todos los de Béla Bartók, la primera música de Stravinsky, la música medieval, toda la música de cámara de Mozart, es la mejor música que hay. El jazz es maravilloso, pero esa música clásica es como la gran literatura, es lo más que se puede conseguir en música.<sup>107</sup>

The fact that he privileges classical music over jazz, may appear surprising, but Cortázar is nothing if not contradictory. For Cortázar, jazz transcends music. He asks ‘¿podrá negarse, en este tiempo de aires existencialistas, que el hombre como tal tiene en el jazz uno de los caminos ciertos para ir a buscarse, acaso a encontrarse?’<sup>108</sup>

As mentioned, Cortázar views improvisation as a creation which is not subjected to a logical and pre-established discourse. He sees it as free from the restrictions of language and reason. Nicholas Roberts challenges Cortázar’s depiction of jazz as an authentic form of expression beyond language and explores key connections between Cortázar’s concept of

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<sup>105</sup> Carmen Ortiz, *Julio Cortázar: una estética de la búsqueda*. 48.

<sup>106</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 56.

<sup>107</sup> Maire, *El jazz en la obra de Cortázar*, 60.

<sup>108</sup> Julio Cortázar, ‘Elogio del jazz: carta enguantada a Daniel Devoto’ in: *Julio Cortázar. Obra crítica. Obras completas:6*. (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2006), 213.

jazz and Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty.<sup>109</sup> Roberts holds the view that what is salient in Cortázar's presentation of jazz is, akin to Artaud's statements on the theatre of cruelty, 'a systematic dismantling of each of the apparent divides found within both linguistic expression and musical composition and performance'.<sup>110</sup> As music avoids language's problems and divisions, Cortázar espouses the idea that jazz's improvisational characteristics free it from the restraints of discursive logic and language.<sup>111</sup>

Roberts explores the notion that jazz solos are ostensibly unrepeatable, and 'it is precisely in being non-iterable that jazz improvisation can claim to be beyond the structures of language, beyond the play of *différance* and, hence, make possible the sort of ontological and expressional leap with which Cortázar is concerned'.<sup>112</sup> The crucial question for Roberts is whether or not jazz solos are as unrepeatable as Cortázar suggests. As soon as jazz is performed, it is always already inscribed within representation, and once it is recorded, it may be repeated *ad infinitum*. Furthermore, as mentioned performers often draw from riffs or precomposed background lines adapted from other soloists.<sup>113</sup> Roberts demonstrates that it is impossible for jazz to escape iterability and representation. Nevertheless, although it may fall short of Cortázar's ideal, Roberts concedes:

For the power of jazz music, like the power of Cortázar's writing on it, does not lie in simplistic claims of success in attaining some sort of a beyond of representation, but in the constant search, the constant challenge to language, to music, and to such simplistic claims.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Nicholas Roberts, 'Subverted claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz'. *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (July 2009), 730-745. JSTOR. Web. 06 Dec. 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Roberts, 'Subverted claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz', 734.

<sup>111</sup> Roberts, 'Subverted claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz', 737.

<sup>112</sup> Roberts, 'Subverted claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz', 740.

<sup>113</sup> Roberts, 'Subverted claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz', 744.

<sup>114</sup> Roberts, 'Subverted claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz', 745.

It is the aim of this thesis not only to explore the esoteric paths trodden but also tentatively to posit music as a potential key to the quest for enlightenment within Cortázar's literary endeavour. Although Cortázar is not an esoteric writer *per se*; the esoteric is a pulse which permeates his work. I believe that it is important to highlight that any attempt to circumscribe Cortázar's literary kaleidoscope would prove asymptotic.<sup>115</sup> Scant attention has been paid to the occult generally and not simply the Fantastic within the Cortázarian literary cosmos, a lacuna which I aim to address. The present thesis is therefore only concerned with the discrete esoteric elements which permeate his works, as opposed to any political texts he has composed. The esoteric novels discussed are *Divertimento*, *El Examen* (and its companion *El Diario de Andrés Fava*), *Los Premios*, *Rayuela* and *62: Modelo para armar*. Viewed from an esoteric perspective Cortázar's final novel, *Libro de Manuel* is an anti-climax in light of the works which have preceded it. It is, in essence, an exoteric novel - a political blueprint. From an historical vantage point, it is arguable that a circle is completed with Andrés Fava of *El Examen*'s Buenos Aires from the 1940s becoming politically committed decades later in Paris in *Libro de Manuel*, although there is some debate as to whether it is the same Andrés Fava who reappears in *Libro de Manuel*. I believe that it is the same individual and that this continuity of character highlights the extent to which readings of later works enrich our reading of his earlier works, which were frequently published later in his life and even posthumously. With this anomaly in chronology we are forced to reassess the past from its relative future. As *Libro de Manuel* is a predominantly exoteric novel, it is touched upon but not analysed in any great depth for our purposes.

*Rayuela* is Cortázar's masterwork, the fulcrum around which his other novels radiate. It is in this context I have chosen to place considerable (one could argue incommensurate)

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<sup>115</sup> The temptation beckons to circumscribe Cortázar in one or other literary traditions such as Surrealism but the true genius of Cortázar is that he eschews such reductionist readings. For instance, Evelyn Picón Garfield's, *Es Julio Cortázar un surrealista?* (Michigan: Gredos, 1975) argues that he draws heavily from Surrealism but is not a Surrealist writer.

emphasis on supposedly less well-known novels such as *Divertimento*, *El Examen* and arguably, *62: Modelo para armar*. I believe that the novels which precede *Rayuela* reveal the germ of esoteric and musical threads and theories which suffuse *Rayuela* and enrich our appreciation thereof. The narrow focus of *62: Modelo para armar*, which was inspired by *Rayuela*, serves to underscore its progenitor's creativity and range. It is not my intention to accord less famous works greater attention than they would intrinsically merit, but I believe that it is crucial to appraise Cortázar's novelistic output overall to get a feel for his treatment of the esoteric and music therein. Relatively little has been written on his first novels, *Divertimento* and *El Examen*, which were not published until after his death.<sup>116</sup> Although published in Cortázar's lifetime, *62: Modelo para armar* has attracted sparse commentary from critics, partially because of its abstruseness and partially because of its profound divergence from *Rayuela*. I hope to redress this critical neglect somewhat in my study of these overlooked novels and demonstrate the extent to which his novels complement one another irrespective of differences.

In Chapter One I probe the oneiric labyrinth of *Divertimento* and *El Examen* as well as the astral plane of *Los Premios*. From the outset, the themes of spiritism, dreams and premonitory art bubble forth in his first novel, *Divertimento*. The plot of *Divertimento* relates the exploits of a group of friends which includes a surrealist artist called Renato. When Renato shows the group a painting of a house and two individuals he has begun, the group is not only intrigued but becomes fixated on finding its meaning. They solicit the help of a medium friend, Narciso, who holds a séance and brings them into contact with the mischievous ghost, Eufemia Quiroga. It later transpires that the house depicted in the picture belonged to Narciso, although the artist would have had no way of knowing this. Ironically in attempting to discern the significance of the work, the group becomes fractured. Prior to the

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<sup>116</sup> Here I am referring to extant novels. He had written a novel *Soliloquio* before *Divertimento* which he subsequently destroyed as discussed with Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 160.



unveiling of the finished painting, the group's mascot, their cat, dies suddenly. It appears as if a sacrifice is warranted before the epiphany. The painting is revealed to depict the writer, Jorge on the verge of slaying the artist, Renato with his sword. Following Renato's destruction of the painting, Jorge is sent the decapitated head of the cat, ostensibly as a souvenir.

Rituals and dreams are also inextricably interwoven in Cortázar's second novel, *El Examen*, which follows the main characters through the tumultuous streets of Buenos Aires in the twenty-four hours preceding their final University examination. A sanctuary which boasts a relic, a concert-hall where violence erupts and the disintegrating university form the backdrop of the students' journey throughout the hostile city. Do these events actually unfold as portrayed or are they part of a character's nightmare? The question arises as to whether *El Examen* actually predicted the social reality of 1950s Argentina? No definitive answer is forthcoming. Indeed, this lack of resolution is what defines Cortázar's novels *ab initio* and evokes Borges's definition of the aesthetic act as 'la inminencia de una revelación, que no se produce'.<sup>117</sup> *El Examen* (like all of Cortázar's novels) exudes the imminence of a revelation which never materializes, a potential which both excruciates and thrills us.

From the nightmare of *El Examen* we proceed to a lottery and a cruise in *Los Premios*. Leaving Buenos Aires for an indeterminate period of time, *Los Premios* takes place onboard a mysterious ship. The narrative is depicted as a metaphysical voyage from the perspective of a medium named Persio who has devoted himself to studying medieval philosophy, Hinduism and alchemy at length. Alongside a kaleidoscope of passengers randomly selected via a state-run raffle, Persio attempts to give meaning to the voyage. Curiosity is stoked when the passengers are impeded from accessing the stern, under the pretext that typhus has broken

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<sup>117</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *Otras Inquisiciones* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1960), 12.

out. While engaged in lucid dreaming, Persio tries to perceive the inaudible music played by Picasso's painting of a guitar in order to gain a panoramic view of the unfolding events. A co-passenger named Medrano fights his way onto the stern in order to radio help for a sick child, and is shot on the spot by one of the crew members. Medrano's heroic sacrifice is in vain as the child subsequently recovers without further assistance and the revelation that the stern was empty is a secret he takes to the grave. The emptiness of the forbidden stern is an allegory for the enigma of what happens beyond.

Following the voyages of self-discovery of Chapter One a game of metaphysical hopscotch begins in Chapter Two. Here Cortázar's probe of the esoteric reaches a crescendo in his novel *sui generis*, *Rayuela*. Denoted by Salman Rushdie as 'fiendishly esoteric'<sup>118</sup> *Rayuela* embraces a vertiginous gamut of occult themes, ranging from the spiritual and magical to the scientific. The text combines a curious blend of faith systems such as Buddhism, Egyptian Mysticism, Kabbalah and Theosophy. These are interwoven with magical miscellany such as Alchemy in addition to scientific theories pertinent to microbiology, Particle Physics, Quantum Theory and Neuroscience. The text presupposes an endless quest for meaning. The protagonist, Horacio strives not only for enlightenment but also longs to create a new more authentic reality. Horacio seeks an elusive centre, the core of true reality and most of all love. The hopscotch depicted is a game where Buenos Aires symbolizes earth whilst Paris represents the paradise to which the protagonist aspires. The *satori* or sudden enlightenment of Buddhism is pursued throughout. To understand life, it is useful to understand death. To this end, reference is made to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, where the deceased is confronted with his or her deeds post-mortem in the form of *Karma*, and the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, supposedly written by the Egyptian god, Thoth, where one's actions determine one's fate in the afterlife. *Rayuela* pays particular attention to the

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<sup>118</sup> Salman Rushdie, *The Jaguar Smile: a Nicaraguan Journey* (London: Vintage edition, 2000), 79.

incantatory force of language via Kabbalah and Thoth. *Rayuela* explores the magical art of alchemy, also associated with the worship of Thoth, which sought the creation of a panacea of life and symbolized the evolution of a flawed, temporary state to a permanent, ideal state. Theosophy, which synthesises Eastern and Western occultism with magic and science and strove to accentuate the links between Alchemy and particle physics, also features in the novel. *Rayuela* uses science to burrow into the veiled reality obscured by our own and to understand fundamental questions such as our evolution in order to gauge our future. The text describes humanity as an amoeba trying to stretch itself, unable to transcend the limitations of its primitive mind. *Rayuela* traces the evolution of the simplest life-form, the amoeba, to the most complex, the human being. The new sciences evoke spiritual traditions such as Buddhism once the concepts of energy and quantum theory are explored. Everything is in flux, solidity is an illusion and quantum theory's indeterminacy principle reveals that the quantum mechanical properties of any object are unknown and unknowable. The beauty of the esoteric, the unknown and unknowable in other words, is that it can never be truly exhausted.

In *62: Modelo para armar*, the wealth and depth of esoteric themes embodied by *Rayuela* wanes somewhat, but does not vanish entirely. In chapter 62 of *Rayuela*, the fictitious author, Morelli had posited a novel inspired by the chemistry of the human brain: *62: Modelo para armar*. This literary brain-child uses Neuroscience to experiment with a human cast of characters, depicted as puppet-like entities controlled subconsciously by hidden forces. The mental processes which make us human are dissected. Memory is depicted as destroying the past and representing a parallel reality, perception is appraised from a myriad of angles along with its wealth of associations. One of the characters creates a new reality by mentally fusing a constellation of miscellaneous objects. The leitmotif of psychic vampirism is not only used as a metaphor for the cognitive process; it is also the

catalyst for the murder of one of the principal characters. Parallel realities abound in the form of the astral plane and the virtual reality of the *Ciudad* where the characters congregate at will. Dreams and reality blur and become indistinguishable throughout.

As mentioned, I will take a look at all of Cortázar's novels, irrespective of whether they depict music or the arcane. Clearly the absence of the esoteric in Cortázar's final novel, *Libro de Manuel* means that it will not be dealt with at the same level of detail as his prior novels. *Libro de Manuel* is by design an exoteric work and was explicitly written to be understood by the general public for political purposes. Set in Paris in the early 1970s, the text resembles a scrapbook as it includes newspaper clippings detailing human rights abuses and atrocities in Latin America. *Libro de Manuel* tells the story of a group of revolutionaries ('La Joda') which holds a diplomat hostage, in an attempt to secure the release of political prisoners.

The protagonist of the text is the Argentine emigré, Andrés, who is accompanied by an array of colourful characters, including his two mistresses, Francine and Ludmilla, his Jewish compatriot, Lonstein, active revolutionaries such as Marcos, Susana and Patricio, who are parents of baby Manuel, for whom the book was supposedly compiled. The text traces Andrés's radicalization as initially he is an intellectual who does not wish to play an active role in the revolutionary group. His political metamorphosis begins when he dreams of being in a cinema where a Cuban entrusts him with a mission he cannot recall upon awaking.<sup>119</sup> Andrés intuits that fulfilling this enigmatic mission will complete him in some way, but has no idea of the details. Following the abduction of the diplomat Andrés follows his mistress and her new lover, Marcos to the safe house and in effect joins 'La Joda'. When the security forces attack, Andrés recognizes the scenario as all part of the aforementioned

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<sup>119</sup> As Standish indicates in *Understanding Julio Cortázar* (25) the modern-day Andrés Fava has a dream which Cortázar himself had experienced, a dream which features a Cuban and a mysterious mission.

dream (*Libro de Manuel* 352). The authorities open fire and Marcos is believed to be martyred.

Music and its absence play a pivotal role in many but not all of these novels. In *Divertimento*, music reflects the thoughts and emotions of the characters, and is afforded a very superficial treatment. By sharp contrast, in *El Examen* music provides a soundtrack to the carnivalesque and nightmarish atmosphere which permeates the narrative, boasting a variety of musical genres from folklore to classical, specifically Bach and Beethoven. With regard to *Libro de Manuel* modern classical music is accorded prominence, particularly in the context of its revolutionary role. Music is more of an abstraction in *Los Premios*, as the guitar drawn by Picasso represents the music of the spheres. The tango at the beginning of the adventure underscores the vibrancy and *Weltanschauung* of some of the passengers, contrasted with the closed narrow-mindedness nature of others. *Rayuela* is the zenith of his musical endeavour, interweaving classical music and jazz within critical episodes of the narrative, in effect performing a 'jazz opera' which is followed by a classical music farce prior to terminating in a deathly silence. In *62: Modelo para armar*, the dearth of music is appropriate to his original intention of eschewing the litany of references to literature and music which had hallmarked *Rayuela*. This lacuna underscores the notion that *62: Modelo para armar* is by no means a sequel to the whirlwind of *Rayuela*, and the lack of music certainly underscores the clinical detachment of this novel. As shall become apparent, a constant dialectic between music and visual art suffuses Cortázar's novelistic enterprise overall. In *Divertimento*, Renato's painting dominates, whilst music fades into the background. Conversely music, not art, preponderates in *El Examen*. In *Los Premios* music is rendered an abstraction, contrasting with the privileged role of a Picasso painting. Art and music jostle for supremacy in *Rayuela* with music becoming the dominant force. Strikingly, in *62: Modelo para armar*, music is once again silenced by abstract art which plays a pivotal

role in a concatenation of tragic events. Music is used for political ends in *Libro de Manuel*, whilst art does not command our attention.

At variance with his novels which reflect the epoch and *Zeitgeist* in which they were written, Cortázar's short stories are timeless. Diverging somewhat from the novel which is an open form, the short story is circumscribed by its limits, both of time and of space. Cortázar counterpoints the short story with the novel by comparing each with a photograph and a movie respectively.<sup>120</sup> Cortázar maintains that both the photograph and the short story writer act as an 'aperture' to that which transcends itself. As alluded to, time, reincarnation and spiritual possession all represent divergent facets of the self and enrich our view thereof. Moreover, time and reincarnation are inextricably intertwined in the hypothesis of the 'eternal return', just as reincarnation suggests a successive, rather than parallel, form of spiritual possession. Music also assumes a privileged position in a number of Cortázar's short stories. I counterpoint both musical and non-musical short stories, which touch on one of the trinity of motifs of time, reincarnation and spiritual possession.

Chapter Three begins by examining the enigmas of time and time travel in a number of stories, from the vampiric wristwatch of 'Instrucciones-Ejemplos Sobre La Forma De Tener Miedo' to the time travelling mirrors of 'La conducta de los Espejos en la Isla de Pascua'. Traversing distinctive historical eras defines 'La Noche Boca Arriba', where man enters 'sacred time', not to mention 'El Otro Cielo' where distraction affords the protagonist a portal to another century. An attempt to rectify the mistake of man-made time is adumbrated in 'El Perseguidor' where jazz encapsulates immortality and timelessness for Johnny Carter. Indeed jazz allows not only the musician to speed up and slow down time, but also opens up a conduit to time travel, the concept of stopping time and journeying within the

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<sup>120</sup> He says, 'en la medida en que una película es en principio un "orden abierto", novelesco, mientras que una fotografía lograda presupone una ceñida limitación previa' in 'Algunos aspectos del cuento' (Originally published in *Diez años de la revista "Casa de las Américas"*, nº 60, julio 1970, La Habana) reproduced online at [www.literatura.us](http://www.literatura.us)

moment. It is noteworthy that the hypotheses expounded on time by the novels' characters are quite extensive, despite an inability to manipulate time, at variance with their short story counterparts.

From the enigma of time, I attempt to appraise reincarnation by contrasting it with its complement, resurrection. 'Una Flor Amarilla' conjectures that we are all reincarnated once we die and highlights the plight of the only man to discover, and attempt to change, this inevitability. The extra-terrestrial transmigration of Christ is posited in 'De la Simetría Interplanetaria' while the rebirth of character configurations distinguishes 'Todos Los Fuegos, El Fuego'. The classical music of Bach and Gesualdo play a pivotal role in Cortázar's depiction of reincarnation in 'Clone'. The music contains hidden codes and exerts subtle manipulation. Music provokes the characters to re-enact a tragedy from centuries before and leads us to believe that they have been reborn through music as instruments. In 'Las Puertas del Cielo' Marcelo recounts the death of his friend the dancer, Celina. We are led to believe that she has been fleetingly resurrected prior to being assumed into the all-encompassing embrace of her tango. In 'Spiritual Possession' 'Lejana' is the quintessential tale of bidirectional possession. Man is usurped by salamander in 'Axolotl' while a malign primeval spirit invades the characters of 'El ídolo de las Cícladas' via the medium of a statuette. Music is portrayed as possessor in 'Las Ménades', where the ambience of the concert hall and the selection of music comprising Mendelssohn's 'A Midsummer's Night's Dream', Strauss's 'Don Juan', Debussy's 'La Mer' and Beethoven's 'Fifth Symphony' induces the audience to devour their conductor at the Teatro de Colón orchestra. In 'Manuscrito hallado junto a una mano' the narrator experiments with his ability to sabotage music psychokinetically. He discovers that he can psychically affect non-musical objects as long as there is a parallel between a string instrument such as a violin and the selected object, calling to mind Henry Cornelius Agrippa's conjecture that the universe is articulated by a

lattice of ‘occulted’ correspondences.<sup>121</sup> Ironically, music proves to be his nemesis as his unique telepathic gift causes his own death. Once again, like a god, Music creates and destroys at will.

In conclusion, just as Cortázar’s short stories draw sharp focus on music both in terms of performance and as an abstraction, they also chart variegated patterns of the supernatural. Music is just one potential key to the esoteric. The rich suggestiveness of Cortázar’s portrayal of the arcane is inexhaustible. If we compare and contrast Cortázar’s prose, it becomes apparent that time, reincarnation and spiritual possession permeate not just his shorter fiction, but various elements of his novelistic output. Viewed as a whole, his novels and short stories provide us with different angles of the same *figuras* or patterns. For instance, time outside of time embodied by both dreams and ‘carnival’ in *Divertimento* and *El Examen*, reincarnation in the figure of Andrés Fava, spiritual possession involving both a ghost and a vampire in *Divertimento* and *62: Modelo para armar* respectively are variations on the themes expounded in the short stories. Conversely, even if the short stories refrain from explicitly mentioning spiritual, scientific and magical traditions as the novels do, their influence is no less palpable. A relentless, voracious questioning of the enigmas of life is without doubt a hallmark of Cortázar’s prose. The germs of this tantalizing quest are salient from his initial literary offerings, as we shall now see in Chapter One, where the quintessential arcane tropes of dreams, death and destiny are explored and exploited in *Divertimento*, *El Examen*, *El Diario de Andrés Fava* and *Los Premios*.

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<sup>121</sup> Godwin, *Music and the occult*, 3.



## Chapter One - *Divertimento, El Examen and Los Premios*

‘All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream’ Edgar Allen Poe

It is the aim of this chapter to survey Cortázar’s early novels prior to *Rayuela*. These works, *Divertimento*, *El Examen*, *El Diario de Andrés Fava* and *Los Premios* are all based in and around Argentina, even though Cortázar himself was living in Paris by the time that he wrote *Los Premios*. A salient feature throughout these texts is a fixation with the role of art, be it visual or musical. The concept of seeing, both physically and metaphysically, consumes many of the characters where they attempt to view objects and phenomena from all sides simultaneously. Indeed, the act of vision is presented as an artistic feat as it creates the work. Art serves as a portal to another dimension. Paintings, both Surrealist and Cubist, metamorphose into premonitory channels in *Divertimento* and *Los Premios*. With frequency the artist’s process of prognostication and creation precedes destruction. Moreover, the novels discussed delve into the musical undercurrents of literature and even time and nightmares are appraised in terms of music. Whilst music, specifically blues, simply represents an emotionally charged experience in *Divertimento*, classical music is juxtaposed with the vibrancy of tango, the crucible of cultures which features in *El Examen* and *Los Premios*. Music is imbued with metaphysical dimensions when it is depicted as both a sentient being and a form of life in an alternate universe. As mentioned, the novels discussed in this chapter are characterized by recurrent elements of dreams, death, destiny and rituals, all of which aim to reveal the unknowable reality beyond what is perceived by human consciousness. These texts represent a quest of sorts, from the meaning of a painting and the significance of an exam to the interpretation of both a cruise and a picture. In each instance the search precedes an epiphany and is conducive to sacrifice and death.

## *Divertimento*

A curious blend of Spiritualism and Surrealism is intertwined throughout Cortázar's first novel, *Divertimento* where fine art represents a vehicle for exploring the future and the depths of the human psyche. The narrative is percolated through the eyes of Insecto, one of a group of friends who congregates in the atelier of the surrealist artist, Renato. The group represents a paradigm for the constellations of friends which prevail in novels such as *El Examen* and *Rayuela* where we usually encounter an artist, a writer or both. Renato's atelier 'Vive como Puedas' becomes synonymous with the group which comprises Insecto, a writer, and two sets of siblings: Renato and his sister, Susana, as well as Jorge Nuri, a Surrealist poet and his sister, Marta.

Susana supports Renato in his artistic endeavours by taking care of mundane domestic tasks, allowing him to concentrate on his artistic output.<sup>122</sup> The poet, Jorge emphasises automatic writing as the main route toward a higher reality, a form of writing which drew inspiration from the practice of mediums who claimed to have been directed by dead spirits or the subconscious of the living. Jorge dictates automatic writing which Marta faithfully transcribes, but we later learn that Jorge's purportedly extemporized output is predominantly rehearsed and regurgitated accordingly. By contrast to Jorge's contrived compositions, Renato's unsettling painting, which he ordains his 'nightmare', is spontaneous and epitomizes the potency of the dream. The picture, coupled with endeavours to unearth its masked significance, provides an impetus for much of the action within the text, a quest which uncovers a subterranean landscape of both a psychological and parapsychological nature.

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<sup>122</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Divertimento* (Buenos Aires: Suma de Letras, 2004 ), 57. All further textual references to the novel are to this edition.

Although ostensibly a poet, the narrator Insecto straddles both the visual and the literary by attempting to perceive the world through the eyes of an artist. Whilst distractedly gazing out at a field a number of blocks away, his vision filtered through a striped canvas awning, Insecto beholds a herd of cows grazing in the sunshine: ‘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’ (12). The bovine constellation piques Marta’s curiosity also. She highlights the optical illusion that sixteen full-size cows can appear to fit into such a miniscule space, similar to the illusion that a pointed finger can obscure the sun in the sky.

Insecto suggests that Renato should paint this magical scene of ‘dieciséis vacas celebrando el nacimiento de Venus en un amanecer tórrido’ (13). Painting a realistic scene would only be palatable to Renato if framed by an abstract title. This dialogue prompts them to discuss Renato’s current work. The picture which remains unseen by Insecto is deemed by Marta to be photographic. Insecto aptly contends that it may be photographic: ‘fotográfico a la manera marciana o a través del ojo facetado de una mosca. Imaginate fotografiar la realidad a través de un ojo de mosca’ (13). A fly’s eye is unusual for a number of reasons, both in its appearance and the way it works. Flies have compound eyes and perceive images through the numerous individual photoreceptor units which are located on a convex surface and point in slightly different directions.<sup>123</sup> They can thus view a wider panorama than other simpler eyes. Photographing reality through the eye of a fly would imply seeing almost everything simultaneously. Flies observe events unfolding in slow motion, which allows them to escape being swatted by a human being. Where a person would see a glass smash into smithereens in a split second, a fly would perceive the destruction unfold, frame by frame. Here we see a painting executed in a form of slow motion over a number of weeks, as

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<sup>123</sup> Panagiotis A. Tsonis, *Animal models in eye research* (Academic Press, 2008), 36.

details unfurl when they are dictated by a nightmare, a séance and an exorcism. Given that what seems like a millisecond to a human being lasts a considerable period for a fly, if a person could stretch time like this, a finite lifetime may resemble an eternity, as we shall learn with 'El Perseguidor'.

Insecto is curious about Renato's new painting which perturbs Marta. An unconcerned Renato simply focusses on Marta's psychic abilities: 'más bien parece inquietarse pero ella misma no encuentra explicación. No sé si sabés que Marta es una buena médium' (21). Marta had been trained by Narciso, a medium who held séances with the V4 group, a group which recited Surrealist poetry. Renato claims to experience an epiphany regarding the painting and its origin: 'en este momento me doy cuenta de que Narciso tiene algo que ver con el cuadro' (22). When Renato eventually shows Insecto his work in progress, Insecto feels that the picture conjures up a sense of oneiric solitude. The composition consists of two mysterious figures and a house at dawn. Outside the door, the first figure wields a sword which he points towards the second figure inside the house, a 'victim' which reminds Insecto of 'the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher'. Clearly there is the subtext of the two Usher siblings echoing both Renato and his sister, Susana, if not Jorge and his sister, Marta. Moreover, with his allusion to Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Insecto encapsulates the essence of the horror story - ominous loneliness, apprehension and a deep feeling of uneasiness.

Our attention is riveted by the sword held by one of the individuals in the picture: 'la figura producía una impresión penetrantemente femenina, sin que pudiera precisarse por qué' (34). Perhaps the clothing which the character dons produces a spectral, ethereal effect: 'Al igual que la otra, estaba envuelta en una vestidura de pliegues colgantes que ocultaba enteramente el cuerpo y se prolongaba por el suelo como una pequeña sombra plástica' (34). Physical features of the characters are insinuated with broad brush strokes rather than

concretized. The victim appears to be devoured by the house: 'La figura de la víctima –uno pensaba en seguida que era la víctima–aparecía como devorada por la mole de la casa' (31). Insecto suspects that once the door is completed, the first figure will be able to enter to execute the awful deed. Tellingly, the only completed component was the overhead cloud, 'una sola nube fija y recortada como un ojo anatómico' (33). Eerily this all-seeing eye surveys them as they survey it. As mentioned, Insecto feels that the painting perfectly conjures up the notion of a nightmare: 'Tal vez si pudiera fotografiarse una pesadilla se lograría alguna escena con esta fijeza' (35).

Renato, however, is dissatisfied with the embankment in the painting. He imputes metaphysical attributes to it, insisting that it maintain contact with the shadow as the picture communicates with 'the other side' through it. He longs for it to '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' (38). The other side evokes the notion of life after death as well as the Other of reality, a parallel dimension beyond our ken. Under 'interrogation', Renato reveals that he does not know what Narciso's connection with the painting is as he holds that it was Marta who had forged the link. Disconcerted, Marta claims that even when he had painted just three lines of the work she had sensed an aura from it, one that contaminates Renato: 'tú estás saturado de una cosa impura que lo hace como una niebla' (39).

In a bid to ascertain the rationale behind the painting, they are persuaded by Insecto to invite Narciso, the astrologer and 'mago' for a séance. A very subtle power struggle surfaces within the group as Insecto feels that the group believed itself to be exclusive. Having spotted a ouija board at his friends' house, he decides to add a surprise element to the evening by inviting them along to the séance, without first consulting Renato. These friends, Laura and Moña are given charge of the ouija board at the séance. Before the séance commences,

Susana confides in Insecto that her brother has simply fleshed out details to the inanimate elements of the painting, as if he is afraid to complete the two human figures therein. The air sizzles with tension as they await the session. Windows are shut tight, rendering the atmosphere stifling and infernal. The lights are lowered to facilitate communication with the other side. For Insecto, once the lights are dimmed, everything appears clearer than before. Prompted by Marta's questioning as to the identity of the spirit, the name 'Facundo' is spelt out followed by the word 'espada'. 'Facundo' is taken to mean Juan Facundo Quiroga, as shall be discussed in greater detail. The dry, mechanical sounding voice of a woman emanates from beside Marta, a voice bemoaning Facundo's death. The voice is presumed to be that of Facundo's wife, Eufemia. Insecto believes that he glimpsed a form beside Marta, just for a split second, similar to one of his nightmares, but is unsure. At this point, the reader is naturally dubious as to the authenticity of the spirit. Seeds of doubt are subtly sown. When Narciso interjects that Santos Pérez had killed Facundo, Eufemia laughs maniacally and screams '¡Lo mató Marta!' (67). Narciso asks to whom she is referring, but Jorge abruptly terminates the séance by switching on the light, infuriating Narciso in the process.

The choice of the name of Facundo is striking. The Argentine, Juan Facundo Quiroga (1788 – February 16, 1835) was both man and myth, a *caudillo* with a colourful reputation. In his youth he is reported to have slain a cougar, earning him the moniker 'El Tigre de los Llanos'. He became immortalized by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in 1845 when he wrote *Facundo*, where Sarmiento juxtaposes Facundo's alleged Barbarism with his own supposedly 'civilized' predilection for a European education and way of life. Eufemia's accusation, 'Lo mató Marta' is as enigmatic as it is troubling. The 'lo' in question could indicate a person or a thing. If we take it to mean an object, perhaps Marta's insistence on solving the riddle of the painting is conducive to the dissolution of the group and may influence the untimely demise of the cat. Furthermore, as Marta acts as a medium for Jorge this may mean that Jorge,

through Marta's interference, liquidates Renato in his painting by destroying the group known as 'Vive como puedas'. Alternatively, if 'lo' alludes to Facundo, Eufemia could be indicating that Marta has destroyed Facundo's apparition by channelling Eufemia. One reason that it is Eufemia and not Facundo who speaks is that, owing to his gunshot wound, 'Facundo tiene la cara rota' (66). The possibility cannot be discounted that Eufemia is causing mischief with this preposterous and unfounded accusation that Marta has killed Facundo. Marta later feels that she is being manipulated by Eufemia, which would substantiate this theory. In effect, once all of the cards are laid on the table, we learn that Marta was a 'trick card', a diversion or distraction to which the novel's title alludes. After the séance has concluded, Susana expresses relief that Renato can at last finish the picture. Susana may have feared that she was the intended victim in the painting, echoing Madeleine's fate in *The Fall of the House of Usher*. She too is a false trail, intimated by Insecto in his allusion to Poe's text.

Following the séance Marta and Insecto trawl the streets of Buenos Aires in a bid to find the house featured in the picture. They are stunned to learn that said house was a rental property owned by Narciso. Later Insecto unsuccessfully attempts to draw a line under the whole fiasco by 'exorcising' Narciso and his ghosts from their lives. When Insecto goes to confront Narciso at his apartment about the séance, he sees the ghost of Eufemia. Up until this juncture, the reader has suspected that Eufemia was either an act of ventriloquism or a hoax. Abruptly, this illusion is dispelled, with Insecto's vision of Eufemia unravelling knots in a piece of string. With regard to this image of a weaver, Peter Standish underlines the idea 'that a powerful weaver of destinies is at work ... She (for often the weaver is a female figure) is frequently invoked as a metaphysical force ... In *Divertimento* ... Cortázar again dwells on

the image of the *ovillo*, the skein'.<sup>124</sup> Narciso refers to Eufemia thus: 'Está con su ovillo ... Es un ovillo lleno de nudos, que lleva consigo y trata de desanudar. Le da mucho trabajo, y avanza de a poco' (116). It is worth noting that this vision of Eufemia echoes our first glimpse of Laura who, while unravelling a thread in order to rewind it into a ball, encounters resistance: 'Globo terrestre ovillo, ahora ves mares, continentes, una flora ahí dentro, y no te vale tirar porque resiste, tires de los paralelos, tires de los meridianos' (42). A knot is thread biting itself, swallowing up or cannibalizing itself. Laura views this woollen ball as a translucent universe: 'En los ovillos que no son nada, su propia materia girando y girando inmóvil, universo translúcido en la mano, copa de árbol de lana con cosas adentro que enganchan los hilos' (43). Unable to untie the knot Laura impatiently cuts the thread, and thus resembles Atropos, the inflexible Fate who is also said to sever the thread that she and her sisters wove. Not only did Laura long to cut the metaphorical umbilical cord which her family wielded over her, but she also cut the ties that bound the 'Vive como Puedas' ensemble by enticing Jorge away. Equally it could be argued that Eufemia guides their Fate in unexpected ways. Marta believes in her power to determine their destiny, as Insecto discovers. He asks, '¿Te parece que Eufemia hará algo más que predecir una cosa? ... Eso sería conferirle una actividad, una fuerza sobre vos que me resulta inconcebible' (76). Marta looks at Insecto, 'con la cara de Jorge en los trances' and declares: 'Todo el que profetiza está ya actuando sobre la cosa' (76). Eufemia does exert influence on the group, far more than any of the friends would care to admit.

As mentioned, Insecto had visited Narciso to demand that he put an end to the whole affair but is shocked when Narciso retorts that Eufemia will not be willing to do so. Terror grasps Insecto, and he assaults both Narciso and Eufemia. Curiously, when he kicks Eufemia he expects his foot to glide through the air, but he feels as if the ghost is solid: 'A mí me

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<sup>124</sup> Peter Standish, *Understanding Julio Cortázar* ( Univ of South Carolina Press, 2001 ), 18.



parece que el zapato pegó realmente en un plexo solar. Eufemia se dobló en dos y bloqueó varias veces, balbuceando incoherencias' (118). A remorseful yet chastened Insecto starts to appease Narciso. When he turns around he sees Eufemia who blends with the folds in the sofa. These folds are akin to the spectral pleats which featured in the clothing of Renato's painting. What do they represent? In 'The Doors of Perception', Huxley muses on pleats and the 'luxuriant development of drapery as a major theme'.<sup>125</sup> These non-representational forms, 'very often they set the tone of the whole work of art ... they express the mood, the temperament, the attitude to life of the artist. Stoical serenity reveals itself in the smooth surfaces'.<sup>126</sup> They contrast with 'a silken wilderness of countless tiny pleats and wrinkles, with an incessant modulation - inner uncertainty'.<sup>127</sup> It is plausible that the aforementioned 'inner uncertainty' is depicted by the folds of the textiles in both the painting and the apparition of Eufemia. A smooth surface would represent clarity, which is the polar opposite to the opacity of both the nightmare and the ghost.

An agitated Insecto tells the group about his encounter with Narciso, but fails to mention the phantasmal presence of Eufemia. Renato laughs and says that he has painted what he should have painted, and was not crazy as he had feared: 'Creí de veras que me había vuelto loco, pero estaba pintando la verdad. Vos acabás de liquidar el resto, lo incomprendible' (128). At this juncture, the cat, Thibaud Piazzini dies for no apparent reason and each deals with the shock in his or her own way. Jorge looks on taciturnly while Renato 'argumentaba, con gestos exagerados la previsión en Paolo Ucello' (130). The artist, Uccello was renowned for his work on perspective and his obsession with the 'vanishing point',<sup>128</sup> - a vanishing point which fades into the future. Uccello's groundbreaking work on three-

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<sup>125</sup> Aldous Huxley, Robert S. Baker, James Sexton, *Complete Essays: 1939-1956* (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 2002), 167-8.

<sup>126</sup> Huxley, Baker, Sexton, *Complete Essays: 1939-1956*, 168.

<sup>127</sup> Huxley, Baker, Sexton, *Complete Essays: 1939-1956*, 168.

<sup>128</sup> Generally the point beyond which something disappears or ceases to exist but here it denotes the appearance of a point on the horizon at which parallel lines converge.

dimensional perspective signalled a revolutionary mode of portraying the world, literally by aggregating another dimension, rendering the image more veridical. As we shall see in *Los Premios*, this augmentation of dimensions foreshadowed works by Picasso and Marcel Duchamp. It is as if Renato translates Thibaud Piazzini's death into an act with artistic undercurrents – a new dimension has been opened up to the group.

Following a brief interval, Laura arrives and lures Jorge away from his possessive friends, essentially fracturing the group. Insecto suggests to Renato, '¿Qué te parece si hacemos juntos la vela de armas?' (141) which is in other words a vigil of arms for the defunct cat. Traditionally, this 'vigil of arms' was a peculiar condition required for entry into knighthood. It consisted of keeping a long silent watch in some gloomy spot, preferably a haunted one.<sup>129</sup> After Insecto has laid out the feline cadaver, Renato reveals the finished painting to him. In it the identity of the individuals becomes clear. Renato is the secondary figure or victim, while Jorge is in the foreground, brandishing a sword (a sword which Insecto says could be called Laura). Jorge through his union with Laura has fractured the integrity of the group.

As dawn breaks Renato destroys the painting. In a macabre gesture, Insecto later goes to Jorge's house, where he leaves him a package containing Thibaud Piazzini's head as a souvenir of 'Vive Como Puedas'. The reason for this decapitation is unclear. On one level, it evokes Facundo Quiroga's notoriety for killing a wildcat or tiger in his youth. On another level, it may be revenge for what he perceives to be betrayal. Perhaps he feels that this sacrifice consecrates the group in a bizarre manner or even that is he creating a form of art.<sup>130</sup>

Tantalizingly in *Divertimento* the *dénouement* poses more questions than it answers. The

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<sup>129</sup> Bill Nye, *Bill Nye's History of England: From the Druids to the Reign of Henry* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2005), 103.

<sup>130</sup> It also evokes the writer and philosopher, Georges Bataille who, obsessed with sacrifice, founded a secret society, *Acéphale*, the symbol of which was a beheaded man.

original mystery revolved around the content of the painting: what did the painting signify and who were the two characters portrayed therein? One question which arises is: are these valid questions? As a piece of abstract art, should it represent someone or something tangible as a classical portrait would? There is no onus on the artist to create something which the observer must construe in a pre-ordained way. Nevertheless, Renato feels impelled to provide clues as to the springboard which inspired the picture. Provisionally Renato entitles the painting 'Pesadilla' or 'nightmare' and explicates:

El título no es importante pero un cuadro surrealista necesita del título como explicación del trampolín que lo puso en marcha. Lo malo es que del trampolín no tengo sino una idea muy vaga, una mezcla de recuerdos, un despertar a medianoche con un miedo atroz, una especie de presentimiento del futuro (21).

Renato is oblivious to the inspiration of the painting but intuits that it represents a premonition which originated in a nightmare.

The distinctions between dreams and art blur and fuse, as the oneiric realm appears to be propitious for inspiration. Insecto surmises that, if we could photograph a nightmare, the result would resemble Renato's composition. For Insecto, it is the picture's ephemeral or 'snapshot' nature which renders it oneiric: 'en el sueño la cosa es distinta; vos ves las cosas así, pero las ves un sólo instante, sin fijación; apenas un *augenblick* [sic], piensa en la etimología de la palabra' (35). In German the term 'Augenblick' means 'moment', but its composite parts mean 'eye' 'view', i.e. what we see in the blink of an eye determines the temporal interval. Insecto juxtaposes Tanguy's dreamlike works with his own dreams: 'Algunos cuadros de Tanguy son lo más cercano a los paisajes de mis sueños; pero tendría que verlos un instante, entre un encender y apagar de linterna; si dura más la cosa se concreta, se proyecta, salta de este lado' (35-36). Their elusiveness forces these images to stay on the side of dreams; if he were able to capture them permanently, they would be projected onto the reality of his waking hours.

Did the painting foreshadow or occasion the dissolution of the group? Was it a self-fulfilling prophecy? It could be argued that it represented a subconscious acknowledgement on the part of Renato that their halcyon days as a united ensemble were numbered, as Jorge's sense of *ennui* became increasingly evident. This in itself does not explain the prominence of Narciso's rental house in the painting, a house which Renato had never seen. If he had somehow dreamt a vision of the future, does that mean that the future was set in stone, or did he cause this unfolding of events through his dreams? Was he a 'seer' in the preternatural sense? It is quite possible that Renato's artistic sensitivity has opened up channels to the Other for him. Perchance there is a hidden link between artistic creativity and clairvoyance. By unearthing the powers of the subconscious mind, we may uncover elements which normally linger beyond the grasp of consciousness. Just as the poet is a magician, the artist is a seer. The phantasmal and phantasmagorical have become one. By adding new dimensions to reality as Uccello and Picasso before him have done, the artist allows the future to bleed through.

Music does not assume a prominent position in this novel and simply serves to echo and at times intensify their emotions. They all love listening to and empathize with Lena Horne singing, 'I gotta right to sing the blues- I gotta right to mourn and cry' (29). Insecto reveals his hidden feelings for Susana when he sings, 'Sweet Sue, just you'. Prior to meeting Jorge, Laura had felt straitjacketed by her existence and yearns to leave, to be free. Her thoughts merge with Ethel Waters singing:

So you're goin! To leave the old home, Jim,  
To-day you're goin' away,  
You're goin' among the city folks to dwell ... ! (47)

As well as being mawkishly sentimental, the lyrics reflect Laura's craving for adventure. She is certainly stimulated by Jorge, who himself was quite musical.<sup>131</sup> When Laura sings

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<sup>131</sup> Narciso had urged Jorge to learn to play Alexander Scriabin, the innovative Russian Symbolist composer with a

‘Estrellita’<sup>132</sup> it somehow becomes bound up with her love for Jorge: ‘Laura cantaba “Estrellita” y estaba enamorada de Jorge’ (82). Laura’s rendition of the song Estrellita has a particularly strong resonance for Jorge as it makes him feel like a child again, ‘Nunca he podido oírle “Estrellita” a Laura sin sentir deseos de llorar, de ser pequeño, de estar desnudo en mi cama ...’ (81).

Music may mirror their emotions but it does not dictate their actions. In essence, music fades into the background while Renato’s painting takes centre stage. The quest to both understand and complete the work conjures up the historical ghosts of the Argentine leader, Facundo Quiroga and his wife, Eufemia. It acts as a catalyst for a chain of events which leads to the dissolution of the ensemble. The artist’s act of prognostication and creation precedes, if not provokes, destruction. We shall see that Cortázar’s following novel, *El Examen*, is unwittingly a chronicle of the death foretold of another leader’s wife, Eva Perón.<sup>133</sup> Akin to *Divertimento*, *El Examen* hinges on a nightmare, one which is not an ephemeral snapshot, rather a protracted nightmarish reality from which the core constellation of friends strives to escape.

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predilection for theosophy, in keeping with Narciso’s own proclivities, but Jorge prefers to play Beethoven, badly according to Insecto.

<sup>132</sup> Composed in 1912 by the Mexican musician, Manuel Ponce.

<sup>133</sup> In the Preface to *El Examen*, Cortázar writes that his friends ‘habían creído ver en ciertos episodios una premonición de acontecimientos que ilustraron nuestros anales en 1952 y 53. No me sentí feliz por haber acertado a esas quinielas necrológicas y edilicias.’ Cortázar, *El Examen* (Buenos Aires: Suma de Letras, 2004), 9.

## *El Examen*

‘Un ritual no se inventa ... – o se lo recuerda o se lo descubre. Ya están listos desde la eternidad’.<sup>134</sup>

Resonating with *Divertimento* a trinity of death, nightmares and ritual is pivotal to Cortázar’s dystopian novel, *El Examen*, written in 1950 but published posthumously in 1986. On the eve of their final college exam, Juan and his wife Clara decide to kill time by engaging in a variety of diversions. The normally conventional rite of passage towards their academic degree assumes metaphysical proportions as the main characters find themselves embroiled in a ‘ritual of rituals’. Initially they intend to stay awake for the twenty-four hours preceding the test, in the process unintentionally becoming flâneurs who stroll around Buenos Aires examining the city and its decomposition. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak and predictably, despite the best of intentions, they succumb to sleep.

At various junctures, Juan and Clara are joined by their former college friend, Andrés, who is in love with Clara, Andrés’s girlfriend, Stella, and a journalist known as the Cronista. As with *Insecto* in *Divertimento*, the Cronista’s true name is never revealed, his role as a journalist makes him an ostensibly objective observer of events. The friends are shadowed throughout by another former colleague, the phantasmal Abel, who wishes to inflict pain on Clara for reasons unknown. Both Juan and Andrés are writers and each keeps a journal which they lend to the other to read. *El Examen* originally encompassed *El Diario de Andrés Fava*,

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<sup>134</sup> Julio Cortázar, *El Examen* (Buenos Aires: Punto De Lectura, 2004), 77. All further textual references to the novel are to this edition.

which as the name suggests exposes Andrés's innermost musings, and it is my intention to 'reattach the severed limb' and treat the two texts together.<sup>135</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of the group's conversations and individuals' cogitations revolve around *avant-garde* literature, coupled with the esoteric nature of dreams, language, music and death. At times, and subverting the norm, the conversations appear to conduct the characters rather than the reverse (a trait which hallmarks *Rayuela* among other works). The examination acts as a pretext for lengthy deliberations on literature as well as an embarrassment of quotations. Clara's fixation with the examination means that she frequently alludes to writers such as Rimbaud, Mallarmé and Malraux and attempts to divine the questions to be posed. She contextualizes her experiences in terms of the examination. The test that Clara and Juan anticipate will be the climax to their twenty-four hour ordeal never comes to fruition. Arriving at the university and compelled to wait, their torment is exacerbated by the infernal heat and the fetid stench of glue. The professors fail to materialize and after a series of blackouts the exam is indefinitely annulled. The cancellation is as metaphorical as it is practical. It epitomizes not only their journey but in many ways the anticlimax of the narrative itself. As mentioned, *El Examen* embodies the imminence of a revelation which never materializes, a potential which both tortures and stimulates the characters and us.

As ultimate insult, the students are offered an exam certificate for ten pesos, a certificate which even the Cronista can purchase simply because he is present. After all of Clara's toil and anxiety, this degree is nugatory, depriving her of a meaningful future and in a sense negating her past. Their test ultimately becomes the ultimate test: a test of survival. They must learn that what they held to be 'the rules of the game' have changed and that in

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<sup>135</sup> I shall differentiate between the two texts by using *Diario* as an abbreviation within references.

order to survive they must escape from a city where they no longer belong. My initial intention is to examine the configuration of characters and their esoteric interests and, in some instances, afflictions. The spectral Abel is a 'living death', Andrés is obsessed with esoteric elements of music and a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards death, whilst Clara's nightmares simultaneously haunt and define her. Secondly, I will probe the various stages in the 'rituals' which they undergo in their path to either enlightenment or destruction. In the process of scrutinizing distinct facets of Buenos Aires the group visits a number of venues, taking them from *La Casa*, a centre for listening to literature being read aloud to '*Santuario*', a focal point for the veneration of a bone, later to a concert at the 'Teatro de Colón' before their trajectory ends at the University. I aim to place particular emphasis on the role played by music within the various stages of their ritual, relating it to Andrés Fava's theories on music as expounded in his diary.

From the outset, the novel encapsulates a miasma of death and disintegration. A pall of mysterious fog has descended upon Buenos Aires, a cloying haze which is equally political and social. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, Argentina was a country in turmoil and the intellectuals in particular feared that their values and way of life were under threat.<sup>136</sup> Aside from these societal concerns, our characters fear mental stagnation and lament that the very words that they utter have become nothing more than empty husks devoid of spirit, a sentiment later echoed by Horacio in *Rayuela*. Even the fuzz which floats through the air and irritates their throats is, according to Juan, 'las palabras que dice la gente y que la niebla preserva y pasea' (120). Literally, the word was made fuzz and drifted among them. Smothered by the very air which they breathe, the panic-stricken citizens are warned not to

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<sup>136</sup> In his work, *Understanding Julio Cortázar*, Peter Standish notes, 'Yurkievich says, and Cortázar himself acknowledged, that the intellectuals of the day sensed the affinity between the military-supported, nationalistic, and popular Peronism on the one hand, and fascism on the other ... Moreover, Cortázar had been alienated by personal experience, having resigned his teaching post at the Universidad de Cuyo in protest at the advances being made by nationalists at the expense of university autonomy' (181).



consume the glowing noxious mushrooms which sprout throughout the city. This omnipresent sense of putrefaction regrettably does not precede phoenix-like renewal. Many believe that it signals the apocalypse and rush to stock up on provisions. A group calling itself 'Las Ochenta Mujeres' claims to foresee the end of the world, and tries to recruit other women to their doomsday cult.

Fires blaze, as explosions and gunshots terrorize the city. The ubiquitous stench of decay assails their noses. Trapped in a train on the underground, Andrés feels as if encased in a tomb, excruciated by a woman trapped beside him who shrieks incessantly. Belligerent hounds prowl the city, and a dog is pushed onto the rail tracks by a security guard, meeting a brutal and graphic end. This is one of a number of perturbing incidents which punctuate their evening, underpinning the extent to which the natural order has been thrown out of kilter. The hungry, acidic fog consumes the lecturer they meet after the farce of the supposed exam. He is embarrassed at what has happened and makes a feeble attempt to explain: ' "Yo" ... dijo el doctor, pero se detuvo y la niebla se lo fue comiendo como un ácido' (317).

Death is personified on many levels in *El Examen*. With its foundering footpaths, Buenos Aires itself has become a necropolis, luring people to their demise. While observing Clara, Andrés evokes Curzio Malaparte, who, writing on the horror of World War II, claims that everyone knows how egotistic the dead are; they forgive the living everything except being alive. Jealous of the living, death strikes in an arbitrary fashion. Andrés appears to be finely tuned to the presence of death enveloping them. Deeply embroiled in a conversation with Clara, Andrés believes that he foresees her demise if she insists on remaining in Buenos Aires. He imagines that his interlocutor is not Clara, rather her skull, a future *memento mori* of sorts. Clara only truly appreciates the danger which they face once she bears witness to the death of a young man at close range while on the street. As if in exam-mode autopilot, Clara formulates her reaction with a literary quote: 'Animula vagula blandula' (329). This phrase

was reputedly said by the Emperor Hadrian who, sensing the approach of death proclaimed, 'O animula, tremula, vagula, blandula; quæ nunc abibis in loca horrida, squalida,' - 'O poor, trembling, wandering soul, into what places of darkness and defilement art thou going?'<sup>137</sup> Glimpsing the mortality of the other crystallises Clara's own fear of death, a fear she wishes to ignore.

The elusive Abel is portrayed as an agent of death. Initially Juan and Clara are not too concerned by his presence, as they view him as somewhat harmless. However, their attitude changes once Clara receives an 'anonymous' threatening letter from Abel on the day of the examination. Juan says that Abel is like the city (228), a city which represents death for them.<sup>138</sup> The biblical Abel was killed by Cain out of envy and thereafter as the judge of the souls was depicted as, 'An awful man sitting upon the throne to judge all creatures, and examining the righteous and the sinners'.<sup>139</sup> Upon learning of the altercation at the Teatro de Colón, what perturbs Clara most is the Cronista's reference to Abel's presence prompting her to think of what is termed: 'THE FULFILLMENT OF THE OBSCURE PREDICTIONS' (142), as if his vendetta were dictated by scripture. The capitalized typeface used above is somewhat unexpected and evokes stage directions. In addition, it may represent tentative steps into experimenting with typeface and structure, a process which is enhanced in Persio's italicized soliloquies in *Los Premios* and in *Rayuela*, in particular.

While planning their departure, Clara wonders whether Abel can defy his fate, or whether he is doomed to follow this destructive path regardless. She likens him to the scorpion which essentially condemns itself to death by stinging the frog which had been carrying it to safety. When asked why it had done so, the scorpion had replied that it was a

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<sup>137</sup> This is also quoted by Horacio in *Rayuela* and was the epitaph to Marguerite Yourcenar's novel, *Las Memorias de Adriano* which Cortázar translated from French into Spanish a number of years later.

<sup>138</sup> Andrés says to stay means that they will have to confront Abel (22) when Clara is reluctant to leave, a threat which impels Clara to leave.

<sup>139</sup> Singer, Isidore; Adler, Cyrus; (eds.) et al. (1901–1906) *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk and Wagnalls, New York), 48.

scorpion and stinging was its nature. The absence of free will to determine its own destiny has doomed the scorpion. Was Abel likewise condemned because he believed himself to be doomed? By contrast, an unwavering belief in the ability to control one's fate is evinced by Salaver, a passing acquaintance of the group who introduces them to his unique concept of 'contraazar'. By way of example, he states his desire to go to live in Spain, and randomly sticks a pin in a calendar in order to determine the date. This is the first part of what he terms 'superazar'. The second part consists of guessing what the designated day will entail for him, for instance, what the weather will be like. After he forecasts these events, he must wait until the day in question and then he must contravene his own prognostications. If he has predicted rain, he must wear summer clothes instead, and, regardless of his boss's instructions, he must write an article on Beethoven: 'Vos habías previsto el superazar, y lo hundís con el contraazar' (106). Salaver claims that his own name 'Sal a ver' or 'Go out and see' is prophetic – as he views himself as a seer of sorts: 'En mi apellido hay también un signo que me concierne ... Soy un adelantado en el tiempo, mi propio destino me manda a mirar qué pasará' (107). Another noteworthy feature of Salaver's name is that it is an imperfect anagram of 'al revés' ('alraves'), as he does the reverse of what he has predicted. Clearly, his methodology is nonsensical and provides mirth among the group. As shall become clear, this notion of counter fate, although not taken seriously by Andrés Fava, provides him with food for thought on the role and nature of art in the future.

Andrés's diary, interwoven with his stream of consciousness and a rich tapestry of literary allusions, commands our attention for a myriad of reasons. In particular the diary outlines Andrés's esoteric musical hypotheses and thoughts on death and reincarnation. In tandem with his love for literature, Andrés devotes a great deal of attention to music. He combines the two passions by appraising literature as if it were music. He wonders whether Hesse's novel, *Demian* (1919), possesses a secret virtue in its original German version. In

Spanish, this ‘repugnant’ book, ‘suenan como el texto de flauta mágica con la música de Lescaut’ (*Diario* 29). He construes this as a cacophony of a text, as incongruous as a kitten barking. Andrés explores music both in the physical sense and as an abstract idea. For Andrés, we reach the Platonic Form of Music through music in its terrestrial incarnation or performance: “‘Por las músicas se asciende a la Música.’ Razón de más para no olvidar que la escalera es una suma de peldaños’ (*Diario* 80). Using the metaphor of climbing, he explains that the valley, or musical performance, acts as impetus to reach the summit or Music as an Idea, whilst reaching the peak and surveying what lies beneath, allows us to gauge the magisterial musical works: ‘Si de algo sirve el valle es para estimular el ascenso a la cima; si de algo sirve la cima, es para que todo está ahí a la vista, lo que verdaderamente importa del valle’ (*Diario* 80). It is this symbiotic relationship between the abstraction of Music and musical representation which inspires him. In *Los Premios*, the abstraction of music may well be synonymous with the ‘music of the spheres’, an inaudible music that Pythagoras asserted was produced by the celestial bodies.

Andrés portrays music as a jealous mistress who enslaves musicians. He uses the example of the renowned violinist, Jascha Heifetz, as a case in point: ‘A propósito de la libertad y del ser libre: Se dice: ‘Heifetz hace lo que quiere con su violín’. ¿No será el violín el que hace lo que quiere con Heifetz?’ (*Diario* 48). Heifetz derided those who ascribed the superiority of a musical performance to the calibre of the instrument alone. He was once allegedly approached after a concert by a female fan who complimented him breathlessly on the ‘beautiful tone’ of the del Gesù violin he had played that night. Bending down to put his ear close to the violin lying in its case, Heifetz remarked, ‘I don’t hear anything.’<sup>140</sup> Heifetz sees the violin as his tool, oblivious to the fact that he is the one who serves it. Just as the

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<sup>140</sup> As discussed by Philip Ball, *The Music Instinct How Music Works and Why We Can’t Do Without It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 234.

piano transforms the piano-man, 'a conformar al hombre, a hacer de él un pianista, un hombre-piano, un servidor con negra que corre el mundo', Heifetz becomes a violin-man: 'El violín se hace llevar por Heifetz ... Ajustándose estrictamente a la voluntad del señor, el criado cumple los movimientos necesarios para que el violín suene' (*Diario* 48). The dead tyrants to whom he refers (*Diario* 48), are the composers whose works he plays, despots who dilute the modicum of free-will granted to him by his violin. The merger of man with instrument, although somewhat implicit in Johnny Carter's relationship with his saxophone in 'El Perseguidor', reaches its apogee in 'Clone', where the singers could be viewed as *de facto* musical instruments.

Andrés measures time in terms of music. Physically repulsed by Chopin, Andrés feels that the musician does not belong to his time simply because he does not allow him to: 'Al lado mío hay un señor cuyo tiempo abarca a Chopin, ello no significa que su tiempo tenga algo que ver con el mío. Coexistir no es coincidir' (*Diario* 111). Contrary to what logic dictates, for Andrés, it is music that determines time. It is intriguing to imagine the watch used to tell time in terms of music with the performance of a particular piece signalling an hour or a minute. Andrés claims that, unlike Andrés himself, music is intemporal: 'Si en mi tiempo caben Perotin o Guillaume Machault [sic] y no hay sitio para Schubert es que mi temporalidad se afirma como el centro de la rueda, y tira los radios de la analogía busca lo suyo fuera del tiempo, pero ojo desde el tiempo' (*Diario* 111). Music from the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may pertain to Andrés's time whilst Schubert does not. Music encodes values. Andrés's time is not his chronological lifespan from the twentieth century; it seeks what is appropriate to it outside of time. He hopes that the identification of his time with his self will be resolved in a future incarnation: 'Que mi tiempo sea yo, o yo mi tiempo, constituye otro problema. La solución en el próximo avatar' (*Diario* 111). This confluence of being and time contains echoes of Heidegger's maxim that the horizon of

Being – the context which allows us to understand Being – is time.<sup>141</sup> To be is to exist temporally in the interval between birth and death. Being is time and time is finite, ending with our death. Therefore, it is necessary to confront death, to project our lives onto the horizon of our death, what Heidegger calls ‘being-towards-death’.<sup>142</sup> Many of Cortázar’s characters such as Andrés Fava aspire to this. For Andrés, time is our own temporality by which we are drawn into the future, present and past.

In *El Diario de Andrés Fava*, Andrés states that Salaver’s theories of *contraazar* are flawed but he suspects that they contained a sliver of truth which had eluded him:

Al revés del chino, que quisiera congelar el porvenir para frustrarlo con un esquema libre y personal, el pintor o el músico agregan un elemento más, activo y viviente, a la palpitación del futuro ... Donde mejor se lo ve es en las obras un tiempo desconocidas o subestimadas (lo gótico, por ejemplo) que de pronto estallan en toda su fuerza actual (208).

The artist or musician adds to the future rather than freezing the present or past. Sometimes a piece of art or music may languish in obscurity and needs to find its own future epoch to be appreciated fully. It is noteworthy that he does not distinguish between visual and acoustic arts; here he is referring to art in general. These are works which from their inception contain their future perception. These works are past or present works which, as they belong to the future or are appreciated in the future, I shall refer to as ‘works with a future’. Andrés claims: ‘Cuando miro una imagen de Chartres, estoy viendo futuro de esa estatua; está tan mal hablar del arte antiguo. Y la figurilla de Gudea con el plano entre las manos, no tiene cinco mil años de edad; está cinco mil años delante de su edad’ (*Diario* 117). These artistic creations are like magnets which attract metallic filings that swirl around them. These in turn magnetize the compositions that explore them. What is inspired by or written about a specific piece of music is a work of art in itself, be it a critique by Hoffmann on Beethoven or a fictional text

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<sup>141</sup> Heidegger, Stambaugh, *Being and Time*, 343-44.

<sup>142</sup> Heidegger, Stambaugh, *Being and Time*, 343-44.

such as Leo Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata* (1889). Contrasting with Salaver's theory of 'contraazar', which aims to 'freeze the future', the actual future vibrates with potential. These trembling 'works with a future', transcend time, as we shall see with the Bach and Beethoven works performed at the Teatro Colón.

As previously mentioned, Andrés views his life in terms of his time. He reckons that his authentic time is disjointed from his lifespan. Authentic time is not man-made clock time; it is closer to sacred or timeless time as shall be discussed in Chapter Three. Andrés yearns to exuviate his life like a snakeskin:

Es oscuro y no sé decirlo: sentir que mi vida y yo somos dos cosas, y que si fuera posible quitarse la vida como la chaqueta ... Después ponérsela de nuevo, o buscarse otra. Es tan sólo tengamos una vida ... como la vida es siempre la delantera del tiempo (*Diario* 24).

Having only one life is tedious; he longs to supplant this existence with another and feels as if his own life does not belong to him.

In a macabre twist, Andrés intimates that he has already died before: 'hace un rato, al bajar la escalinata de los Tribunales ... sentí de pronto que ya había muerto' (*Diario* 98). Despite his rejection of immortality he claims, 'me alcanzó la certidumbre de que, en alguna forma, en algún estado, pasé ya por la muerte. ¿Con qué derecho postularme inmortal cuando lo único que sé es que vengo de una muerte?' (*Diario* 115). Andrés does not appear to fear death; he carries a pistol in his pocket and theorizes that death ought to come from within and be unsensational: 'Si matarse es una ventana, no salir golpeando la puerta. Si vivir fue *not a bang but a whimper*, disponer el cese de actividades con la misma sencillez que apaga el velador para admitir una noche más' (*Diario* 115). Andrés equates death with writing, whereby the moment of death should be the equivalent of a full stop: 'El punto final es pequeñito, y casi no se lo ve en la página escrita; se lo advierte luego por contraste, cuando

después de él comienza el blanco' (*Diario* 115). 'El blanco' refers to the blank space which follows the full stop, a vacuum or silence, a *tabula rasa* with which to start again.

Andrés brushes against death while browsing in a bookshop. Outside loudspeakers blare with the apocalyptic voices of 'Las Ochenta Mujeres' inciting women to join them while there is still time. A young man with whom he was casually acquainted has collapsed and is snuffed out abruptly. Having frequented the same bookshops and writers' clubs as the young man, Andrés views his unfortunate peer as his double: 'era curioso porque se veía a sí mismo, pensaba en el muerto pero era a él mismo a quien estaba viendo descomponerse' (266). This concept of the double is a prominent leitmotif throughout Cortázar's novels and short stories, as we shall see. As Juan and Clara leave the city by boat Abel pursues Andrés for having aided them and a shot is fired. Considerable ambiguity surrounds whether Andrés has committed suicide or Abel has killed Andrés or vice-versa. We could conjecture that Abel is an alter ego of Andrés or that he is simply a ghost. The fact that the others have seen Abel would not preclude this possibility. Cortázar himself has given ambiguous and contradictory indications on his fate in later interviews. In her work, *Keats, Poe, and the shaping of Cortázar's Mythopoesis*, Ana Castillo says,

In *El Examen*, Andrés dies at the hands of Abel; yet, when I asked Cortázar for an explanation of the ending, he said that after Andrés had helped Juan and Clara to escape, he no longer wanted to live: 'cuando Andrés alza la pistola, no es a Abel a quien mata. Se mata a sí mismo y, naturalmente, Abel es destruido a la vez, puesto que no tenía una realidad independiente.'<sup>143</sup>

Castillo underscores a contradiction between 'the fear of death evinced in Andrés's long monologue after the death of his first double and the suicide through the murder of the second

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<sup>143</sup> Ana Hernández del Castillo, *Keats, Poe, and the shaping of Cortázar's mythopoesis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1981), 61.



double implied at the end of the novel'.<sup>144</sup> Invariably we feel compelled to ask: if Andrés dies at the end of *El Examen*, who is the Andrés Fava who features so prominently in *Libro de Manuel*?<sup>145</sup> Numerous explanations are possible, of course, from temporal shifts to ghosts to simply another character with the same name. It may also be the case that Andrés has been reincarnated.

Indeed, aside from Abel and the unfortunate acquaintance in the bookshop, a third alter ego could be posited for Andrés – namely, Juan. Frequently Juan simply serves as complement to Andrés and often expands on his views regarding language and literature. Juan reveals a propensity for deducing hidden connections or ‘similitudes amigas’<sup>146</sup> between disparate miscellanies. In a revealing exchange with Andrés and Clara, Juan quarries his dreams and compares writing poetry with hypnagogia, the twilight state between being asleep and awake, where ‘de golpe uno se siente como una cuña a punto de hacer saltar todos los obstáculos’ (99) allowing us to behold naked truth or hidden reality. Upon awaking, a memory of Paradise Lost lingers. Continuing Juan’s line of thought, Andrés expands on this notion that this oneiric realm provides the ideal circumstances to trap essences. Certain dreamt narratives leave the dreamer with the sensation of having returned from the original forms or ideas: ‘Como si en sueños se alcanzara a veces la pureza necesaria para atrapar esencias, ciertas fábulas soñadas dejan al despertar la ansiedad maravillada del que retorna del mar, de una cima, de las sustancias originales’ (42). He speculates that what we dream is ‘noumenon’ (the unknowable reality behind what is perceived by human consciousness), and that we relapse into the realm of ‘phenomena’ (that which is known through the senses) upon

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>145</sup> In a letter written to Ana María Hernández, Cortázar writes of his regret that the Andrés of *El Examen*, ‘had not come to light because the novel had not been published, he writes that ‘Andrés (andros, “man”) represents me in a very deep sense in both cases, and that is why on the one occasion when his surname is given I automatically opted for giving the full name from the previous novel’. Ana María Hernández “Cortázar: El libro de Andrés + Lonstein = Manuel”, *Nueva Narrativa Hispanoamericana*, enero-septiembre de 1975, Madrid, 55.

<sup>146</sup> Cortázar refers to ‘esas “similitudes amigas” de que hablaba Valéry’ in his own text, ‘Para escuchar con audífonos’ in *Salvo el crepúsculo*.

awaking: 'No me puedo negar a la sensación de que si el sueño prescinde de la lógica de vigilia, o la altera, ese orden no pertenece a la realidad, es sólo una clasificación diurna. Quizá soñamos nómeno, y recaemos en el fenómeno al despertar. El mundo espera a su descubridor' (*Diario* 33).<sup>147</sup> It is only in dreams that we can unearth some of these essences, unmediated by veneers. We create the world via perception upon waking, or, perhaps the authentic world of archetypes and essences remains to be grasped by man. Dreams are authentic reality whilst our waking hours are nothing but an illusion. As we shall discover, Juan and Andrés's positive slant on dreams provides stark contrast to Clara's experience of the oneiric realm.

Clara's nightmares have beleaguered her since early childhood and her decision to deprive herself of sleep prior to the exam is driven by her fear of nightmares and not, as she claims, by the conviction that staying awake will make her more phosphorescent (77). The trajectory to the examination is likened to Clara's 'Via Dolorosa' and as with the Garden of Gethsemane, she asks her companion, Juan, to keep vigil with her. The students joke that they are on death row. To help stave off sleep, Clara starts to sing a lullaby, 'Les trois enfants', which epitomizes the horror of childhood. According to legend, in the midst of a famine an evil butcher trapped and dismembered three little boys. Before he could sell their remains as ham, Saint Nicholas rescued and resurrected the three boys. A graphic tale such as this is not unusual for lullabies, where cradles, for instance, have an unfortunate habit of crashing to the ground.

Perturbingly, at times there is no unequivocal demarcation between their daily life and their oneiric activities or dreams, most notably in Chapter Two. We are reminded of Chuang

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<sup>147</sup> Kant juxtaposed the terms 'phemonena', meaning objects of experience, with 'noumena' as 'things-in-themselves specified negatively as unknown and beyond our experience, or positively as knowable in some absolute non-sensible way ' Kant insists that the perception of noumena, which themselves recall Platonic forms, are theoretically impossible for sensible beings like us.' Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2nd. ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999) , 462-3.

Tzu who did not know whether he was then a man dreaming he was a butterfly, or whether he was now a butterfly, dreaming he was a man.<sup>148</sup> This chapter encompasses a collage of dream sequences with all of their confusion and ambiguity, taking place in the twilight hours of the day of the exam. The group has managed to stay awake all night but eventually, and contrary to Clara's better judgement, they all decide to go home. Just as the sun rises, Juan and Clara are travelling through Buenos Aires in a taxi at 6.30 am. Juan recalls being a child aged three or four and being awoken by the crowing of a rooster, 'splitting the silence', terrifying him. This recollection is reminiscent of the cock crowing on the dawn before Christ's crucifixion, signalling betrayal and impending death. Juan says, mixing biblical metaphors, 'En el comienzo era el canto del gallo' (146). Juan and Clara observe the collapse of the city and its hostility to its dwellers. Upon reaching their own apartment building they realize that they too are out of synch with their surroundings. Unable to gain access initially, they find that the front door has become misaligned owing to the subsiding floor. Once inside, they find that the elevator is stuck. In a macabre fashion Clara conjectures that a corpse is blocking the elevator which is trapped between the fifth and sixth floors.

As alluded to, Andrés, Juan and Clara succumb to febrile slumber and we assume that the dreams are experienced concurrently, as they are intertwined with one another. Predictably, the dreams are jumbled, but certain features are salient. Before analyzing Clara's nightmares, it may be apposite to take a brief glance at Juan and Andrés's dreams. In Juan's nightmare the fog, comprising a bizarre blend of roasted chestnuts and chlorine is asphyxiating him. Surreally he witnesses the grotesque image of Clara giving birth to a cauliflower. Juan muses on possible questions in the forthcoming examination, which in itself

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<sup>148</sup> As Borges writes in "Nueva refutación del tiempo" in *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emece, 1989-1996. v. 2)

Elijamos un momento de máxima simplicidad: verbigracia, el del sueño de Chuang Tzu (Herbert Allen Giles: *Chuang Tzu*, 1889). Éste, hará unos veinticuatro siglos, soñó que era una mariposa y no sabía al despertar si era un hombre que había soñado ser una mariposa o una mariposa que ahora soñaba ser un hombre (146).

is atypical, as it was Clara who was always obsessively trying to pre-empt the questions asked. According to Juan, the Process Philosopher Alfred Whitehead establishes the 'monstrous interdependence' of all beings (168). When asked to explain the term 'monstrous', Juan associates the name of Whitehead with a 'white horse' evoking the first horseman of the Apocalypse.<sup>149</sup> Finally, recalling Whitehead, Juan invokes Keats's phrase, 'sleep sweet embalmer of the night' where Keats alludes to Death as sleep.<sup>150</sup> The 'monstrous interdependence' of the examination, the apocalypse, dreams and death is thus established via Whitehead.

Andrés, for his part, falls asleep next to Stella but dreams of Clara. He fears that in the future Clara will discard him. While asleep he hears a drip or a leak and imagines that the tap-tapping noise is the heartbeat of Madame Roland, about to be executed on the guillotine. Andrés is perturbed by the supposed blandness of his dreams and compares them to the wonders dreamt by others: 'La mujer de un amigo se había soñado muerta, enterrada a *Extraña aventura de David Grey* ; desde su profundidad veía los rostros que la lloraban, inclinándose sobre la tumba' (162). In the dream the woman longs to scream to let them know that, although she is not alive, she is there and can see them, but is unable to do so. As shall become apparent, Andrés's lamentation regarding the monotony of his dreams is more significant than it would first seem.

Dream and reality blur and become indistinguishable with Clara. Following on from their actual arrival home, Clara dreams that she still awaits Juan who has become stuck in the elevator. Clara then dreams that she is led by the hand down stairwell after stairwell, evoking a descent into Hades. She conveys to her deceased mother that Andrés is concealing

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<sup>149</sup> 'I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest'. Revelation 6:1.

<sup>150</sup> Whilst life is consciousness or a state of anxiety for Keats, sleep or death will liberate him. In his sonnet 'To Sleep', he says, 'Then save me, or the passed day will shine/ Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;/ Save me from curious conscience, that still hoards/ Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole'.

information from her, perhaps concerning the peril which hovers over her. Bizarrely, she is trapped by a table which encircles her like a tutu. Her mother's evasiveness unnerves Clara who attempts to 'listen' to her eyes, a technique she had employed to prognosticate her mother's subsequent death. Clara is at a crossroads in her life and the obstructing table may simply represent the exam, the eminent table at which she will be judged by what Juan terms the 'gods of Olympus', a table which later disintegrates once the exam is cancelled.

Absurdly Clara feels that it is crucial that she and Andrés listen to fanfares together, as a sign of their pact. Music is a way of aligning herself and Andrés. Clara connects the sound 'fan' with sundry terms such as 'fanfarlo', 'fan fan la tulipe', 'fan gogh' and 'c'est l'ophan'. The warning signals in her dreams are cryptic and easily overlooked. Reality is a nightmare which plagues Clara. We could hypothesize that all of these dream sequences are dreamt by Clara, rather than by the three main characters individually, and that the entirety of *El Examen* is Clara's nightmare. As in a dream, she is being pursued for reasons she does not understand. At the end of the novel, Clara and Juan flee in the only boat at the port, as if their ferryman existed only for them, and once they depart, Andrés thinks, 'este no existe ya, queda solamente el recuerdo que guarda Clara' (359). It would seem that this Buenos Aires exists only in Clara's memory.

As previously mentioned, within chapter two of *El Examen* Andrés bemoans the insipidness of his own dreams. Strikingly, however, in *El Diario de Andrés Fava*, he recounts a dream that he had had the morning of the exam, between going home at 6.30 am and at least two hours before Clara had telephoned to invite him to the concert (*El Examen* 46). This supremely macabre dream executed with cinematic clarity, would beg to differ with his assessment of his dreams as boring. He dreams that he glimpses a cadaver laid out on a stretcher or mortuary slab, as if he were hovering overhead, 'como la cámara que filma moviéndose horizontalmente mientras toma de arriba abajo' (*Diario* 108). He was unable to

discern details as the body was gradually covered by a black velvet fabric from head to toe, ‘un ritmo perfecto, casi como si mis ojos fueran emitiendo el terciopelo un instante más pronto que la mirada misma’ (*Diario* 108). Then he felt projected into the air prior to the epiphany: “‘pero entonces claro, yo soy ese (cadáver)’ y el horror. Desperté en el acto mismo de quedar tendido en la mesa’ (*Diario* 109).

As Andrés believes that he has lived and died before, he fears a ‘conscious death’ which echoes the ‘David Grey’ or *Vampyr*-like experience of his friend’s wife’s dream. Andrés concedes that recounting the dream fails to do justice to the dream itself. He analyzes the extent to which a nightmare may be preceded by a protracted dream which contains elements of terror but may only crystallize at the culmination of the oneiric process, ‘pero aunque, wagnerianamente, ya rondaban ahí los temas del horror, sólo al final saltan en toda la orquesta. La pesadilla pura no puede durar mucho, nos mataría’ (*Diario* 108). Tellingly, even nightmares assume a musical hue with the force of the coda representing the horrific climax, and although an oppressive sense of dread permeates *El Examen*, it is only at the *dénouement* that the ‘full orchestra’ of terror thunders in all its glory. If Andrés’s mortuary dream occurred at approximately the same time as the others, it is strange that it is not included within the dream sequence. Perhaps it took place after the other dreams, or perhaps it was simply deemed irrelevant within the text. As alluded to, this omission as well as the excision of *El Diario de Andrés Fava* from the main body of *El Examen* may be because *El Examen* is a portrayal of Clara’s nightmare alone. Fava’s prominence as a character is diluted by relegating the bulk of his contribution and impact to his diary, allowing the focus to rivet on Clara and her plight. Irrespective of emphasis on one character over and above other characters, Juan, Clara, Andrés and Abel combine to form an ever-shifting constellation. What Juan alludes to as the ‘monstrous interdependence of beings’ implies that their lives and deaths become inextricably intertwined as the exam approaches.

What are the stages they must undergo in their supposed path to enlightenment during the twenty four hours preceding the examination? The rite of passage starts at *La Casa*, an institution where students listen to literary works being read aloud. They then proceed to the *Santuario*, a makeshift ossuary erected in La Plaza de Mayo where veneration of a relic and political canvassing are accompanied by a peculiar medley of music. The following day, a sortie to the concert hall is organized for a reluctant Juan and Clara just before they are due to sit their examination. During the concert interval, Clara's father becomes enraged when someone jumps the queue to use a small nylon comb attached to the wall of the restroom. All present, including Juan and the Cronista, become embroiled in the ensuing altercation. The police are called and question the offenders, prior to releasing them without charge. A curious symmetry between milestones over the course of the two days commands our focus: the Casa mirrors the university, while the 'pilgrimage' with its simmering menace of brutality and its totemic bone resonates with the concert hall brawl and its spoils of war (a nylon comb). The coterie of friends has truly ventured through the Looking Glass.

The first port of call on their odyssey is *La Casa*, a residence where students gather to listen to works being read aloud. Although the University had organized these readings, mutual animosity simmered between both institutions. A reader from *La Casa* derided the university by saying that its only distinguishing feature was its staircase. Conversely those from the university referred to *La Casa* as 'only His Master's voice', i.e. akin to a record player. At times, *La Casa* resembles a house of worship or temple, with scriptures being read to the neophytes.<sup>151</sup> *La Casa* filled a lacuna, 'en un tiempo en que resultaba difícil dictar cursos interesantes o pronunciar conferencias originales, la Casa servía para mantener caliente el pan del espíritu' (16). On other occasions, these sessions resemble a musical

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<sup>151</sup> *La Casa*'s director, Dr. Menta, is depicted by Clara as espousing an attitude of, 'Lea libros y se encontrará a sí mismo. Crea en la letra impresa, en la voz del Lector. Acepte el pan del espíritu' (14).

performance, modulating the flow of speech and silence for maximum dramatic effect: 'Como un pianista veterano, concedía unos segundos de relajación, pero no demasiado, no se fuera ese fluido, esa sustancia tensa que pegaba su voz a la gente, su lectura a las atenciones no siempre fáciles' (23).

Stella has persuaded her reluctant boyfriend, Andrés to accompany her to *La Casa* leading to their serendipitous encounter with Juan and Clara who are seeking distraction from their exam. Within *La Casa*, listening to and reading literature is depicted as a means of eschewing reality and commitment to action. Hypocritically, Clara derides other students who are awash with data but are ignorant of what goes on outside. She too is swaddled in a rarefied clique which betrays indifference, if not snobbishness towards fellow Argentines outside of their social milieu. In *La Casa* the students are immersed into an inscrutable world. The aforementioned metaphor of listening to music on a record player or 'His Master's Voice' is not entirely inappropriate. Students amble to a variety of sectors in order to listen to different languages and literary genres, akin to tuning into a radio, with each room representing a different channel. Ironically, rather than stimulating their imagination, the students become osmotic receptacles of these recited works, literally allowing themselves to be dictated to, without any interaction.<sup>152</sup> We attempt to detect a pattern in the selection of works performed, but no discernible trend is forthcoming. For instance, the first text mentioned alludes to hunting, which may or may not foreshadow Abel's pursuit of Clara, or may simply be a coincidence. Indeed the apparent randomness of the texts calls to mind the surrealist works read out on the radio during the Second World War. These broadcasts contained messages for the French resistance, but were arcane to those outside of the inner circle. Interestingly in his cinematic version of *Orpheus*, Jean Cocteau copied this technique,

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<sup>152</sup> The motto of *La Casa* is 'L'art de la lecture doit laisser l'imagination de l'auditeur, sinon tout a fait libre, du moins pouvant croire a sa liberté.' (22). This lofty ambition that the art of reading should let the reader's imagination be free or, if not totally free, at the very least able to believe in its own freedom, belies the manner in which their imagination is blunted by *La Casa*'s practices.



using Apollinaire's phrase, 'L'oiseau chante avec ses doigts' on the car radio, as Orpheus was being driven in the Princess's (Death's) Rolls Royce. We wonder if a secret code remains to be deciphered, or whether perhaps it is simply meant to arouse curiosity, or even evoke a surreal, mesmerizing ambience.

Juan, Clara, Andrés and Stella leave *La Casa* and later chance upon the Cronista listening to music in a bar. At Stella's behest, the group of friends amble towards La Plaza de Mayo which is located beside the governmental buildings in order to gauge what is going on. The ossuary or so-called '*Santuario*' is formed by tarpaulin and the pyramid, the oldest national monument in Buenos Aires. The Cronista had written about the ceremonies which were taking place in the Plaza de Mayo, ceremonies which celebrated the veneration of an enigmatic relic, whose provenance is never specified. When challenged as to whether the press had helped to invent these rituals, profiting from the entrance fees, the cronista claims: 'Un ritual no se inventa ... – o se lo recuerda o se lo descubre. Ya están listos desde la eternidad' (69). This concept of rituals chimes with the notion of Platonic Ideas. Here they are merely reclaimed from the mists of time and recycled according to a contemporary context.

The tang of Carnival pervades the entire scene. Despite being considered a Christian festival, Carnival's origins hark back to the Saturnalian and Dionysian festivals. Traditionally, Carnival precedes sacrifice, and true Carnival does not distinguish between participants and spectators.<sup>153</sup> We are reminded of the 'Carnavalesque', a term coined by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin which denotes a subversive and literary mode that liberates by means of humour and chaos. In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929) and *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Bakhtin likens the carnivalesque in literature to this time of revelry

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<sup>153</sup> Ken Hirschkop, David Shepherd (ed), *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 215.

which precedes Lent. Carnival represents a time when the rules of ordinary life become temporarily suspended and reversed. Like dreams, Carnival is a 'time outside of time', one in which the norms no longer apply. Much of Cortázar's literature could be described as carnivalesque given that he subverts literary canons, uses his own unique brand of humour as a weapon and unleashes chaos where possible. This text, however, does not herald a popular revolution in the Bakhtinian sense, as a sense of putrefaction and stasis takes hold.

Chaos certainly dominates the scene outlined here. One thousand five hundred workers had just arrived from Tucumán the night before and a dance is held in front of the town hall. Indeed, reference to Tucumán and these ceremonies is significant, as these rituals may resonate with ceremonies held in Tucumán during that epoch, an epoch in which political rallies merged with spiritual festivals. The Tucumán Peronist government had recast the traditional Carnival celebrated in the Calchaqui Valley as the Provincial Pachamama Festival - 'an evocation of the Incaic myth of Pachamama, the fertility goddess or 'Mother World'.<sup>154</sup> As per the Cronista's claims, (69) these rituals are reinvented intermittently, even if their Platonic Idea has always existed.

Our not so merry band of flâneurs is forced to drag their feet as the quagmire beneath threatens to engulf them. The path they take towards the bone is punctuated by a concatenation of disquieting vignettes, most notably those involving a young woman dressed in white and a young boy threatened by older men. Meandering through the multitudes, they observe a knot of men encircling a young woman with golden hair dressed in a white tunic, 'entre delantal de maestra y alegoría de la patria nunca pisoteada por ningún tirano' (70). Clara peers through a gap within the 'magic circle' and sees two or three men acting as

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<sup>154</sup> In their work *The New Cultural History of Peronism: Power and Identity in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina* (Duke University Press, 2010), 129-143, Matthew B. Karush and Oscar Chamosa argue that Peronism ritually linked the mythical past of the Argentine Andes, personified in the Pachamama, with the golden future promised by Perón. 'Festivals such as the Vintage and Zafra at the provincial level and the Pachamama at the local level constituted part of an annual cycle that culminated in the Día del Trabajo, the international labor day celebrated on 1 May' with elaborate celebrations in the Plaza de Mayo.

officials at a ceremony. One of the men places his hand on the woman's shoulder, asserting, 'Ella es buena' (71). In unison the crowd chants 'Ella es buena' (71). The woman remains fixed to one spot with her hands clasped to her thighs, and begins opening and closing her fingers as if 'in a hysteria about to explode' (71). Like a shaman she is entranced, hypnotized by the chants of those encircling her. Simultaneously mesmerized and gripped by fear, Clara chants with the crowd, 'Ella es buena' (72). Clara hears her own disembodied voice, perhaps seeing herself reflected in the entranced woman in white.

Terrified at having participated in the ritual, Clara approaches Andrés with her eyes shut, panting, 'Canté con ellos, recé con ellos. He firmado, he firmado' (72). Clara's participation in the collective ritual could signify her succumbing to the collective pressure and momentary enslavement by the regime, a regime whose influence the group attempts to escape, both intellectually and physically. Just moments earlier Clara had joked that, if the topic of 'crowd psychology' popped up in the exam, she would be able to relay her experience of mingling with the masses there. Forensically she examines her compatriots as an anthropologist would, little suspecting the extent to which she will become submerged in their reality. Just as the traditional concept of Carnival eradicates the notion of 'spectator', Clara finds that she has been integrated into the ritual, in stark contrast to her friends who appear to be impervious to it. Instead of seeking solace from her husband, Juan, Clara clings to Andrés. Few can deny that the image of the woman in garbed white is richly suggestive. She seems to be both of this world and a preternatural being. She may embody the moon goddess of pagan lore, portrayed by Robert Graves as the 'White Goddess of Birth, Love and Death'.<sup>155</sup> Alternatively with her immaculate white tunic, she may even represent the Virgin

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<sup>155</sup> Her apparition calls to mind Robert Graves's myth of 'White Goddess of Birth, Love and Death', who, analogous to the 'Mother Goddess' of the moon, provides inspiration for a number of goddesses prevalent in European and pagan mythologies. For Graves, 'true' or 'pure' poetry is bound with the ancient cult-ritual of his proposed White Goddess' (Robert Graves, *The White Goddess - A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966, first published by Faber and Faber, UK, 1948)).

Mary. Given the context of the Argentina of the 1940s in particular, the image of the blonde girl bedecked in white equally resonates with that of the ‘queen of labour’ pageant.<sup>156</sup> She may evoke the ultimate queen of the provincial labourers, Evita.

The preface to *El Examen* affords us the most extraordinary clue to the possible significance of both the woman in white and the relic. Here Cortázar alludes to the ‘premonition’ of events following Eva Perón’s death in 1952, two years after this novel was written. Represented by both the bone and the blonde woman robed in white, even her name, Eva, evokes the garden of Eden and an innocence which inheres in ‘la patria nunca pisoteada por ningún tirano’ (70). Significantly the ensemble ends its chants with the words: ‘Ella es buena ... Ella viene de Chapadmalal’ (71). Chapadmalal is where Juan Perón’s presidential residence was built in the 1940s and is the current location of one of the Eva Perón museums. On her deathbed, Evita’s image was evolving into that of a saint and a martyr and for the twenty-two years following her death, her corpse was shuttled to and fro - even to Madrid and back—in a bizarre volley of attempts by her husband and his adversaries to capitalize on her power. Cortázar denied that he had foreseen her death in *El Examen*, but history sprinkles its own seasoning over our reading of the text.

The ceremony involving the enigmatic woman garbed in white, although unsettling, is innocuous when compared to the treatment meted out by the crowd to a young boy. The air crackles with tension as the friends wend their way through the throngs. Andrés then bears witness to said young boy being excruciated by a cluster of older men. Menacingly they direct a large upholsterer’s needle towards his eye and chant hypnotically: ‘En medio de en medio de en medio de en medio de a menos que fuera enemigos enemigos enemigos

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<sup>156</sup> A central part of the festivals was the ‘queen of labor’ pageant. The press and official statements described the participants as delicate, feminine, and patriotic and emphasized that they were preparing themselves to be good mothers and housewives.’ Although the pictures of the participants published in newspapers show young women of European descent some of them with blonde or dyed hair, officials and journalists called them ‘criollo beauties.’

enemigos' (74). Eventually they release the traumatized youngster, but no explanation for their behaviour is forthcoming. It is quite plausible that this aberration is intended to serve as a warning to others or possibly to evoke child sacrifice inherent to the Incan rituals recreated by these ceremonies. Whatever the motive, the normally unflappable Andrés is jolted by this horrific spectacle. Nevertheless unlike Clara, he did not become immersed in the crowd's actions and managed to maintain an objective distance from the 'ritual' such as it is.

Prior to reaching the ossuary, they encounter politicians exploiting the ceremonies for their own propagandist purposes. One political candidate conflates the vision of the relic with political freedom: 'ésta es la hora del trabajo, la comunión con la reliquia ha terminado para vosotros pero se la llevan con Ustedes en el corazón ... y nos darán fuerzas para continuar adelante hasta el final VIVA VIVA VIVA' (82). Unconvinced, the group forges ahead and when they finally reach the relic they are underwhelmed by the sight of this small white bone laid out on a piece of cotton. The totem which galvanizes the other 'pilgrims' has left them unmoved. Having had their fill of empty promises, the group leaves the *Santuario*, deflated and disillusioned.

Our attention is riveted by the music which pervades the pilgrimage to the *Santuario*. Before they approach the Casa Rosada or presidential residence, senses fuse as a violent light dazzles them, whilst their eardrums are sullied by an 'aberration' of music streaming through the tannoy speakers: 'De lejos venía una música metálica, esa abyección de la música (cualquier música) cuando la echan desde los parlantes en serie, la degradación de algo hermoso' (67). The violin appears to be particularly distorted through the speakers. This physically repulses Juan via a 'unique' form of synaesthesia which merges both his acoustic and olfactory faculties: 'Son los violines más diarreicos que he oído en mi vida- dijo Juan- Dios mío, esto es una locura' (75). Music acts as a channel for social and intellectual stratification for the friends. They share similar musical tastes and judge others accordingly.

The Cronista's predilection for Eric Coates's 'Again' is excused on the basis that he has just returned from Europe and the piece has sentimental connotations for him. Among other attributes, Stella's preference for boleros sets her apart from the group. The others view her as silly and shallow, and this merely reinforces their prejudice. And prejudice is precisely what defines their attitudes to music. They listen to the tango which epitomizes their sentimental view of Buenos Aires. They abhor Argentine folk music, which they regard as inferior. Music, as well as being a question of personal taste and 'personal time' according to Andrés, marks geographical, political and class boundaries. It is interesting to note the shifting attitude to various musical genres throughout Cortázar's oeuvre, as the tango is portrayed less favourably in *Rayuela* than in *El Examen*. The tango itself remains the same; it is merely the text's context and attitude which changes as we shall see.

The student group discusses the merits or otherwise of different genres of music. Whilst some classical music is acceptable to them, certain composers such as Chopin and Liszt are not. It may be a visceral reaction; they simply do not savour the sound of their music; or, it may be a philosophical objection; they abhor music which is political propaganda, for example. Upon exiting the ossuary, the connection between provincial folklore music and political propaganda is underlined, as it serves to complement the orators and evoke the required atmosphere: 'Un tambor rodaba a veinte metros, se oían cantos de mujeres, y todos tenían los ojos puestos en el orador que esperaba alguna cosa' (90-91).<sup>157</sup>

When asked why they don't play tango music, Cronista's answer is saturnine and patronizing: 'Porque les gusta esto ... No ves que la pobre gente ha descubierto la música vía cine? Te creés que esa asquerosidad llamada canción inolvidable no hizo lo suyo?' (75-76). Soundtrack music, irrespective of genre, acts as emotional shorthand; it primes the audience

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<sup>157</sup> This beating of the drums calls to mind the aforementioned Provincial Pachamama Festival which featured *bagualeadas* (singing tournaments between men and women accompanied by the *caja*, a flat, shaman-like drum). Karush, Chamosa, *The New Cultural History of Peronism*, 132.

to react in a particular way. As well as obviating the need for reflection, cinematic scores can also be employed to brainwash the masses.<sup>158</sup> Here the film highlighted, ‘Una canción inolvidable’ or ‘A song to remember’ (released in 1945, directed by Charles Vidor) exemplifies political propaganda via cinema. ‘Una canción inolvidable’ romanticizes the Polish composer and pianist, Chopin and his patriotic deeds while his country was under Russian rule. Later at the *Santuario*, upon hearing strains of the Hungarian Rhapsodies, another eminent testament to patriotism, the friends tiptoe around Liszt’s name, as if it were an obscenity: ‘Los parlantes tocaban una de las Rapsodias Húngaras de ya se sabe’ (85). The divergence between the tango of the capital city and *provinciano folklore* music symbolized the rift between the port capital and Peronism’s working-class political base of the interior.<sup>159</sup> The music which they admire, as explained by Andrés Fava, belongs to their ‘personal time’ and defines them. As Andrés claims, ‘Coexistir’ is not synonymous with ‘coincidir’. Tellingly, Cortázar views music as propaganda in a far more positive light in his final novel, *Libro de Manuel*.

When asked how he felt about the people congregated in the Plaza de Mayo, Juan launches a shocking tirade against his compatriots: ‘No me importan ellos ... Te voy a decir que cada vez que veo un pelo negro lacio, unos ojos alargados, una piel oscura, una tonada provinciana, me da asco. Y cada vez que veo un ejemplar de hortera porteño, me da asco’ (130-131). He detests the power those supposedly ‘inferior’ beings hold over him, and is quite explicit in his racial and intellectual prejudices. Those who fail to appreciate Picasso are on a par with the so-called ‘Cabecitas Negras’ from the provinces. Compatriots he regards as belonging to a different social or cultural stratum repulse him. Those who resemble himself and his group arouse his pity, as their culture and way of life are threatened by the Philistines.

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<sup>158</sup> Perón was not adverse to employing cinema for the diffusion of propaganda *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>159</sup> Attempts were being made at the time to bridge this divide - Karush, Chamosa, *The New Cultural History of Peronism*, 136.

The group's hostility to the music played at the *Santuario* is a symptom of how ostracised they feel from this sphere. This would-be Carnival and its music represent a grim world devoid of style. The only glimmer of hope is Bach's 'Partita for Violin' which appears as out of place as they are. Percolated through the loud speakers, the Partita is drowned out by shouts of 'VIVA' from the throngs, but its very presence encapsulates an encoded message for our characters, as we shall see. Arguably, Bach's recurring Partita for Violin is a hidden seam which sutures the tapestry of their experiences at both the Plaza de Mayo and the concert hall, Teatro de Colón.

Analogous to the way that the provincial workers had flocked to the impromptu sanctuary in the Plaza de Mayo, Juan, Clara and their peers seek refuge at the concert hall of Teatro de Colón. Clara's father had organized the outing to help them to relax prior to the examination and to divert his own attention from the ubiquitous fog and its concomitant tensions. Ironically, far from providing an oasis of calm, the theatre proves to be infernal. Juan and Clara are delighted to bump into the Cronista who has been dispatched by his newspaper to investigate whether panic has set in among the public or not. Before the music begins, Juan tries to distract Clara by showing her what he calls 'the jewel of great nights'. He places his glasses on his chest so that the chandelier is reflected in the lenses, shrunk to the size of a gold coin, shining like yellow eyes. Clara and Juan then view the theatre through the prism of this 'jewel':

Los ojos se esfumaban, sin cerrarse, y en lugar de la luz surgía la forma de la bóveda de la sala, un disco rosado donde las pupilas, opacas ahora pero todavía presentes, parecían mirar su propia contemplación como los ojos de los Bodhisattvas enajenados (193).

A Bodhisattva is a Buddhist worthy of nirvana who postpones paradise in order to provide help to others. As we shall see with 'Las Ménades', it is plausible that the concert hall may be conducive to attaining enlightenment of sorts, here endeavouring to underline to them the



precariousness of their position via musical codes. Later Clara asserts that like the chandelier, ‘Quizá ... las obras que importan no son las que significan, sino las que reflejan’ (203), itself a maxim which could apply to all of Cortázar’s works.

As the lights evanesce, so too do the concert goers’ whispers. Juan believes that it is the lights themselves that fall silent. A blind violinist enters with great aplomb, and the accompanying pianist declares that, owing to the delicacy of the Maestro’s health, he must rest between movements of Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata*. Juan and the Cronista are infuriated by the inane applause of the audience members who clap simply upon learning that the violinist needs to take a break. The selected piece, the *Kreutzer Sonata* was an intriguing and challenging choice, as its introduction has achieved immortality: ‘The slow introduction to the first movement is singled out for its remarkable harmonic organization, in which the usual progression from minor to major - from “darkness” to “light” - is strikingly reversed’.<sup>160</sup> Intriguingly this process parallels the progression from light to darkness in the concert hall. Theodor Adorno even highlighted the potency of a single note in the piece:

Just before the beginning of the reprise of the first movement of Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata*, which Tolstoy defamed as sensuous, the secondary subdominant produces an immense effect. Anywhere outside of the *Kreutzer Sonata* the same chord would be more or less insignificant. The passage only gains significance through its place and function in the movement.<sup>161</sup>

The effect of this piece on Juan for instance, would be far less significant elsewhere than it is here, as he does not anticipate its power to overwhelm him.

The *Kreutzer Sonata* is in many regards a ‘work with a future’ as it provided the inspiration for Tolstoy’s novella, to which Adorno alludes. Upon its release, Tolstoy’s polemical work was banned throughout much of Europe for indecency. This naturally

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<sup>160</sup> *The Beethoven Violin Sonatas: History, Criticism, Performance*, Edited by Lewis Lockwood and Mark Kroll. (Illinois: University of Illinois, 2004), 83.

<sup>161</sup> Theodor W. Adorno *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 115.

provoked renewed interest in Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* and it enjoyed something of a renaissance. In Tolstoy's novella, a passenger on a train, Pozdnyshev, announces that he has murdered his wife in a jealous rage. A pianist named Trukachevsky had performed the *Kreutzer Sonata* accompanied by Pozdnyshev's wife on the violin. Convinced that the pair was having an affair, Pozdnyshev murders his wife whilst Trukachevsky escapes. Pozdnyshev claims that music has the power to move people to unspeakable acts, be it adultery or murder and depicts his own reaction to music thus:

Music makes me forget myself, my actual position; it transports me into another state, not my natural one; under the influence of music it seems to me that I feel what I do not really feel, I understand what I do not really understand, that I can do what I can't do.<sup>162</sup>

Beethoven's sonatas, which epitomize intensity of feeling and stark contrasts of both mood and emotion, are depicted as particularly potent. Contrary to his initial instincts, Juan is seduced by the piece and abandons himself to its rhythms: 'Quería pensar, hacerse fuerte en su rápida cólera contra ese carnerismo histérico del aplauso; en vez se abandonó a los ritmos' (195). When the virtuoso performs Beethoven, Juan sees something of a sacrificial victim in him: 'Tenía algo de chivo emisario, de camino al Gólgota; de sus manos estaban saliendo todos los pecados del mundo; maligno el canto, inútilmente hermoso' (196). Like the crucified Messiah he gives all of himself for the sake of music, collapsing on a chaise longue at the interval. His musical performance resembles an exorcism of sorts. We are reminded of the conductor in 'Las Ménades' who also channels the power of music and who is sacrificed in a concert.

Juan mulls over the significance of a blind man, whom he had compared to Homer, playing the musical works of deaf man, Beethoven. Homer was traditionally portrayed as

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<sup>162</sup> Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, *Master and Man and Other Tales and Plays* (Maryland United States: Wildside Press LLC, 2008), 130.

physically blind yet numinously gifted or sighted.<sup>163</sup> Was Beethoven also numinously gifted?

As Barthes in *Image Music Text* postulates:

The truth is perhaps that Beethoven's music has in it something inaudible ... It is not possible that a musician be deaf by pure contingency or poignant destiny (they are the same thing). Beethoven's deafness designates the lack wherein resides all signification'.<sup>164</sup>

Beethoven's music is otherworldly. The blind musician has an acute sense of hearing, as he must rely on sound to construe his world. A blind man playing a deaf man ironically results in a most extraordinary musical performance. Utterly enraptured, Clara feels 'illuminated' by the violinist's blindness:

hasta Clara estaba conmovida y la ceguera del artista se le apareció como una calidad inmediata, era como ceguera, un atisbo del mundo sonoro donde el ciego se movía a pequeños saltos, con su grillo, su pequeño ataúd barnizado, su linda momia cantora, vaticinando (200).

The artist affords her access into his sonic world with his violin vaticinating. What exactly is the prophecy? Could it be the sacrifice to which Juan has alluded?

During the interval, Juan and Clara encounter friends of theirs, Pincho and Wally López Morales, with whom they exchange gossip. Juan says to Wally, as if continuing a prior conversation, 'Sí, Wally, yo creo que Schumann no hizo exactamente música, que su lenguaje del Davidsbündler [sic] y el Carnaval está a las puertas de un arte distinto' (201-202). 'Carnaval, Op. 9', is a work by Robert Schumann, subtitled 'Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes' and comprises short pieces representing masked revellers at a Carnival. We could hypothesize that the work is on the threshold of a different art, as it is an encoded work with numerous strata of meaning. For Schumann the four notes were musical cryptograms, signifying 'ASCH' as in Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.<sup>165</sup> The cipher 'ASCH' puts us

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<sup>163</sup> Moshe Barasch, *Blindness: the History of a Mental Image in Western Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 41.

<sup>164</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text* Trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 152-3.

<sup>165</sup> The 21 pieces are connected by a recurring motif. In each section of Carnival there appears either or both of two series of musical notes. A, E-flat, C, B - signified in German as A-S-C-H. Asch is also German for 'Ash'. Beate Julia Perrey, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Schumann* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72.

in the mind of the word-games incorporated by Bach in his works. Juan and his friends would indubitably identify with the Davidsbündler mentioned in the finale of 'Carnaval'. This imaginary band of conspirators aided Schumann in his struggle for freedom of the imagination and represented polar opposites of the Philistines, or those who treated art as a practical commodity.<sup>166</sup> Juan says of Schumann, 'Su música me suena un poco a rito de iniciación' (202). Schumann knew that he possessed a mystery but did not know what it was. He regards Schumann as 'el antisócrates: sólo sé que sé algo pero no sé qué. Parece haber esperado que su sistema musical lo fuera diciendo' (202). Here, we have the absence of Schumann's 'Carnaval' contrasted with the presence of Bach's Carnival music. Schumann's 'Carnaval' ties in with the notion of renewal through revolution in the Bakhtinian sense, but alas that sense of constructive revolution is not to be found here. Instead it is replaced by putrefaction and stagnation combined with a need to escape.

Interestingly, although Andrés is absent from this concert, he too had formulated his own theories on Schumann within his diary. When Andrés observes a girl called Mimi and an unnamed musician perform Schumann, 'la música parece estarlos usando para mirarse' (*Diario* 92). Mimi traces out the geometrical figures of music with her fingers, unaware of her own actions. Andrés muses, 'Sólo yo veo urdirse esos ritmos en el espacio. Sólo yo asisto al ordenamiento de su cuerpo en un modo que no es el suyo, siéndolo tanto' (*Diario* 93). Her body is no longer her own as she yields to her art: 'Sí, el artista es el que *cede*; y la calidad de su cesión da la medida de su arte... (No confundo creador e intérprete; hablo de esa instancia ocasional y maravillosa ya no hay diferencias.)' (*Diario* 93). Here the performer is the creator. As Barthes says, 'To compose, at least by propensity, is to give to do, not to give

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<sup>166</sup> In *Composer and nation: the folk heritage in music* (New York: International Publishers, 1960) by Sidney Walter Finkelstein we learn that Schumann was dedicated to 'carrying on battles for freedom in the realm of art and imagination. He invented his own band of conspirators, the Davidsbündler or 'League of David.' Schumann gave names to these imaginary Davidsbündler. He hinted that some were projections of different sides of himself by signing their names like the impetuous Florestan and dreamy Eusebius, to his music and critical writings' (131).

to hear but to give to write'.<sup>167</sup> Likewise the text demands a practical collaboration of the reader. No Schumann is performed in the course of *El Examen*, but many theories regarding his significance are explored. Schumann is essentially the 'silent musician' whose impact hovers over the action.

Following the interval, the violinist returns to his place 'with an air of mischief'. He acts as if he is about to fall into the pit, provoking panic among the onlookers. Before the audience has had the opportunity to regain its composure the maestro has launched into Bach's Partita in D Minor. The Partita concludes with the emotionally charged Chaconne.<sup>168</sup> Counterpointing the gaiety of the other parts of the Partita, the Chaconne was written by Bach the year that his wife died and some regard it as a requiem for her.<sup>169</sup> The Chaconne is considered the pinnacle of the solo violin repertoire in that it covers every aspect of violin-playing known during Bach's time and thus it is among the most difficult pieces to play for that instrument.<sup>170</sup> Earlier, while at the *Santuario*, Bach's Partita was distorted through speakers and drowned out by the rabble. Here the Partita is afforded the respect it merits. Suitably mesmerized by the music, Clara drifts away and returns from Bach with a feeling of displacement, of having travelled vertiginously. She wished she could stay there for hours. Her tranquility is rudely interrupted because of a bathroom brawl involving her father.

Clara's staid father reveals a hidden side, just as normally placid individuals often resort to violence during Carnival time. The anxiety caused by the stultifying mugginess and

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<sup>167</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 153.

<sup>168</sup> In an interview with the violinist, Christian Tetzlaff in *Violin virtuosos* by String Letter Publishing (California: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000) Tetzlaff claims that Bach's three sonatas represent the sacred festivals of Christmas, Passion and Easter whilst the Partitas, depicted the earthly side of life, with its dancing and merriment.

<sup>169</sup> Tetzlaff feels it is a requiem for her as 'it has citations from many chorales that deal with death' and discusses the manner in which Bach manipulated numbers 'So the note-numbers in the first statement adds up to the year of his wife's death. That is why Bach sometimes repeats only the top note of the chord, sometimes the entire chord' *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>170</sup> Johannes Brahms, in a letter to Clara Schumann, lauded the 'Chaconne' thus: 'On one stave, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. Litzman, Berthold (editor). *Letters of Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms, 1853-1896* (Connecticut: Hyperion Press, 1979), 16.

fog, coupled with the insult of being skipped in a queue in the bathroom have unhinged an already nervous Don Funés. Just as the jealous husband in Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata* felt driven to acts of despicable brutality by the music, it is not unthinkable that music could achieve a similar effect with Clara's father, given the appropriate circumstances. The *Cronista* depicts the fracas to Clara thus: 'Fue la apoteosis ... lo apocalíptico' (217). Inevitably the affray puts a swift end to the musical performance.

Unsurprisingly, music has assumed a privileged role at the concert. In addition to performances of Beethoven and Bach's music, we saw that Schumann was discussed by Juan and his colleagues. This trinity of musicians is intriguing for a number of reasons. For Juan, the violinist's performance of Beethoven makes him appear like Christ sacrificing himself. Bach's Partita, which implicitly evokes the death of Bach's wife, exerts a profound effect on Clara, whilst Juan feels that Schumann encapsulates the notion of ritual and is in possession of an obscure mystery. Sacrifice, death, ritual and mystery all merge to warn the couple of impending doom should they fail to read the signs and escape.

As outlined, the examination that Clara and Juan anticipate will be the culmination of their twenty-four hour vigil is an anticlimax. Invariably the seemingly trivial and interstitial yield the richest insight. While awaiting news of the exam at the university, Andrés and Clara retreat to the gallery in a vain quest for a breath of fresh air. After they descry two individuals removing portraits from the wall and putting them to one side, Andrés claims 'Una vez pensé en lo que sentiría una música hermosa si le fuera dada una conciencia' (290). The concept of music as a sentient being is thought-provoking for a multitude of motives, as we shall see.

Andrés explains that the sight of the defenceless portraits prompted him to consider the horror of Mozart being whistled, of all things. Here music is horrified at being reproduced by a mediocre medium. This vulnerability of music would appear to contravene Andrés's

position in *El Diario de Andrés Fava* where Music subjugated the musician. Ironically, the two positions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, if we take the Music in the diary to be the Platonic form of Music, whilst the music susceptible to the impairment inflicted upon it by a mediocrity would simply be an instance or performance, i.e. temporal incarnation of this Music. If we assume that music encodes particular values, then these values may also be under threat. Clara makes tantalising references to a tale in a magazine whose central idea was imagining a dimension where music is a form of life: ‘Puede concebirse una dimensión (en otro planeta, por ejemplo) donde lo que aquí llamamos música sea una forma de vida’ (290). If music is both conscious and a form of life, then it is quite plausible that it tries to warn them to leave Buenos Aires. The fact that Bach’s Partita for violin is played at both the Plaza de Mayo and in the concert hall is no coincidence. The music’s culmination in the death of the composer’s wife is a grim warning for Clara. Music might be unable to control the medium which reproduces it, but it may be able to inspire humans to interpret it.

Andrés’s aforementioned horror at the sight of the defenceless portraits echoes his deepest fears. Relegating both people and their portraits to a dark corner, consigning them to oblivion, is on a par with erasing the past. In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1979) one of Milan Kundera’s characters, Mirek explains that ‘the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting’.<sup>171</sup> In that instance the powers that be attempt to expunge their foes from the annals of time, in order to rewrite history in their own image. For those who feel that they have been left without a voice or silenced, their struggle is the struggle of man against power, memory against forgetting - euphony against aphonia. Clara, for her part, tries to articulate her all-encompassing sense of dread, ‘Nadie se deja arrumbar si no es arrumbable. Eso es lo horrible. ... Yo solamente puedo decirte que me siento acosada.

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<sup>171</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics; Reprint edition 1999), 4.

No te creas que solamente por Abel. Es otra cosa' (291). The verb 'arrumbar' as well as denoting 'to put to one side', can also mean 'to silence' when applied to a person. Clara fears being 'silenced' definitively but cannot identify the amorphous threat.

*El Examen* evokes the recurring quintessential nightmare of taking an examination, coupled with the archetypal terror of being pursued by an unknown or invisible predator. The examination should act as a catalyst for an evaluation of all they have learned in their past, what they experience in their present and particularly what they anticipate for their future. Instead it is transformed into a test of survival. Ironically it is the absence of the examination which comes to signify their true nightmare and the abyss into which they are plunged. Against the backdrop of a fog-smothered city of decay we explore our kaleidoscope of characters' esoteric tendencies and encumbrances. Nightmares represent Clara's affliction, whilst Abel's role as servant of Death is his. Juan explores the hidden truths hinted at by the oneiric and poetic realms. Nonetheless these pale into comparison with Andrés's ability to foresee death, his belief in reincarnation and his startling hypotheses on Music and its esoteric powers. Akin to energy, rituals are neither created nor destroyed; they are simply transmogrified from one form to another. Quintessential tropes of sacrifice such as the Passion of Christ and pre-sacrificial Carnival insinuate themselves throughout the text. The loci visited within their vigil are represented as houses of worship of sorts, be it *La Casa*, *Santuario*, the Teatro Colón or even the university, temples which ultimately fail to aid our protagonists.

*El Examen* is the quintessential 'work with a future' as conjectured by Fava. Firstly it languished in oblivion for more than three decades prior to being resurrected. Secondly it unwittingly painted a picture which evoked Evita Perón's death and its aftermath. It features a character, Andrés Fava, who is thought to turn up in a later novel, *Libro de Manuel*. Andrés's idea of music determining one's personal time and identity, his speculation on



music as a sentient being and a jealous mistress are themes that form the backbone of a number of Cortázar's own short stories such as 'Las Ménades', 'Clone', 'El Perseguidor' and 'Manuscrito Hallado junto a una Mano', as we shall explore later. From the rite of passage of *El Examen*, it is to the mysterious 'ship of fools' that we venture in the following novel, *Los Premios*.

## *Los Premios*

**‘Las estrellas no saben que forman las constelaciones que nosotros vemos’<sup>172</sup>**

The above citation, paraphrased from Cocteau, planted the seed for *Los Premios* in Cortázar’s fertile imagination. The stars are not only unaware of their participation in a constellation. Rather, it is the human observer who creates the constellation simply by gazing upon their pattern. We merge with what we perceive. Stargazing and deducing patterns form an integral part of *Los Premios*, and my aim is to explore the esoteric human and Cubist constellations filtered through the kaleidoscopic mind of one of the characters, Persio.

Defying easy classification, the text is not what it seems, as it seems to be many things that it is not. It is not a single text. The narrative actually comprises two interwoven strands. The first relates the linear narrative concerning a cruise; the second assumes the form of Persio’s soliloquies, catalogued from A to I, monologues written in italics which could combine to form an alternative novel. Persio’s interstitial musings punctuate the events, just as silence punctuates music, converting an incessant noise into a meaningful melody. In these monologues I will examine both Persio’s esoteric interests and the extent to which he moulds his visions to a painting of a guitar/guitarist by Picasso in order to explain events on the ship. From spiritual, magical and scientific angles I aim to detail the paths taken by Persio in a bid to attain the enlightenment he craves, to hear the music of the spheres as evoked by the painting. A cornucopia of disparate beliefs is interwoven throughout Persio’s soliloquies. Persio is, in a sense, a parody, an observer awash with occult knowledge, unwilling to commit to action. The question arises whether Persio understands on some level that he is being observed and thus created as a fictive entity, just as the seminal painting was recreated

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<sup>172</sup> Julio Cortázar: *Cartas Completas 2 - Julio Cortázar Cartas*; (edición a cargo de Aurora Bernárdez) ( Buenos Aires : Alfaguara, 2000), 702.

on board the ship. He appears somewhat one-dimensional and, in contrast to Horacio in *Rayuela*, we sense that he takes himself and his arcane concerns too seriously.

The premise of *Los Premios* is at first glance unremarkable. A group of individuals, embodying a cross-section of Argentine society, wins a government-sponsored lottery which entitles them to a cruise. Crucially, even the destination of the cruise is shrouded in secrecy; the passengers are merely informed that it may take up to three or four months and that the original captain will no longer be accompanying them. As the new captain does not personally greet them, many are dubious about his very existence. Before they spend their first full day at sea, Persio muses in one of his enigmatic soliloquies, that the ship was guided by a captain and was not rudderless as hitherto believed.<sup>173</sup> As alluded to in the introduction of this thesis, in an interview with Ignacio Solares in 1975, Cortázar spoke of a dream which had influenced *Los Premios*. In the dream, he was travelling in a storm on a ship that was adrift. He had the sensation that he was the sole passenger aboard. He tried to straighten the steering wheel and started to manipulate a compass. A phantasmal captain appeared, took control of the wheel and the compass, and chided him: ‘Si no sabes usar una brújula, ¿para qué te embarcas?’.<sup>174</sup> In the same interview, when Solares asked Cortázar about his belief in God, Cortázar simply replied that he believed that there was a captain aboard the ship, which would imply that he believed in some supernatural guiding force.<sup>175</sup> After Persio’s aforementioned soliloquy, just prior to the first full day at sea, Audiberti’s play, *Quoat-Quoat* (1946) is referenced with the enigmatic quote: ‘le ciel et la mer s’ajustent ensemble pour former une espèce de guitare’ (108). This image of a guitar being formed by the conjunction of sea and sky reflects Picasso’s painting of the guitar and originates from a novel about a young man who has been sent on a secret mission on board a cruise ship. In *Quoat-Quoat*,

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<sup>173</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Los Premios* ((Madrid: Suma de Letras S.L., 2004), 107. All further textual references to the novel are to this edition.

<sup>174</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 43.

<sup>175</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 44.

when the protagonist is apprehended by the captain, a captain thought to symbolize God, the man prefers to die rather than lose his identity.

The ship, the 'Malcolm' is a mixture of a cargo and passenger ship, somewhat removed from the cruise liner the winners would have anticipated. Some are tempted to believe that it is a hoax, and later there are even suggestions that it is an experiment and that they are little more than 'ratones blancos' (331). A pot-pourri of Argentine society peoples the ship; all strata of social classes and ages commingle. Prior to departure, the winners are instructed to congregate at the cordoned-off café London in Buenos Aires, where their friends and families must bid farewell to them. A tango ensemble, including the brother of one of the winners, Atilio Presutti (known as 'El Pelusa'), comes to bid them farewell with a song. The tango performed, 'Muñeca brava', appears to address those present about to embark on a luxury cruise:

Che madám que parlas en francés  
y tirás ventolín a dos manos,  
que cenas con champán bien frapé  
y en el tango enredas tu ilusión (49).

A divide soon becomes apparent as the haughtier elements view the music with disdain whilst others appreciate its warmth and humour. It is not a question of class, but one of attitude. The more tolerant and broadminded winners such as the school teacher, López and the dentist, Medrano are pleased, almost envious of the musicians' *insouciance*, whereas the portentous business tycoon, Don Galo is irked by their audacity. As discussed in relation to *El Examen*, tango music can be portrayed as both a negative and positive force in Cortázar's works. Peiró detects echoes of the adolescent passenger, Felipe's erotic dreams in the tango's lyrics and contends, 'El tango es un estímulo erótico: el erotismo que invade a Felipe y que cataliza el tango desemboca en una violación'.<sup>176</sup> Indeed it is quite striking that a medley of flirtations

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<sup>176</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 79-80.

and whimsical, often humorous interactions counterbalance a series of violent events which culminates in the rape of said teenager, Felipe and the murder of the dentist, Medrano.

The fact that a game of chance, a lottery, has brought the group together is critical to our understanding of the text. Whilst the passengers believe that they are winners, they are oblivious to the fact that the real game is about to begin. This game is literally one of life and death, where their reactions to their environment determine their fate. The one who reaches the ultimate prize, access to the stern, is the one who dies. For Persio this game resembles an elaborate game of chess: 'No sabe más que ellos de las leyes del juego, pero siente que están naciendo ahí mismo de cada uno de los jugadores, como en un tablero infinito' (43). This chess-game is not dissimilar to the games played by the gods of Olympus, determining man's lot in life. Manned by a foreign crew, mainly comprising Nordic seamen evoking the Vikings of yore, the passengers are confined to a specific area and are prohibited from accessing the prow of the ship. Whilst being kept in the dark initially, they are informed that this measure is to prevent the spread of typhus which has infected certain members of the crew, even striking Captain Smith. Suspicious that they are being manipulated by the powers that be, tensions arise as certain members wish to gain access to the forbidden stern, whilst others slavishly obey the authorities.

As a distraction, a masked talent show is organized by some of the passengers. During the soirée the youngest child, Jorge, falls ill with a fever and panic ensues. The ship's doctor is summoned. He rules out typhus and prescribes medicine for the fever. Later when Jorge's temperature soars, the doctor fails to attend and merely phones instructions to double his dosage. Outraged, a select group of passengers decide to use weapons force their way onto deck in order to radio for help. The rebels are led by Gabriel Medrano, who has fallen in love with Claudia, Jorge's mother. Upon reaching the stern, he discovers that it contains nothing. Following a confrontation, Medrano is shot and killed by the operator he has compelled to

radio for assistance. The fact that there is nothing on the stern may suggest that there was no motive for suspicion, or, on a metaphysical level, as the stern equates with death for Medrano, it implies that there is nothing after death. In *Keats, Poe, and the Shaping of Cortázar's Mythopoesis*, Ana Castillo contends:

The initiatic character of the stern in *Los Premios* combines with the symbolic labyrinthine structure of the corridors leading to it; both together give each character's inner confrontation a quality of primitive ritual of death and rebirth, identifying, as in *El Examen*, the psychological with the historical search for the origins.' (Castillo 63).

The stern is all things to all men. Medrano must remain true to himself and his image of himself before he can reach it. He is no coward and refuses to be dictated to by unseen forces. Resonating with the allusion to the protagonist of the aforementioned *Quoat-Quoat* who prefers death instead of loss of identity, it is as if Medrano too values his sense of self above his own life. Predictably, the Argentine authorities cast a veil of silence over the events and threaten the other passengers with imprisonment should they decide to reveal the murder to the outside world. It would appear that collective amnesia befalls the group as no-one has the slightest intention of publicizing what has transpired. The narrative concludes where it commenced with a coterie of lottery winners heading towards the Café London in Buenos Aires. With the exception of Medrano's death, it is as if nobody or nothing has truly changed.

As mentioned, my aim is to focus on the sparks of enlightenment which issue forth from Persio's interstitial musings in the form of monologues, pronouncements which give us a greater understanding of the text, particularly exploring Picasso's picture and the harmony of the spheres he perceives therein. This master of arcanum is a proof reader who has written a slew of unpublished occult manuscripts keen to probe the meaning of existence. He gravitates towards astral projection in his quest; astral in the sense of astronomical and astral in the preternatural sense of ethereal. Within the maelstrom of Persio's mind, the best course

of action for navigating through the maze of this enigmatic cruise is calculated,<sup>177</sup> as Persio flummoxes us with a farrago of possible guides, ranging from esoterica such as the Zend Avesta, compiled by the ancient Persian prophet Zarathustra, to Kabbalah, necromancy through to physiognomy. Persio alludes to Jorge's use of pharmaceutical terms such as 'lípidos' and 'glúcidos' to denote officers and mariners aboard the ship. Like Humpty Dumpty before him, when Jorge uses a term it means what he wants it to designate. Even the adults adopt Jorge's nomenclature to camouflage their intrigues from the authorities.

Persio's fertile imagination relates their voyage to Wagner's opera, 'The Flying Dutchman' (1840) which is based on a ghost ship condemned to drift forever, and the Etruscan daemon, Tukulca. Tukulca was a chthonic daemon with pointed ears (like a donkey), and hair made of snakes and a beak. Indeed, Persio also includes references to Vanth, a female demon in the Etruscan underworld. Famed for divinatory powers, the Etruscan's system of belief was 'an immanent polytheism; that is, all visible phenomena were considered to be a manifestation of divine power'.<sup>178</sup> Heaven reflected Earth, and macrocosm echoed microcosm. The will of deities had been 'revealed' to the Etruscans by two 'initiators', Vegoia, a female figure and Tages, a child-like figure possessed of wisdom and foresight. Why does Persio gravitate toward Etruscan mythology? It is possible that Persio discerns similarities between Tages and Jorge, the child in tune with esoteric knowledge: 'sabe cosas, o sea que es portavoz de un saber que después olvidará' (96). Persio is particularly interested in Jorge's somniloquism and believes that Jorge has seen the captain of the ship with his 'ojo interior' and alludes to him as 'un verdadero pararrayos' (283). Jorge

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<sup>177</sup> 'Su única ansiedad es lo magno de la elección posible: ¿guiarse por las estrellas, por el compás, por la cibernética, por la casualidad, por los principios de la lógica, por las razones oscuras, por las tablas del piso, por el estado de la vesícula biliar, por el sexo, por el carácter, por los palpitos, por la teología cristiana, por el Zend Avesta, por la jalea real, por una guía de ferrocarriles portugueses, por un soneto, por La Semana Financiera, por la forma del mentón de don Galo Porrino, por una bula, por la cabala, por la necromancia, por Bonjour Tristesse, o simplemente ajustando la conducta marítima a las alentadoras instrucciones que contiene todo paquete de pastillas Valda?' (*Los Premios* 68).

<sup>178</sup> 'ancient Italic people.' Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/297441/Italic-people>.

acts as a lightning conductor for the occult. Even his illness provides a catalyst for Medrano's esoteric experience.

The act of seeing, both physically and metaphysically, consumes Persio. His mythological counterpart who killed the Medusa, overcame death by looking at the reflection rather than facing it directly. Later, Persio longs to use Medrano's reflection to descry what he has uncovered. Initially Persio admits that he craves the ability to perceive the world through Jorge's eyes, to annex or add Jorge's perception to his own vision thus becoming like Argus, the watchman with a hundred eyes: '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 ... Todos los ojos, porque eso mata el tiempo, lo liquida del todo ... ' (96) This would abolish his self as well as space and time, removing him from the space-time continuum to integrate him into the One, the indivisible: 'La idea es abarcar lo cósmico en una síntesis total, sólo posible partiendo de un análisis igualmente total' (97). This calls to mind Jorge Luis Borges's vision of the Aleph, a point which paradoxically contains all points in the universe, including, recursively, itself. This notion of simultaneity is inherent in Cubism<sup>179</sup> where infinity is viewed from all sides at once - the ultimate occultist desire for omniscience. This also reflects Insecto's desire to see through the eyes of a fly.

In his perennial quest for meaning, Persio mines spiritual traditions such as Hinduism for enlightenment. Persio claims that his approach to the mystery enveloping the ship is even more obscure than a number which is too colossal for the human brain to assimilate, 'Se complica por un irresistible calidoscopio de vocabulario, palabras como mástiles, con mayúsculas que son velámenes furiosos' (260). This quest is hampered by a seductive mosaic

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<sup>179</sup> Like Persio, Apollinaire and Picasso shared an interest in the idea of simultaneity. For Apollinaire, simultaneity 'defined human identity, reflecting the life of the mind where past, present and future, here, now and elsewhere all coexist above the fatally consecutive flow of time. Cubists such as Picasso, also presents consecutive views simultaneously, producing multifaceted representation.' As quoted in *Picasso & Apollinaire : the Persistence of Memory* by Peter Read, 98.



of vocabulary, consisting of words like masts. These words and their initial letter propel his search for meaning, just as the sail is used to propel a boat. The capital letters or 'sails' which initialize his lexicon render the terms 'proper nouns', nouns that denote a particular thing rather than a generic entity.

*Samsara* is one of these proper nouns which drive Persio forward in his search.

*Samsara* represents a bolt of lightning for Persio, convulsing his body and soul:

Samsara, por ejemplo: la digo y me tiemblan de golpe todos los dedos de los pies ... Samsara, debajo se me hunde lo sólido, Samsara, el humo y el vapor reemplazan a los elementos, Samsara, obra de la gran ilusión, hijo y nieto de Mahamaya (260).

The solidity of the three-dimensional world is but an illusion. *Samsara* in Hinduism signifies the endless cycle of birth and suffering and death and rebirth, a cycle which can only be ruptured by Nirvana or enlightenment. Maya, the Giver of Perception, is a veil of illusion which tricks us in order to keep us tethered to *Samsara*, the Wheel of Existences. Gazing at the constellations, Persio senses 'la oscura certidumbre de que existe un punto central donde cada elemento discordante puede llegar a ser visto como un rayo de la rueda' (105). He hopes that everything will fall into place and illusion will dissolve once he has reached this central point of the Wheel of Life and Death.

However, Persio, like Horacio after him, discovers that words serve as both a barrier and catalyst. They mediate and hide reality, a reality whose illusive nature *Samsara* personifies. Persio recoils and bewails his own ridiculousness. Medrano had asserted that they were all ludicrous, and their fear of appearing ridiculous prevented them from taking action. Even those, like Persio, who are destined to question everything, are limited by the condition of their Argentine nationality. While they dance 'la danza de Shiva', Persio laments the fact that they are poisoned by futile metaphysics and that they do not rebel. The dance of Shiva, representing the rhythmic movement of the entire cosmos, encapsulates Shiva's

destruction and creation of the world. More importantly, the dance aspires to liberate man from the snare of illusion, from *Samsara* in other words. This enlightenment eludes a crestfallen Persio who, in an infinite loop, ends the monologue as he began, declaring,

No, no creo que mi frente de ataque sea más claro que un número de cincuenta y ocho cifras, o uno de esos portulanos que llevaban las naves a catástrofes acuáticas. Se complica por un irresistible calidoscopio de vocabulario, palabras como mástiles, con mayúsculas ... (265)

Aside from attempting to penetrate the Absolute by dipping into a palette of religious traditions, Persio, as befits someone synonymous with a constellation, is fixated with both astronomy and astrology. One of Persio's predominant motives for taking the trip is to escape the confines of the city and feast on the stars in their full glory. Like man, stars are born, live and die. Navigators traditionally used constellations to plot their trajectory while astrologers presaged man's future through astral charts. This leads Persio to believe that stargazing will empower him to see past, present and future. This trope of constellations corresponds to the challenging concept of 'figuras'.<sup>180</sup> These 'figuras' form part of a shifting constellation of significances throughout Cortázar's work. In *Divertimento* emphasis was placed on determining the identity of the two human 'figuras' in the painting, while Fava delights in exploring the diverse definitions of 'figure' given by *Webster's* dictionary: 'Vale la pena leer los veintitrés párrafos consagrados a *figure*' (*Diario* 63). The term 'figure' encompasses meanings as diverse as a human body, a paper or cloth pattern, a horoscope in the form of the diagram of the aspects of the astrological houses, not to mention a form of melody or musical motif. In *Los Premios* the 'figura' of the figure is also polysemous. Boldy holds that these 'figuras' are deeply rooted in the Borgesian concept of 'figuras' or patterns which could only be grasped by a divine intelligence (22). For Persio, it could also indicate the human figure of the guitarist but more probably relates to patterns or constellations as discussed. In Cortázar's

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<sup>180</sup> For a more extensive study of 'figuras' please see Boldy's *The Novels of Julio Cortázar*, 22-24.

later work, 62: *Modelo para armar*, as shall be discussed in greater detail, the ‘figuras’ perceived open up a channel to prognostication if only we are able to read them correctly. Solitary stars appear insignificant next to the ‘escritura indescifrable’ of fully-fledged constellations. For Persio these clans of constellations engage in a titanic struggle for supremacy. Persio feels that when we look at a constellation, ‘tenemos algo así como una seguridad de que el acorde, el ritmo que une sus estrellas, y que ponemos nosotros ... es más hondo, más sustancial que la presencia aislada de sus estrellas’ (45).

Persio believes that from time immemorial man has intuited the supremacy of constellations and has thus sacralised constellations. The relationship between the firmaments and music has exerted man’s mind from the days of the ancient philosophers until Kepler and Newton. It was said that of all men only Pythagoras heard the music of the spheres. Boethius felt that ‘musica humana’<sup>181</sup> could be created through self-knowledge:

By coming to know these essences – even in the corporeal world of sound – the mind is able to transcend cursory sensory experience and rise to a higher level of knowing; it is reminded of these essences as it comes to know its own being and as it studies nature and the cosmos.<sup>182</sup>

In his own quest for enlightenment, Persio eschews scientific instruments such as telescopes because he believes that only a poetic vision can approach or encompass the sense or meaning of figures which angels ‘write and reconcile’. He claims that one of those ‘figuras’ begins with lottery which chooses winners amongst hundreds of thousands of individuals,

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<sup>181</sup> The great medieval philosopher, Boethius divided music into three categories:

*Musica instrumentalis* – that which can be produced on instruments, and is audible to the ear and is audible.

*Musica humana* – that which is of the human body (holds together body and soul). Whoever penetrates into his own self perceives this human music.

*Musica mundana* – That which is produced by heavenly bodies moving through their orbits and only audible to God and Pythagoras.

Aside from his three-fold division of music, Boethius also categorized three types of musicians: performers, composers, and critics. Unusually, the theorist/critic was seen to be the true musician, for he alone is concerned with ‘knowing, through reason, the fundamental essences which determine the value of performances and compositions.’ *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* Edited by Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 146.

<sup>182</sup> Thomas Christensen (ed), *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* 146.

winners who later select their companions spontaneously. In perpetual flux, this configuration portrays the instantaneous and ephemeral kaleidoscope.

For Persio this trip is fundamentally a sociological and psychological experiment: ‘En realidad lo que hago es recaer en el unanimismo pasado de moda, pero le busco la vuelta por otro lado’ (45). The French literary movement, Unanimism, to which he alludes revolved around the psychological concept of group consciousness and the necessity for the poet to merge with this ‘transcendent consciousness’.<sup>183</sup> Given that a group is both more and less than the sum of its parts Persio hopes to appraise the group from within and without to determine whether or not it is a ‘figura’ in the magical sense. Just as Nietzsche opined that self knowledge meant that man could turn his life into art, Persio sees himself as a poet creating a work of art wrought from understanding both himself and the magical constellation to which he pertains. Persio believes that once he has recognised the distinct points of any constellation be it human or stellar, he can draw lines between the points to form a recognisable figure: ‘no estoy lejos de pensar que un día veré nacer un dibujo que coincida exactamente con alguna obra famosa, una guitarra de Picasso, por ejemplo ... Si eso ocurre tendré una cifra, un módulo’ (99).

How does Persio propose exploring the aforementioned constellation from inside and outside the group simultaneously? Persio purports to meditate and travel the astral plane in the hope of gaining enlightenment. He asserts,

Yo viajo en el infraespacio y el hiperespacio — ... Por lo menos mi cuerpo astral cumple derroteros vertiginosos ... Vea, este crucero me va a ser útil para las observaciones estelares, las sentencias astrales. ¿Usted sabe lo que pensaba Paracelso? Que el firmamento es una farmacoepa (95-96).

As alluded to, the term ‘astral’ is clearly derived from the stars, but may also differ somewhat

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<sup>183</sup> ‘Unanimism.’ Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 24 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/613993/Unanimism>>.

from our common conception of the astronomical. The astral plane, a plane parallel to the physical world<sup>184</sup>, is a concept which has rippled throughout the ages in a multitude of esoteric philosophies and mystery religions. Astral projection involves the traveller leaving his physical body to venture into higher realms using his astral body, which is the spiritual, ether-like twin of the tangible body. Theosophists also believed that the astral plane was accessed by the soul in its astral body on the way to being born and after death. It is thought that dreams or the hypnagogic state between wakefulness and sleep form the most propitious springboard for astral projection. Although not all dreams comprise travelling the astral plane, a substantial quantity is believed to fall within this category. Theosophy, as later discussed in *Rayuela*, revived interest in astral projection in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, drawing from the Hindu and neoplatonic concepts of the astral body. For some the astral body connects the rational soul to the corporeal body while the astral plane is populated by immaterial entities, including angels and demons, even vampires as we shall see. In his article 'The Astral Body in Renaissance Medicine' D. P. Walker gives an account of the Neoplatonic astral body as the 'garment of the soul' and claims that the astral body, or 'vehicle of the soul' may coincide with the substance of the stars and spheres: 'It is thus especially susceptible to astrological influences'.<sup>185</sup> It is not explicitly specified whether Persio uses dreams to access this plane, and it is probable that he actively induces a trance-

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<sup>184</sup> C W Leadbeater, *A Textbook of Theosophy* (Project Gutenberg EBook web resource, 1912):

We have given names to these interpenetrating worlds for convenience in speaking of them. No name is needed for the first, as man is not yet in direct connection with it; but when it is necessary to mention it, it may be called the divine world. The second is described as the monadic, because in it exist those Sparks of the divine Life which we call the human Monads; but neither of these can be touched by the highest clairvoyant investigations at present possible for us. The third sphere, whose atoms contain 2,401 bubbles, is called the spiritual world, because in it functions the highest Spirit in man as now constituted. The fourth is the intuitional world (Previously called in theosophical literature the buddhic plane) because from it come the highest intuitions. The fifth is the mental world, because of its matter is built the mind of man. The sixth is called the emotional or astral world, because the emotions of man cause undulations in its matter. (The name astral was given to it by mediaeval alchemists, because its matter is stary or shining as (24) compared to that of the denser world). The seventh world, composed of the type of matter which we see all around us, is called the physical.

<sup>185</sup> D. P. Walker, 'The Astral Body in Renaissance Medicine'. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 21, No. 1/2 (Jan. - Jun., 1958), 119-133, *The Warburg Institute* URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/750490>.

like state in order to project himself into that dimension.

Persio's allusion to the Renaissance Alchemist extraordinaire, Paracelsus and the so-called 'Pharmacopeia of the Firmament' ties in with this notion of the astral plane, which is both an ethereal dimension and one connected with the cosmos which envelops us. Likewise, Paracelsus 'saw man as a microcosm, reflecting the nature of the divine world through his immortal soul, the sidereal world through his astral body or vital principle, and the terrestrial world through his visible body'.<sup>186</sup> Paracelsus revolutionized medicine and the manufacturing of drugs (pharmacopeia) to cure disease. In *The Spirit of Man in Art and Literature* Carl Jung states that, 'In his *Labyrinthus medicorum* Paracelsus says that the stars in heaven must be 'coupled together,' and that the physician must 'extract the judgment of the firmament from them ... The Firmament is not merely the cosmic heaven, but a body which is a part or content of the human body ... The firmamental body is the corporeal equivalent of the astrological heaven'.<sup>187</sup> Thus the astrological constellation provides both diagnosis and therapy. Persio optimistically anticipates the restorative abilities of his beloved constellations.

As mentioned, Persio claims to travel in hyperspace using his astral body. Theoretically hyperspace is a notional space-time continuum in which it is possible to travel faster than light, a thesis explored by short stories such as 'El Perseguidor', as shall be discussed later. The term 'hyperspace' basically means space of more than three dimensions, with the fourth dimension commonly held to mean time, a dimension which unlike the first three is invisible to the human eye. Just as a two-dimensional object may be perceived by a three-dimensional object, a three-dimensional object can be properly viewed by a four-dimensional object. If we were to see our life from the fourth dimension, we would see a

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<sup>186</sup> Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary Of Philosophy*, Second Edition.

<sup>187</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man: Art and Literature* (Routledge: London, 1984), 20.

series of snapshots, each mimicking a moment in our life. In his work, *Hyperspace: a scientific odyssey*, Michio Kaku recounts that

Abstract painters tried not only to visualize people's faces as though painted by a four-dimensional person, but also to treat time as the fourth dimension. In Marcel Duchamp's painting *Descending a Staircase*, we see a blurred representation of a woman, with an infinite number of her images superimposed over time as she walks down the stairs. This is how a four-dimensional person would see people viewing all time sequences at once, if time were the fourth dimension' (*Hyperspace* 63).

The trailblazing scientific research into multidimensions and the mathematical concepts of non-Euclidean geometry inspired *avant-garde* artists, leading to an unusual cross-fertilization between art and science.<sup>188</sup> The fourth dimension subverted traditional views of the world, defying long-held beliefs on perspective as it allowed human beings to view all sides simultaneously. The Theosophist Leadbeater<sup>189</sup>, consistently equated four-dimensional vision with the 'astral sight' of the clairvoyant, whereby the 'infinite object is seen, as it were, from all sides at once'<sup>190</sup>, while Apollinaire calls the fourth dimension a 'utopian expression'.<sup>191</sup>

On one level, Picasso's painting of the guitar 'que fue de Apollinaire' provides a key to understanding the text. Prior to discussing the painting, a number of background details

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<sup>188</sup> Whether art critics of the early twentieth century such as Apollinaire had read or fully understood these esoteric scientific hypotheses is, to a certain degree, a moot point. In 'Cubism and 'the fourth dimension', Gibbons argues that they did not grasp the intricacies of Einstein's concept of Relativity and/or Minkowski's concept of a four-dimensional space-time continuum, but they were certainly aware of general scientific and mathematical trends, and as we know, often science lags behind philosophical discoveries. The *avant-garde* seized on the fourth dimension as it was both enigmatic and pushed the boundaries of science to the limit.

<sup>189</sup> Leadbeater drew on C. Howard Hinton's work. In 1880, the Dublin University Magazine an article by Hinton entitled 'What is the Fourth Dimension?', which aimed to foster in his reader 'the mental ability to penetrate to the Fourth Dimension of permanent transcendental which will give meaning and purpose to our lives' as quoted in 'Cubism and "The Fourth Dimension" in the Context of the Late Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Revival of Occult Idealism' by Tom H. Gibbons, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 44 (1981), 130-147.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-147. Irrespective of what scientific papers had been published or grasped by him by the time that Apollinaire penned 'Les Peintres Cubistes' in 1913, he explores the notion of the fourth dimension in Cubist art in chapters iii and iv of 'Les Peintres Cubistes':

Until now, the three dimensions of Euclid's geometry were sufficient to the restiveness felt by great artists yearning for the infinite...Today, scientists no longer limit themselves to the three dimensions of Euclid. The painters have been led naturally, one might say by intuition, to preoccupy themselves with the new possibilities of spatial measurement which, in the language of the modern studios, are designated by the term: the fourth dimension ... it represents the immensity of space eternalizing itself in all directions at any given moment. ..But the art of the new painters takes the infinite universe as its ideal.

may be apposite. Bound together by a dizzying array of shared interests, Apollinaire and Picasso exerted a profound effect on the other's work.<sup>192</sup> Although Picasso created a number of paintings of guitars this painting occupies a privileged status as Picasso gave it to Apollinaire as a wedding gift, shortly before his untimely death.<sup>193</sup> This musical image represents a union between Apollinaire and Picasso. As the phrase 'que fue de Apollinaire' suggests, the painting not only belonged to Apollinaire, but in some respects was also of Apollinaire. A closer examination of the painting may yield some clues even if Picasso's poetic picture resists circumscription. The work consists of a number of geometric shapes of dullish colours ranging from olive-green to blue to black-and-white striped lines with black rectangles and many triangular shapes. It is possible to distinguish certain elements of a guitar such as the body of the guitar, the sound hole and elements of the guitarist. The hands are discernible and the sound hole of the guitar is repeated where the heart of the man should be. Indeed, according to Peter Read in *Picasso & Apollinaire : the Persistence of Memory*, the guitarist's clothing incorporated aspects of him 'such as his military uniform. The human figure both plays and resembles a guitar, creating a fascinating pattern of shifting, reflecting shapes and planes, suggesting physical and spiritual unity between the musician and his instrument'.<sup>194</sup> Man and guitar merge into one, forcing us to ask: 'how can one separate the dancer from the dance, the guitarist from the guitar?' Lines represent both the chords of the guitar and also the sound waves produced by the guitar. The guitar itself could equally be a

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<sup>192</sup> As discussed in Peter Read's, *Picasso & Apollinaire : the Persistence of Memory* (28-9), just as Picasso created numerous portraits of Apollinaire, even one depicting him as a coffeepot in 1905, Apollinaire wrote extensively about abstract art as we have seen in 'Les Peintres Cubistes'. In 'The Assassinated Poet' Apollinaire says that 'when the spirit encounters imperishable art, it casts off material constraints and enjoys a taste of immortality', clearly with Picasso's timeless art in mind.

<sup>193</sup> Apollinaire's stellar career was cut short. Seriously injured and trepanned, he had survived the First World War to marry his fiancée, Jacqueline Kolb on May 2 1918, only to fall prey to Spanish influenza on November 9 of the same year.

<sup>194</sup> Peter Read, *Picasso & Apollinaire : the Persistence of Memory* (California: University of California Press, 2010), 129.



rifle given its position and the manner in which it is held. A rifle would chime with both Apollinaire and Medrano's gun.<sup>195</sup>

Echoing Apollinaire's thoughts on Cubist painters, Persio uses his intuition, to preoccupy himself with probing the concept of 'the immensity of space eternalizing itself in all directions at any given moment'.<sup>196</sup> Just as Cubism uses a painting to examine reality from incalculable perspectives, Persio scrutinizes this particular painting from myriad angles. These perspectives include visual aspects such as telescopic manipulations of the picture and views from within the painting, acoustic perspectives such as the silence preceding the sound of the guitar, metaphysical dimensions such as the antiguitar. The evolution of the painting from a visual to a metaphysical entity is charted throughout Persio's monologues as he 'listens' to the stars on the astral plane. He asks, '¿Por qué razón ha de ser así una tela de araña o un cuadro de Picasso, es decir, por qué el cuadro no ha de explicar la tela y la araña no ha de fijar la razón del cuadro ... ?' (53-54).

Persio's first allusion to Apollinaire's painting by Picasso juxtaposes it with a spider's web and wonders why one does not explain the other. Persio deduces secret links between discrete phenomena in the spirit of the occult philosophy, as expounded by Cornelius Agrippa's 'De occulta philosophia' which, as mentioned, holds that 'the universe is articulated by a network of correspondences, "occulted" or invisible to the senses. Agrippa's various types of magic exploit these correspondences, using objects in the lower realms of existence (e.g., words, metals, herbs) to draw down the influences of their higher counterparts

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<sup>195</sup> The sound holes could easily be eyes or gunshot wounds. In fact the two holes reflect a premonitory painting of Apollinaire by Chirico, which many felt foreshadowed his serious head injuries. Louis Aragon, in his obituary, called Apollinaire 'a magus and a prophet' and recalled Chirico's premonitory portrait of the poet: 'Signs prefigured the events of his life; a painter in 1913 saw on his head the scars of a wound that was yet to appear. Linked by a pact with all sacred animals, he knew all the gods and could make all the magic potions', as discussed by Peter Read in *Picasso & Apollinaire: the Persistence of Memory*, 35.

<sup>196</sup> Herschel Browning Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*. Volume II of California studies in the History of Art, (California: University of California Press, 1968), Print, 224.

(e.g., angels, planets)'.<sup>197</sup> The web emanates from the lower realm of existence whilst the picture, exemplifying the sidereal harmonies evokes its higher counterpart. What is a spider's web only a beautiful, lacy trap which the spider has fabricated from his own body? It is the stuff of which he is made, just as the celestial harmonies Persio envisages emanating from Picasso's picture comprise the same essence as the Supreme Musician. Seductively woven, the arachnoid trap calls to mind the three Fates weaving man's destiny, as alluded to in *Divertimento*.

Persio conjectures that we can never see things in their true form, as the very act of vision fuses us with the object, 'Las cosas pesan más si se las mirá, ocho y ocho son dieciséis y el que cuenta' (54). Still traversing the astral plane, Persio views the configuration of winners within the London café. Mimicking the zoom feature of a camera he describes this constellation from a number of angles. From ten metres it is a boardgame, from twenty centimetres we see Attilio Presutti's face, from fifty metres it coincides with the aforementioned guitar player painted by Picasso in 1918. Persio advances the scrutiny of the picture by examining reality from within the painting – he is on the inside looking out. For instance, he envisages the two poles which support the bow of the ship as corresponding to the round holes in the centre of the painting. A little later Persio resents his own predilection for forcing a contrived reality, his bid to make reality conform to what he believes to be rather than what it is. His continuous uncertainty is that of the 'insecto cromófilo' which conspicuously runs around the surface of the picture, a three-dimensional object crawling over a two-dimensional plane. The insect stays on the edge as if he's swimming beside the boat, just as everything is on the verge for Persio, who is concurrently inside and outside of the configuration.

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<sup>197</sup> Godwin, *Music and the occult*, 3.

Persio moves from visual images of the picture to listening to its music while meditating on the astral plane. At times Persio makes oblique references to the guitar without mentioning the name of the instrument, as if it is taboo or too sacred to be uttered. He refers to playing the guitar as ‘el roce de una papila cutánea contra un reseco y tirante cilindro de tripa urda en el espacio el primer polígono de un movimiento fugado’ (236). He juxtaposes the guitar strumming with the transmogrification of ink into Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* and holds that ‘la meditación, tinta secreta y uña sutil percutiendo el tenso pergamino de la noche, acaba por invadir y desentrañar la materia opaca que rodea su hueco de sedientos bordes’ (236). The reference to ‘secret’ or ‘invisible’ ink could mean that the work existed on the astral plane as a virtual entity prior to being brought into existence via the interplay between thought and action, meditation and ‘writing’. Writing here could also mean playing the astral guitar which as we see later, ‘inscribe en un espacio duro como mármol una música para otros oídos’ (331).

For Schopenhauer the ‘Will’ is the primary essence of all things, an aimless desire to perpetuate itself - the basis of life. What is the correspondence between Schopenhauer’s concept of Will and the guitar of the picture, here depicted as the guitar of the night or the skies? Schopenhauer regarded art as a release from the imprisonment of this world. It is important to note that music occupies a privileged place in Schopenhauer’s aesthetics, as he believed it to have a special relationship to the will. Where other forms of art are imitations of things perceived in the world, music is a direct copy of the will: ‘Music is thus by no means like the other arts, the copy of the Ideas, but the copy of the will itself, whose objectivity these Ideas are. This is why the effect of music is much more powerful and penetrating than that of the other arts, for they speak only of shadows, but it speaks of the thing itself’.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Works of Schopenhauer*. Abridged ed. edited by Will Durant. Intro. by Thomas Mann. (N.Y: Ungar, 1955). (This is an abridgment of his main work, *The World as Will and Representation* plus a selection of other

Persio imagines that he has heard the guitar, a muffled sound strummed by the giant nail of space. Persio hopes that charged words will respond to the resonance of the strings and perhaps enlighten him: ‘Al borde - y esa palabra vuelve y vuelve, todo es borde y cesará de serlo en cualquier momento - , al borde Persio, al borde barco, al borde presente, al borde borde: resistir, quedarse todavía, ofrecerse para tomar’ (238). He contemplates sacrificing himself in order to learn the truth: ‘destruirse como conciencia para ser a la vez la presa y el cazador, el encuentro anulador de toda oposición, la luz que se ilumina a sí misma, la guitarra que es la oreja que se escucha’ (238). As the light which illuminates itself, the space between subject and object, between knower and knowledge will thus be abolished, just as the distinction between the guitarist and the guitar is blurred:

Arriba la música también se hieratiza, una nota tensa y continua se va cargando poco a poco de sentido, acepta una segunda nota, cede su apuntación hacia la melodía para ingresar, perdiéndose, en un acorde cada vez más rico, y de esa pérdida surge una nueva música, la guitarra se desata como un pelo sobre la almohada, todas las uñas de las estrellas caen sobre la cabeza de Persio y lo desgarran en una dulcísima tortura de consumación (239).

A note becomes charged with meaning. It loses itself in an increasingly rich chord and from this sacrifice a new music is born. The nails of the stars claw at Persio ‘en una dulcísima tortura de consumación’. It is worth noting that Pythagoras saw the universe as a giant monochord stretched between heaven and earth: ‘If struck in the more spiritual part ... the monochord will give eternal life; if in the more material part, transitory life’.<sup>199</sup> Persio sings believing that he can hear the guitar; he sees beyond his eyes, in the spirit of not just astral vision but also the motto of his and Jorge’s beloved ‘Little Prince’ for whom, ‘L’essentiel est invisible pour les yeux.’

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essays), 150.

<sup>199</sup> Hall, *The Secret Teachings Of All Ages*, 82.

Although Persio fancies that he sees the guitar being played sporadically, on other occasions it appears to be inert. He conjectures that this repose is as necessary as the calm before the storm, the pregnant silence preceding the explosion of the musical chord, an explosion evoking the Big Bang which called forth the Universe, space and time: 'La imagen apenas antropomórfica, desdeñosamente pintada por Picasso en un cuadro que fue de Apollinaire, figura más que nunca la comedia en su punto de fusión, cuando todo se inmoviliza antes de estallar en el acorde que resolverá la tensión insoportable' (331). He hopes that this music will release the pent up tension and provide catharsis for the drama.

Later, Persio speculates on a twist in the plot, 'donde la tercera mano entrevista apenas por Persio en un instante de donación astral, empuña por su cuenta la vihuela sin caja y sin cuerdas, inscribe en un espacio duro como mármol una música para otros oídos' (331). Persio laments not having chewed coca leaves in order to open the 'doors of perception', to feel the growth of the third hand. Just as a third eye allows us to see invisible forces, to contemplate the 'Other', to visit the astral plane, Persio believes that the astral plane has momentarily furnished him with the gift of the aforementioned third hand. The third hand is able to grasp and not simply see time. For Persio, the third hand explosively inserts itself into an instance of poetry, art, suicide or sanctity.<sup>200</sup> He longs to caress the night with this enigmatic third hand, wishing to reveal the true nature of time and thus control it. In addition to its correspondence to the third eye, the third hand may equally allude to one of the numerous hands of the dancing Shiva also mentioned in this monologue.

Persio rejects intelligible poetry, voodoo or rites of initiation; he craves pure rhythms, 'dibujos en lo más sensible de la palma de la tercera mano, arquetipos radiantes' (264). Persio appreciates the abstruseness of this guitar: 'No es cómodo entender la antiguitarra como no es

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<sup>200</sup> 'En alguna parte ha de estar esa tercera mano que a veces fulminante se insinúa en una instancia de poesía, en un golpe de pincel, en un suicidio, en una santidad' (263).

cómo entender la antimateria ... una tercera mano sideral se propone con la más desaforada de las provocaciones para arrancar al vigía de su contemplación' (331). The invisible guitar, devoid of either box or strings is portrayed as an antiguitar, the 'Other' to the physical guitar. Curiously the notion of an antiguitar is counterpointed with antimatter. Generally when antimatter and matter collide they provoke a massive explosion and destroy one another. Does it follow that this guitar can annihilate a physical guitar? Not for Persio, as this is an astral guitar, it coexists peacefully alongside the material guitar. A metaphysical guitar requires a metaphysical hand to play it and perhaps a metaphysical mind to understand it: 'no porque ese palíndroma del cosmos sea la negación (¿por qué tendría que ser la negación el antiuniverso?) sino la verdad que muestra la tercera mano, la verdad que espera él nacimiento del hombre para entrar en la alegría!' (332). Ironically, this glimpse of future joy is shortlived.

A profound change in Persio's mood and methodology occurs when Jorge is struck down with an unidentified malady while performing at the soirée. An overwrought Persio imagines that the passengers are wooden dolls, whom the stars have dictated should continue with the interrupted show. These primordial dolls enact the dance of creation and ultimately like Shiva, 'la danse macabre'. According to Boldy, Persio sees the passengers as wooden dolls, ones who 'will die, to be replaced by monkeys and real men. Here ...there is a reference to the Guatemalan myth of evolution reconstructed in Asturias's *Hombres de Maíz*, where in fact, through a series of rites, 'the real man' is rediscovered in the shell he had deserted'.<sup>201</sup> This dance is for Persio, the first act of American destiny as the dolls are abandoned by their gods, left to their fate as the ships passengers are set adrift.

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<sup>201</sup> Boldy, *The Novels of Julio Cortázar*, 16.

The oceanic guitar has been rendered silent and Persio falls into the almost blind present, blind in both the physical and metaphysical realms, framed by a starless sea. Vainly he had donned the mantle of prophet, certain that he could reach a central point from which the discrete coordinates would fit together and make sense. Now nothing makes sense in the way he had hoped, as death appears to hover over Jorge. It was all a metaphysical swindle. His desire to see the stern has evanesced. He determines that the stern is really his bitter vision, what he denotes as his most necessary and deplorable task. Although he no longer yearns to see the stern he is haunted by phantasmagorical visions of monkeys and lions patrolling the decks, holograms which blur with his vision of the wooden dolls. In a fusion of epochs and civilizations, Persio believes that music does not merely emanate from Picasso's picture. Rather, these wooden dolls or puppets are performing an illusory ritual dance along the lines of the painting, their rhythms carving out the contours of the image: 'figuras de la danza que repiten en un barco cualquiera las líneas y los círculos del hombre de la guitarra de Picasso (que fue de Apollinaire)' (373).

Persio is horrified that what he thought was a unique constellation is in fact the perennial dance of life and death. Right now, however, Persio's priority is Jorge. He fears an incurable irresolution at the centre of all solutions, perhaps the death of Jorge. Jorge's fever has demonstrated the danger of their passivity to Persio, who is reduced to tears. '¿Por qué lloras, Persio, por qué lloras; con cosas así se enciende a veces el fuego, de tanta miseria crece el canto; cuando los muñecos muerdan su último puñado de ceniza, quizá nazca un hombre. Quizá ya ha nacido y no lo ves' (375). Persio ultimately believes that a self-actualized or 'real' man may be born. Perhaps this man will be courageous enough to force his way onto the stern, to find the truth and maybe save the boy.

Despite Persio's relief that Jorge has been spared, once the dance has finished and the sacrificial ritual has been completed, Persio feels bitterly betrayed as he was denied

knowledge of what was on the stern. A sacrifice was warranted and Medrano fulfils this remit by breaking through the ultimate barrier. In so doing, Persio wonders: did he see the beasts or hear the primeval voices on the stern? Did he experience the archetypes or Mothers? It is interesting to note that the 'Tao' is also referred to as the great Mother<sup>202</sup>, so perhaps this notion of Mothers tallies with Taoism's Mother of the Universe. The individuals who returned alive from the stern lack the intelligence to understand what they had seen and the only person who understands is now dead.

Persio feels that their efforts to discover the Ultimate Truth have been thwarted by sinister forces whose 'terror acaba por matar la imagen del dios creador' (418) and who conspired to conceal 'lo que temblorosamente esperaba del otro lado' (418). He believes that Medrano was killed so as not to reveal what had been revealed to him on the stern, perhaps the true face of the guitarist. The picture or dance has been performed not just painted:

Una vez más ve Persio dibujarse la imagen del guitarrista en un cuadro que fue de Apollinaire, una vez más ve que el músico no tiene cara, no hay más que un vago rectángulo negro, una música sin dueño, un ciego acaecer sin raíces, un barco flotando a la deriva, una novela que se acaba (418).

Once again Persio sees the image of the guitar player being drawn, he sees that the musician has no face and is anonymous. There is now a black rectangle, a music without owner, as a ship sailing adrift and a novel just drawing to an end.

In spite of the passengers' tumultuous ordeal, everything returns to normal with the exception of Medrano, who is dead. The others bounce back into their old lives, akin to the elastic images which comprised their totemic picture. Disheartened, Persio believed that they were on the cusp of something extraordinary but were unable to transcend their own limitations. Although *Los Premios* centres around a voyage, there is a very real sense in which they never truly escape from Buenos Aires. The characters are surrounded by a

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<sup>202</sup> Anthony John Monaco, *Scriptures from the Orient: The Symbolic Version of the Dhammapada - The Symbolic Version of Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu, The Symbolic Version of the Kitab i Aqdas*. (AuthorHouse, 2004 ebook), 177.



colourful selection of their fellow citizens, albeit in a confined space. Interestingly, Cortázar himself was living in Paris by the time that he wrote *Los Premios* but it is not until *Rayuela* that Europe in general and Paris in particular is portrayed as an aspiration, whilst Buenos Aires encapsulates ‘the hell that is other people’.<sup>203</sup> Critics, such as Cynthia Schmidt-Cruz, contend that *Rayuela* is ‘dated’, although it undoubtedly embodies the *Zeitgeist* of the Bohemian Paris of the early 1960s, as we shall see.<sup>204</sup>

As *Los Premios* draws to a conclusion, the jigsaw remains incomplete. The fundamental question lingers: who is the Supreme Musician? Not dissimilar to the cryptic painting in *Divertimento* and the enigmatic pursuit in *El Examen*, here the conundrum of the cruise and the stern remains unsolved, irrespective of the actions of the protagonists. It is the journey rather than the *satori* that counts. Interspersed throughout *Los Premios* we have seen the way in which Persio’s italicized soliloquies (an experiment with typeface and structure upon which *Rayuela* expands) combine to form a parallel novel. Form and content are interwoven. Persio is not afraid to delve into the crucially important questions such as our origins and purpose in life. This he does with the aid of Hinduism, the fourth dimension of time and art coupled with astral travelling. The anarchic dissemination of esoteric tropes is spectacular. Indeed, throughout this chapter, a wide variety of *figuras* or constellations has been untangled. I have perused the way in which visual art acts as a conduit to other dimensions, including past and future in *Divertimento*, *El Examen* and *Los Premios*. Speculative music counterpoints physical musical performance in *El Examen*, *El Diario de Andrés Fava* and *Los Premios*. With classical music subtle messages are encoded in both Bach and Beethoven, a trend which resurfaces in Cortázar’s short stories. In addition to art, language is appraised as a cypher which shapes and conceals reality, whereas this very act of

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<sup>203</sup> Cortázar saw Paris of May 1968 as a golden age, albeit an ephemeral one.

<sup>204</sup> Cynthia Schmidt-Cruz, *Mothers, Lovers, and Others*, 94.

concealment is a matter of life and death to the revolutionaries of 'La Joda' in *Libro de Manuel* as shall become apparent. As mentioned, the novels discussed in this chapter are characterized by recurrent elements of dreams, death and fate. Focus has been drawn to dreamscapes in addition to the astral plane, traversed during lucid dreaming in a bid to grasp unfolding events. Dreams reveal true essences or 'noumenon' in addition to the subterranean landscape of the human psyche. The quotidian and the oneiric merge as dreams foretell and dictate the future. Rituals dominate and sacrifice is a *sine qua non* of enlightenment. The enigma of what happens beyond death is symbolized by an empty, forbidden stern. Fate appears to be largely predetermined and almost impossible to escape. Clearly this does not prevent the characters from attempting to do so, with varying degrees of success, particularly in *El Examen*. Indeed the individual is damned if he/she acts and damned if he/she does not, a maxim exemplified by both Medrano and Persio in *Los Premios*. We have also seen that the incessant questioning and craving for answers remains unsated, whilst the quest itself is tantalizing. As shall become apparent, the treatment of magic, spirituality and scientific theories in the early novels foreshadow many of the leitmotifs of Cortázar's later works. With its relentless probing of alterity and subversion of norms, 'La búsqueda de lo otro es el tema y la razón de ser de *Rayuela*'.<sup>205</sup> No answers are provided to life's profound riddles throughout. In his closing note to *Los Premios*, Cortázar asserts that the work was no allegory. In a sense, the moral of the story is that there is no moral to the story. Akin to all of his novels, *Los Premios* is dictated without a blueprint, intended as an escape, leaving the doors of perception open for a brief period, 'para que entre el aire de la calle y hasta la pura luz de los espacios cósmicos' (441). As we shall discover in the following chapter the quest, although colourful and complex, ultimately proves to be asymptotic; the Unknown is quite simply Unknowable.

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<sup>205</sup> Julio Cortázar, 'Carta a Graciela de Sola', 7 de enero de 1964, *Cartas Completas 2*, (Buenos Aires, Alfaguara, 2000) 671.

## Chapter Two - *Rayuela*, 62: *Modelo para armar and Libro de Manuel*

‘The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious.

It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the

cradle of true art and true science.’

Albert Einstein

### *Rayuela*

Cortázar’s masterwork, his ‘fiendishly esoteric’ novel, *Rayuela*, represents the quintessential exploration of the esoteric, the apogee of his endless probing of the mysterious.<sup>206</sup> *Rayuela* is an anti-novel, subverting conventions of the traditional novel.<sup>207</sup> According to Alain Robbe-Grillet, the anti-novel is a novel which has lost its hero, story is unimportant as are form and content : ‘The notion that a writer has something to say and knows how to say it is obsolete; a good writer “has nothing to say” for he has only a way of speaking’.<sup>208</sup> Crucially, the novel was conceived of at a time of great upheaval and revolution, specifically the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban missile crisis. Henriksen views *Rayuela* in terms of an attempt to reach the paradise lost of sacred time through socialism and poetry, as Cortázar himself writes:

Mi problema sigue siendo, como debiste sentirlo al leer *Rayuela*, un problema metafísico, un desgarramiento continuó entre el monstruoso error de ser lo que somos como individuos y como pueblos en este siglo, y la entrevisión de un futuro en el que la sociedad humana culminaría por fin en ese arquetipo del que el socialismo da una visión práctica y la poesía una visión espiritual.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Salman Rushdie, *The Jaguar Smile: a Nicaraguan journey* (London: Vintage edition, 2000), 79 .

<sup>207</sup> Cortázar referred to it as a ‘contra-novela’ in *Cartas Completas 1*, 466.

<sup>208</sup> Julius Thomas Fraser, *Of Time, Passion, and Knowledge: Reflections on the Strategy of Existence* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton UP, 1990) 424-25.

<sup>209</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 111.

For Henriksen, this golden age echoes Eliade's view on Marx's end to history:

In fact, Marx's classless society and the consequent disappearance of historical tensions find their closest precedent in the myth of the Golden Age that many traditions put at the beginning and the end of history. Marx enriched this venerable myth by a whole Judaeo-Christian messianic ideology ... Marx takes over for his own purposes the Judaeo-Christian eschatological hope of an *absolute end to history*.<sup>210</sup>

Cortázar felt at the time that rather than attaining a golden age, humanity had taken the wrong turn which had meant that it led a 'false' life divorced from authentic reality and that his erroneous trajectory had also led humankind to the brink of nuclear annihilation.<sup>211</sup> Through the protagonist, Horacio, Cortázar sought to explore the diverse paths which had brought humanity to this point, arguably with a view to finding a strategy for inventing a new reality. As he explained in an interview with Omar Prego<sup>212</sup>, using Horacio as a mouthpiece he posits the limitations inherent in language and asks: How can we rebel against the Judeo-Christian civilization if we must employ the intellectual tradition circumscribed in its language? How can we create a new reality without first obliterating the language of the old world order?<sup>213</sup> Within *Rayuela*, Cortázar did not attempt to provide a panoply of answers, rather a repertoire of questions.<sup>214</sup> The current chapter hopes to explore diverse strands of the esoteric in *Rayuela*. The questions which concern us are: what does Horacio (and by implication Morelli and Cortázar) seek and what form does this quest take? A curious blend of faith systems is interwoven with alchemy and esoteric scientific theories which are only understood by an elite few, such as Particle Physics, Quantum Theory and Neuroscience. I aim to examine

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<sup>210</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 111.

<sup>211</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 171-173.

<sup>212</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 171-172.

<sup>213</sup> 'Y por eso el escritor tiene que incendiar el lenguaje, acabar con las formas coaguladas e ir todavía más allá, poner en duda la posibilidad de que este lenguaje esté todavía en contacto con lo que pretende mentar. No ya las palabras en sí, porque eso importa menos, sino la estructura total de una lengua, de un discurso.' Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela* (Madrid: Suma de Letras, 2001) 571-572. All further textual references to the novel are to this edition.

<sup>214</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 173.

these sources of inspiration under the following rubrics: spiritual traditions, magic and scientific philosophies.

*Rayuela*'s protagonist, Horacio Oliveira, the dilettante or polymath, is an Argentine emigré drifting through Paris. Along with his mistress, La Maga he meets with a circle of friends called, 'el Club de la Serpiente'.<sup>215</sup> Here they fritter away their time ensconced in a chrysalis of alcohol-fuelled discussions while wallowing in jazz. A wide gamut of subjects including abstract art, literature, philosophy and, of course, jazz is celebrated and debated. What exactly does Horacio seek? Nobody can answer that question with any certitude because Horacio himself only has a vague idea. Following the death of La Maga's baby and her own subsequent disappearance, Horacio becomes singularly fixated with trying to find her. In essence, Horacio seeks a number of things, from what he terms a 'centre' to a new reality. As alluded to, this new reality can only really be brought about through the annihilation and purification of language which encapsulates the drudgery of habituation. Horacio rallies against reality and Western rationalism. In one sense he is searching for the meaning of life, or at the very least to give meaning to his own vacuous existence. Horacio longs to grasp the true, hidden essence of reality; what is termed 'Yonder' (568). Doomed to failure, his odyssey teems with exquisitely crafted and humorous language as well as a number of absurd episodes. These incidents are intriguing, frequently laced with irony, and dazzlingly charged with a metaphysical or philosophical significance. Horacio ridicules himself as he knows that he is a cliché. He even couches his inertia in esoteric terms, drawing from the sacred Hindu text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, by comparing himself with Arjuna who wishes to abandon the battle and abstain from action.<sup>216</sup> He tries to impress those around him

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<sup>215</sup> Traditionally the serpent symbolizes forbidden knowledge and even the Celtic druids used the serpent as their emblem. As Yeats wrote in *Per Amico Silentia Lunae*, the fate of human knowledge is to follow the winding 'path of the serpent' and hope for 'sudden lightning' flashes of illumination. (W.B. Yeats *Per Amico Silentia Lunae*, 1918), 39. The knowledge discussed in the 'Club de la Serpiente', although not quite forbidden, is challenging.

<sup>216</sup> When Ronald invites him to participate in an evening of political activities, we learn that Horacio sees himself as Arjuna, who wishes to abandon the battle, to abstain from action. Krishna warns, however, that without action, the

by infusing his conversations with obscure arcane references, but is essentially like a child.<sup>217</sup>

Horacio and la Maga never make arrangements to meet; they simply hope to bump into one another as fate dictates. They both revere Alfred Jarry's 'Pataphysics, a science of 'imaginary solutions'.<sup>218</sup>

La Maga's *soubriquet*, meaning magician or sorceress is richly suggestive. She does not rationalize life as Horacio does; she experiences it directly. Unlike Horacio, the spontaneous and intuitive La Maga lives in the present – time does not exist for her in the same way that it exists for others. She is outside of time, because, as Henriksen highlights, 'La Maga se posesiona con naturalidad de los tiempos'.<sup>219</sup> La Maga interprets unity in terms of time as: 'que todo se junte en tu vida para que puedas verlo al mismo tiempo' (109). As Lida Aronne Amestoy claims in *Cortázar: La Novela Mandala* (67-68) La Maga is pure intuition: 'Es el ser primigenio. Eva antes de comer el fruto del bien y del mal ... La Figura de la Maga evoca la de una Virgen Negra -imbricación exótica de María y de Isis, de Mujer y deidad, de Virgen y Madre, de paganismo y ortodoxia'.<sup>220</sup> La Maga is an aspiring singer and her repertoire is as capricious as she is, ranging from Gershwin to Schumann. In many ways, La Maga represents everything that Horacio is not but longs to be. The sorceress in La Maga is revealed when she sends a voodoo-like doll, complete with pins, to her rival for Horacio's affection, Pola. Upon learning that Pola is suffering from cancer, she feels guilty.

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cosmos would fall out of order and truth would be obscured. Although Arjuna is convinced by the argument, Horacio, by contrast, feels that he has acted wisely in rejecting the simple stupefaction of collective action. Vraj Kumar Pandey, *Encyclopaedia of Indian philosophy - Volume 1* (Anmol Publications, 2007), 43.

<sup>217</sup> Horacio is extraordinarily superstitious, so much so that when he accidentally drops a sugar-cube onto the floor at a café he hysterically insists on retrieving it, (much to the consternation and discomfiture of those around him), lest bad luck should befall him.

<sup>218</sup> Herbert Molderings, *Duchamp and the Aesthetics of Chance: Art as Experiment*. New York: Columbia UP, 2010), 117.

<sup>219</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 114.

<sup>220</sup> 'Cortázar, Surrealism, and 'Pataphysics' by Sara Castro-Klarén, *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 27, No. 3. (Summer, 1975), 228.

Horacio's own rival for La Maga's affections, Ossip Gregorovius, is also a member of the 'Club de la Serpiente' (40). Ossip resembles Horacio in a number of ways and shares many of his esoteric interests. They both enjoy flaunting their erudition to impress La Maga, pontificating on principles which she can never comprehend, such as the Hindu Veil of Maya, or Morelli's hypotheses. Improbably, Ossip claims to have three mothers, including the colourful Adgalle who is also drawn to arcane topics such as the Kabbalah and the Occult. Forced to return to Buenos Aires, Horacio meets up with an old friend, who procures a job for him in the circus and later at the psychiatric institution where he and his wife, Talita have also found work. Horacio and Traveler mirror each other in many ways and both are fascinated by the arcane. Alongside Traveler's interest in Theosophy we are told of his doomed attempt at creating a mandrake by planting a sweet potato in a pot of earth and sperm.<sup>221</sup> Just as Horacio seeks to explore intelligence and the origins of life, Traveler strives to create artificial intelligence, with commensurately underwhelming results. Their relationship is fraught with contradictions. Even though Horacio tries to provoke a rift between Traveler and Talita, Traveler is drawn to Horacio whom he loves, hates and envies simultaneously.

As we shall see, many of the more peculiar incidents that take place in Argentina revolve around this curious love triangle of Horacio, Traveler and Talita, particularly in Chapter 41's so-called 'tablón' episode. Here Horacio and Traveler fashion a makeshift bridge out of planks joining their respective buildings at a very high altitude. Horacio persuades Talita to deliver maté and nails to him by negotiating said bridge, risking life and limb in the process. The scene is seared by a blend of farce and drama, highlighted by the dramatic tension of whether Talita will fall with no net to catch her, and, to a lesser extent

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<sup>221</sup> It was a common belief in some European countries that a mandrake would grow where the semen of a hanged man dripped on to the earth. In an extract from Chapter XVI of *Witchcraft and Spells: Transcendental Magic its Doctrine and Ritual* by Eliphas Levi (A Complete Translation of *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* by Arthur Edward Waite, 1896) we learn that some alchemists experimented in the artificial reproduction of man without the involvement of the female.

whether the maté and nails will arrive in one piece. In essence, Horacio has fashioned his own parody of the circus; a mixture of walking the tight rope and the flying trapeze, where alternatively Horacio and Traveler try to grasp Talita, the subject of their power struggle. Ultimately she yields to Traveler's wishes and throws the nails and maté to Horacio. There is a sense that this absurd vignette is an obscure metaphor with an inexhaustible vector of interpretations. It encapsulates the aforementioned principle of 'la inminencia de una revelación, que no se produce'.<sup>222</sup>

The interstitial chapters in the allegedly expendable section flavour our understanding of the text on a number of levels. Here we experience the literary theories of Morelli, the enigmatic fictitious writer who crafted the majority of these 'surplus' chapters – rendering him a co-author of the text. In Part I of *Rayuela*, Morelli is knocked down by a car. Horacio witnesses this *contretemps* but fails to realize that the victim is his literary idol until he visits him in the hospital, where Morelli later dies. Horacio had asked Morelli's editor for Morelli's address prior to this, but was always rebuffed. Horacio discovers that what he had sought was under his nose the entire time. Tellingly, Ossip claims that Horacio senses that in some part of Paris there is a key and he searches for it as if possessed: 'Adivina que en alguna parte de París, en algún día o alguna muerte o algún encuentro hay una llave, la busca como un loco.'(180)

Echoing Cortázar, Morelli urges the writer to set language alight and cast doubt on the possibility that this language remains in contact with that which it purports to name. Like Horacio he seeks to rebel against the *status quo* and forge a connection with 'authentic' reality. Morelli alludes to the 'strange self-creation of the author through his text' (506). In his texts he whispers to his reader, 'por debajo del desarrollo convencional, otros rumbos más

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<sup>222</sup> Borges, Jorge Luis. *Otras Inquisiciones*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1960. 12.



esotéricos' (505). He wishes to render the reader an accomplice or a co-author, one who will participate in the novelist's experience. Contrary to convention, here the writer himself does not necessarily understand fully the subject matter about which he is writing; he is a messenger who did not conceive the message. Crucially, in Chapter 154 when Horacio enquires about the order in which Morelli's notes and texts should be printed, he fears that he will make a mistake in the compilation of his work. Morelli retorts that this is of no importance. His book may be read as we wish: 'Liber Fulguralis, hojas mánticas, y así va. Lo más que hago es ponerlo como a mí me gustaría releerlo. Y en el peor de los casos, si se equivocan, a lo mejor queda perfecto' (702). The concepts of 'Liber Fulguralis' or lightning book and divinatory pages are revealing. Lightning is associated with flashes of brilliance and fate. The reader picks the pages which mark out his or her future, as if they had been predestined for each individual.<sup>223</sup>

In keeping with this notion of bespoke compilations, *Rayuela* comes with a variety of suggested reading trajectories.<sup>224</sup> Ostensibly, the text is divided into three parts. There are two 'narrative' sections: chapters 1-36, termed, 'Del lado de allá' which are set in Paris, chapters 37-56, termed 'Del lado de acá' are set in Buenos Aires and the third selection from chapter 57 to chapter 155 is entitled 'De otros lados: Capítulos prescindibles', so-called expendable chapters which include a variety of notes, embellishments and quotes. If we choose to read the text in a linear fashion, the first section ends with Horacio being arrested in Paris, prior to his deportation. The second section ends with his threat to commit suicide by hurling himself

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<sup>223</sup> Evidently, one could read the text in any order one elects. The random structure evokes William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* which boasts a structure not dissimilar to that of *Rayuela*, allowing the reader to jump in at any point. Indeed, William Burroughs suggested that cut-ups may be effective as a form of divination saying, 'When you cut into the present the future leaks out' as quoted in Dworkin, Craig Douglas, and Kenneth Goldsmith, *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*. (Evanston Illinois: Northwestern UP, 2011) 123.

<sup>224</sup> In the preface the reader is jolted by the proposal that in its own way, this book consists of many books, but two books above all. Cortázar suggests that the book can be read simply from the beginning to chapter 56, where the book can be considered to end, and that the reader may ignore what follows with a clean conscience. An alternative order is suggested, beginning with chapter 73.

from the psychiatric asylum window and the third section ends with his visiting Morelli in hospital.

Clearly, the order in which we read the text determines its outcome. For instance, if we end on chapter 56, with a 'clear conscience', there remains some doubt as to whether Horacio jumps to his death: 'lo mejor sin lugar a dudas hubiera sido inclinarse apenas hacia fuera y dejarse ir, paf se acabó' (451). Nevertheless, in the dispensable chapters, this ambiguity may be dispelled as Horacio appears alive and grumbling in chapter 135. The alternative order proposed begins with chapter 73 and then proceeds according to a vertiginous sequence listed in the 'Table of Instructions'. The narrator may well be playing a game with the reader by subverting expectations and by challenging us to defy the instructions. Do we comply or forge our own path? Horacio faces a similar challenge when asked to collate Morelli's texts.

If we consider the alternative reading recommended by the author, Chapter 131 takes place after Horacio's supposed attempt at suicide in the psychiatric hospital where Traveler and Talita rally around him at home. The omission of chapter 55 from the recommended sequence can hardly be an oversight, so how does this lacuna affect our construal of the text? In chapter 55 Traveler cannot sleep and takes a drink. Talita returns to the room to tell him of her encounter with Horacio and their kiss. She informs him that Horacio mistook her for La Maga and that he is afraid that Traveler will try to kill him. Traveler does not seem particularly concerned by these revelations and laughs at Horacio's fears. By the end of the discussion, he and Talita appear more united than before. Why is this chapter 'superfluous'? When Traveler goes to talk to Horacio in chapter 56, he is prepared for Horacio's paranoia. He may be secretly jealous of Horacio kissing his wife, or, may be consoled by his wife's candour. In many ways, chapter 55 serves as a turning point; it reinforces his suspicions about Horacio's feelings towards Talita and reaffirms Talita's loyalty towards Traveler.

Ostensibly, the reader is expected to jump around from chapter to chapter, as if playing a game of hopscotch. In addition to influencing the structure of the work, the image of hopscotch provides a salient leitmotiv throughout. Hopscotch is a game in which a child tosses a stone into an area drawn on the ground in chalk and then hops through it and back to regain the stone. Henriksen notes that Cortázar sees hopscotch as a ritual: ‘Por su parte las rayuelas, como casi todos los juegos infantiles, son ceremonias que tienen un remoto origen místico y religioso’.<sup>225</sup> Hopscotch is related to myths of labyrinths and later came to symbolize the soul’s journey from Earth to heaven.<sup>226</sup> Horacio associates La Maga with hopscotch and describes their union as a vertiginous hopscotch. Within this vertiginous hopscotch of love, Horacio and La Maga resemble the friends of *El Examen*, meeting each other at random exploring the physical and spiritual landscape of the metropolis.

For Horacio, Paris too represents hopscotch’s heaven. Paris comprises two cities – Paris, the physical location and Paris, the mythical City of light. Paris is a city of revolution – the political, cultural and scientific fulcrum. Paris signifies reconnecting with the axis or centre, when in chapter 73 Horacio ponders on the mythical Paris he inhabits: ‘Sí, pero quién nos curará del fuego sordo, del fuego sin color que corre al anochecer por la rue de la Huchette ... cómo haremos para lavarnos de su quemadura dulce que prosigue’ (490). Metaphorically this muffled flame could be the existential angst gnawing away at man’s innards. It could be energy or lifeblood which pulsates through man and Paris, the city where Henri Becquerel discovered radioactivity: ‘París es un centro, entendés, un mandala que hay que recorrer sin dialéctica, un laberinto donde las fórmulas pragmáticas no sirven más que para perderse. Entonces un cogito que sea como respirar París, entrar en él dejándolo entrar, neuma y no logos’ (546). Horacio contrasts the ‘logos’, which is the divine word, with the ‘Neuma’, which not only signifies the spirit or breath of inspiration, but also the basic

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<sup>225</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 121.

<sup>226</sup> Janice Weaver, *The A to Z of Everyday Things*. Plattsburgh, (NY: Tundra, 2004), 32.

element of Western and Eastern systems of musical notation prior to the invention of five-line staff notation. Breath, spirit and ancient music are merged and conveyed by this enigmatic term. Enlightenment implies breathing Paris, absorbing without language, without logic or traditional religion. In contrast to the breath of fresh air epitomized by Paris, Buenos Aires is 'capital del miedo' (496).

Just prior to Horacio's expulsion from paradise following his arrest for lewd behaviour with the vagrant, Emmanuèle, Horacio ponders on the elements necessary for hopscotch. It is difficult to arrive at heaven as the player miscalculates the distance and the stone hops out of the squares. Gradually, the player acquires dexterity, but by the time the necessary skill has been perfected, the player has left childhood, thus forgetting the necessary steps for reaching paradise. Horacio noted that La Maga was aware of this happy balance without recourse to Vedanta or Zen. She was the eternal child, in touch with esoteric forces which he sought to intellectualize.

Later Horacio mistakes Talita for La Maga when he observes her playing hopscotch. He believes that she has been possessed by La Maga's spirit and that the hopscotch grid had served as a portal between Paris in the past and Buenos Aires in the present, 'para repetir en la rayuela la imagen misma de lo que acababan de alcanzar, la última casilla, el centro del mandala, el Ygdrassil vertiginoso por donde se salía a una playa abierta, a una extensión sin límites' (417). The last square is equated with the centre of the Mandala, as shall be discussed later, and the magical Ygdrassil tree<sup>227</sup>, which implies a revelation. The winner of hopscotch is thus rewarded by enlightenment. The trope of the game varies throughout Cortázar's oeuvre.<sup>228</sup> Games represent a different form of life, as Alazraki surmises, combining game

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<sup>227</sup> Ygdrassil in Norse mythology, an ash tree, is also called the World Tree. It magically conferred knowledge as well. According to one myth, Odin hanged himself from Ygdrassil in order that the sacred runic secrets would be revealed to him. Richard Leviton. *Encyclopedia of Earth Myths: An Insider's A-z Guide to Mythic People, Places, Objects, and Events Central to the Earth's Visionary Geography* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads, 2005), 32.

<sup>228</sup> For a fuller discussion of this please see, the chapter, 'Homo Sapiens vs. Homo Ludens en Tres Cuentos de Cortázar' in

theory of both Caillois and Johann Huizinga: 'El juego es un actividad desarticulada de la vida corriente y funda un orden que suspende o cancela el orden histórico'.<sup>229</sup> Unlike the throw of a die, a game of skill such as hopscotch (or chess) is defined by rules and structure. Everyone understands what he or she must do to win. Once immersed in the game, real life stops and the game takes over. A game does not merely obey a structure; it creates structure. Games are not just a form of diversion; they serve an evolutionary function as they prepare children for life. Team sports mimic battles, for instance. Many see life itself as a game, but perhaps the game is an alternative form of life, a parallel dimension which is outside of and inside of our own. Tellingly, Hopscotch is not the only game of skill in *Rayuela* as Morelli and Horacio posit the existence of an Indian form of Chess - the so-called infinite game: 'Gana el que conquista el centro. Desde ahí se dominan todas las posibilidades ... Pero el centro podría estar en una casilla lateral, o fuera del tablero' (700). The goal can be in or outside the player. In a sense, it is necessary to leave or lose the self to find the self or centre in this instance.

What is this elusive centre to which Horacio alludes? There is no comprehensive response to this conundrum, but this search for a centre characterizes Horacio. When asked to define a 'centre', one answer would be 'the middle part' or 'the core'. The pertinent question, however, is: of what is it the centre? In one sense, the centre can be the self or the ineffable yonder of authentic reality. Initially when we think of a centre, the image of a circle leaps to mind. It is a point which is equidistant from all points along the circumference. Horacio laments, 'Terrible tarea la de chapotear en un círculo cuyo centro está en todas partes y su circunferencia en ninguna' (629). The ubiquity of the centre implies that it is constantly expanding like the universe. The universe radiates from the miniscule point that preceded the Big Bang at the start of time as we know it. The centre is, among other things, the origin.

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*Hacia Cortázar: aproximaciones a su obra*, 91-97.

<sup>229</sup> Alzraki, *Hacia Cortázar: aproximaciones a su obra*, 94.

Horacio yearns for the core of reality, of mankind, of the universe itself. As we shall see the centre can be the origin, the self, contact with the divine, the maté Horacio drinks, music or even Paris.

Disconcerted and stymied by the terms used in his search for a spiritual centre in chapter two Horacio says, 'necesitaría tanto acercarme mejor a mí mismo, dejar caer todo eso que me separa del centro' (30). He claims to allude to the centre while unsure of what he is discussing: 'Acabo siempre aludiendo al centro sin la menor garantía de saber lo que digo, cedo a la trampa fácil de la geometría con que pretende ordenarse nuestra vida de occidentales: Eje, centro, razón de ser, Omphalos, nombres de la nostalgia indoeuropea' (30). The omphalos<sup>230</sup>, a common type of religious stone artifact, means 'navel' in Greek. According to the ancient Greeks, Zeus sent out two eagles to fly across the world and they met at its centre, the 'navel' of the world--which the omphalos represents. The main characteristic of the omphalos or 'stone of splendour' was its ability to allow direct communication with the gods. Horacio wishes to establish contact with a reality which lies beyond our own. Yearning to understand the metaphysical mysteries of life Horacio clutches at terms of Indo-european nostalgia: '¿Por qué hemos tenido que inventar el Edén, vivir sumidos en la nostalgia del paraíso perdido, fabricar utopías, proponernos un futuro?' (218). Nostalgia is a term of Greek origin which suggests 'pain of a homeward journey', a pain which is the loss of Eden or paradise and its concomitant harmony. Humankind seeks to heal this pain through the creation of a 'reino milenario', a brotherhood or sisterhood of man on earth and not in heaven (482).

The notion of solidarity is also implicit in Horacio's aspiration of a 'kibbutz del deseo' which could also be synonymous with the centre (268). He claims that the label just

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<sup>230</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 231.

spontaneously occurred to him. The term kibbutz normally refers to a collective settlement in Israel, the 'Promised Land': 'Kibbutz; colonia ... unirse al mundo ... abrirse a la cristalización del deseo, al encuentro' (268-269). Horacio's aspiration was a kibbutz not of the soul nor of the spirit. It is not unlike Schopenhauer's 'will' - the primary essence of all things. Horacio recognizes that it is a vague term of incomprehensible forces, but senses that it whispers the possibility of an alternative life.<sup>231</sup> This kibbutz is an absence; it is what could have been if the poet and primitive man's magical reality had been allowed to dominate. It represents the road not taken. That said, the kibbutz is a paradise that could be constructed here on earth, by man for man even if it was beyond Horacio's reach: 'Se moriría sin llegar a su kibbutz pero su kibbutz estaba allí, lejos pero estaba y él sabía que estaba porque era hijo de su deseo, era su deseo así como él era su deseo y el mundo o la representación del mundo eran deseo' (270). This kibbutz or centre lies tantalizingly out of reach but remains nonetheless a worthwhile aspiration. For Saúl Sosnowski, in his discussion of the mythical quest of *Rayuela*, reaching the centre was the mandatory prerequisite for achieving simultaneity of vision, for transcending humanity and recreating history from point zero:

Llegar al centro era reducir el Todo a un punto (Aleph) desde el cual es posible observar el universo; era asignar un valor único a ese Todo; era trascender el amor y la razón y todo lo que es humano; era dejar de ser hombre para incorporarse a ese nivel mítico que niega categorías y clasificaciones. Entonces, y sólo entonces, Oliveira podría recomenzar la historia del hombre desde cero.<sup>232</sup>

In Horacio's quest for the enigmatic centre and the corollary hidden meaning of life, the paths taken are just as crucial as what is sought. Humanity's desire to understand the profound questions of life, whether it be through venerating magic, religion or science, has developed over the centuries. Within *Rayuela*, these three paths are intertwined and placed on

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<sup>231</sup> 'Y aunque deseo fuese también una vaga definición de fuerzas incomprensibles, se lo sentía presente y activo, presente en cada error y también en cada salto adelante, eso era ser hombre, no ya un cuerpo y un alma sino esa totalidad inseparable, ese encuentro incesante con las carencias, con todo lo que le habían robado al poeta, la nostalgia vehemente de un territorio donde la vida pudiera balbucese desde otras brújulas y otros nombres' (269).

<sup>232</sup> Sosnowski, *Julio Cortázar: Una búsqueda mítica*, 125-126.

an equal footing. The spiritual philosophies explored in *Rayuela* are manifold, ranging from Eastern to Western schools of thought. Prominence is given to beliefs such as Buddhism, Egyptian Mysticism, and the Kabbalah. The boundary which delineates magic from religion is both controversial and subjective. Put simply, one person's magic is another person's religion. As shall become evident, an overlap between the spiritual and the magical is epitomized by the Egyptian god, Thoth, god of wisdom and magic, putative creator of writing and patron of alchemy.<sup>233</sup> In like fashion, what was once thought to dwell in the domain of magic has been brought into being by science. For instance, less than a century ago it would have been unthinkable that man would fly to the heavens and walk on the moon or create technology capable of obliterating the world itself.

Cortázar claims that while he was living in Europe that he had started to read metaphysical works on Vedanta and Zen which inspired him to write *Rayuela*.<sup>234</sup> Cortázar explains the inspiration provided by the mandala when writing *Rayuela*:

Cuando pensé en este libro, estaba obsesionado con la idea del mandala, en parte porque había estado leyendo muchas obras de antropología y de religión tibetana. Además había visitado la India donde pude ver cantidad de mandalas indios y japoneses.<sup>235</sup>

The mandala is any of various geometric designs (usually circular) symbolizing the universe and is used chiefly in Hinduism and Buddhism as an aid to meditation.<sup>236</sup> The word mandala itself is derived from the root *manda*, which means essence, to which the suffix *la*, meaning container, has been added.<sup>237</sup> Thus, one obvious connotation of mandala is that it is a container of essence. From a Buddhist perspective, as an image, a mandala may symbolize

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<sup>233</sup> Rosemary Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 134.

<sup>234</sup> Bermejo, *Conversaciones*, 1978, 64.

<sup>235</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 121.

<sup>236</sup> Leakey, Richard. *Great Civilizations: Society and Culture of the Ancient World*. Vol. 2. (San Francisco, Calif: Fog City, 2003) 447.

<sup>237</sup> Pal Pratapaditya, Hugh Richardson, *Art of Tibet: A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection* (Los Angeles, CA: Museum, 1983), 44.



both the mind and the body of the Buddha. The origin of the mandala is the centre, a dot. Its purpose is to remove the object-subject dichotomy. In the process, the mandala is consecrated to a deity. For Morelli, writing is akin to drawing and simultaneously exploring his mandala; it suggests inventing a form of purification while purifying oneself: ‘Escribir es dibujar mi mandala y a la vez recorrerlo, inventar la purificación purificándose; tarea de pobre shamán blanco con calzoncillos de nylon’ (513). For Henriksen, the novel, *Rayuela* is a mandala which humans must recreate in order to transcend the profane and progress to sacred time.<sup>238</sup> As we have seen, Horacio refers to the last square of the hopscotch grid as a mandala and in Chapter 93, he asserts that Paris is the centre from which a mandala of illumination radiates.

The artist, Etienne, who also formed part of ‘el Club de la Serpiente’, had analysed Morelli’s works in minute detail and felt that he tended to regurgitate a Zen phrase and repeated it *ad nauseam* (551). Morelli wrote for himself, not for a reader and published simply out of sense of vanity. Etienne regards Morelli as the quintessential colonial Westerner (551). Once he has harvested his ‘Buddhist poppies’ he returns to the Latin Quarter with the seeds. The alleged expert is basically returning with desiccated husks in the form of poppy seeds rather than the essence itself.<sup>239</sup> In Alazraki’s work, *Hacia Cortázar: aproximaciones a su obra*, Alazraki emphasizes that both Cortázar and Morelli sympathize with the teachings of Dasetz Teitaro Suzuki, who observes that Zen is the opposite of logic and does not possess a body of doctrines which its adepts must accept.<sup>240</sup> If we ask what Zen teaches, we are told that it teaches a form of self-teaching.<sup>241</sup> Morelli surmises that a portal to

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<sup>238</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 110.

<sup>239</sup> The reference to poppy seeds is also reminiscent of one of the Buddha’s teachings. Once, a young woman carried her dead child to the Master to be healed. The Wise One looked upon her with sympathy and said, ‘To heal the child I need some poppy seeds; go and beg five poppy seeds from some home where death has never entered. Once the woman realised that such a home never existed her mind cleared and she understood the meaning of his suggestion’ from *The Teachings of Buddha*, by Buddhist Promoting Foundation, (Tokyo: Kosiado Printing Co. 1966), 186-187. Poppy seeds are symbolic of enlightenment, perhaps enlightenment that what we seek does not exist and that death and suffering are an inevitable facet of life. This anecdote also evokes La Maga’s despair at losing her baby son.

<sup>240</sup> Alazraki, *Hacia Cortázar: aproximaciones a su obra* 217

<sup>241</sup> Alazraki, *Hacia Cortázar : aproximaciones a su obra*, 217.

enlightenment exists and alludes to the Buddhist concept of a *satori*<sup>242</sup> as an instantaneous phenomenon which resolves everything. *Satori* or flashes of insight are triggered by mundane activity when the mind is distracted or calm. For Morelli, to attain this *satori*, we must first retrace or mentally reassemble history, both external (the macrocosm or universal) and internal (the microcosm or individual): ‘Pero para llegar a él habría que desandar la historia de fuera y la de dentro’ (463).

Horacio also seeks to attain *satori* in his own inimitable fashion. Dissatisfied with mere contemplation in his search for the asymptotic centre he resolves to take action to understand or create a new form of reality in Chapter 41. On a blistering afternoon, Horacio is hammering on nails in a bid to straighten them. He has no idea for what purpose he needs these nails; he simply knows that he needs them: ‘Tengo la impresión de que en cuanto tenga clavos bien derechos voy a saber para qué los necesito’ (308). As taught by Zen Buddhism, perhaps by not concentrating on his query, the answer will occur to him.<sup>243</sup> The mundane act of trying to straighten the nails is significant as nailing something or ‘dar en el clavo’ implies pinpointing or ‘hitting the nail on the head’ – finding the *mot juste*. Once he renders them almost straight, he hits them again and destroys them, often inflicting injury upon himself - ‘hay un momento en que el clavo está casi derecho, pero cuando se lo martilla una vez más da media vuelta y pellizca violentamente los dedos que lo sujetan; es algo de una perversidad fulminante’ (303). If he did not try so hard to straighten the nails, perhaps he would succeed. Ironically, when Gregorovius attempts to explain the concept of Zen to La Maga, Horacio speculates that the intuitive and spontaneous La Maga actually embodies Zen, ‘Cierra los ojos y da en el blanco ... Exactamente el sistema Zen de tirar al arco. Pero da en el blanco

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<sup>242</sup> Hans Wolfgang Schumann, *Buddhism: An Outline of Its Teachings and Schools* (Illinois: Theosophical Pub. House, 1974), 168.

<sup>243</sup> Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

simplemente porque no sabe que ése es el sistema' (43). Unencumbered by knowledge, La Maga uses her intuition and usually hits her target, unlike Horacio.

Horacio's mindlessly repetitive hammerblows are further likened to the Zen Buddhist form of questioning when he rants, '¿Qué se busca? ¿Qué se busca? Repetirlo quince mil veces, como martillazos en la pared. ¿Qué se busca?' (629). The spectacle of Horacio incessantly hammering in a bid to attain some arcane truth also evokes the legend of Pythagoras and the hammers which revealed to him the mathematical ratios underlying the science of harmonics. One day as Pythagoras was passing by the blacksmith's forge when,

in an epiphany of sonorous revelation, he discovered the correlation of sounding intervals and their numerical ratios. According to Nicomachus, Pythagoras perceived from the striking of the hammers on the anvils the consonant intervals of the octave, fifth, and fourth, and the dissonant interval of the whole tone separating the fifth and fourth.<sup>244</sup>

Pythagoras was not seeking this answer when he passed the forge; distraction was the key to enlightenment.

Buddhism's influence on the club members is never felt so poignantly as in Chapter 29 where baby Rocamadour dies. While La Maga and Ossip are talking in a darkened room the baby quietly passes away. When Horacio makes the grim discovery, he says nothing. He wishes to stave off La Maga's histrionics and perhaps he is exacting a subtle form of revenge for her putative infidelity with Ossip. He chooses to literally keep La Maga in the dark for as long as possible. As if to prepare La Maga for the impending shock, Roland claims that he had been reading about the 'Bardo' that very morning, having been initiated into Tibetan Buddhism's mysteries by another friend, Wong. The 'Bardo' is a concept found in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (also known as *Bardo Thodol*) which is a guide for the dead and dying. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* contends that decisive moments of transition are

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<sup>244</sup> *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* Edited by Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 272.

charged with great spiritual potential, especially the interstices between death and rebirth. The first part of the 'Bardo', called 'Chikhai Bardo', describes the moment of death. The second part, 'Chonyid Bardo', deals with the states which supervene immediately after death. The third part, 'Sidpa Bardo', deals with prenatal events. Although it is recommendable to read these instructions just before death, they may also help directly following the last breath.<sup>245</sup> This intermediate period or 'Bardo' is a state of suspended reality. At the moment of Judgement the dead person is confronted with a mirror which is Karma. The deceased person sees all of his or her actions reflected, good and bad, but the reflection is simply a projection of mental images. We appraise our actions and judge ourselves. The ultimate aim of the 'Bardo' according to Solares, is to liberate man from desires and the sensation of separation (which is the true cause of fear and defensiveness) and 'alentarlo a abandonar toda ilusión y fundirse con su naturaleza original: la Clara Luz del Vacío'.<sup>246</sup> It is by overcoming our fear of separation and our fear of the void that true peace is attained. Our fear of fear itself must also be transcended. Death must be embraced as something natural.

As the 'Bardo' is a state of suspended reality, one in which the deceased is presented with a series of opportunities for recognition of the true nature of reality, the conversation conducted by those in the club whilst in the presence of the recently deceased infant is telling. Horacio and Roland discuss whether or not reality exists, and if so, whether there is more than one form of reality. Ronald claims it would be stupid to deny reality even if we don't know what it is. Reality is there and we are in it, understanding it in our own way. For Horacio reality is absurd and he has no idea of the relationship between himself and what is happening to him at that moment. He holds that a crisis, such as the one they are undergoing or about to suffer perhaps, is a saturation of reality. Etienne believes that life and living

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<sup>245</sup> W.Y. Evans-Wentz (translator and editor), *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford University press, London 3rd ed.: 1957), 90-2, 95-7, 101-4.

<sup>246</sup> Solares, *La Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 57.

beings are separate entities, in a sense echoing Andrés Fava earlier. Ronald mocks Horacio for doing nothing and feels that action gives sense to life as Malraux contends. Malraux is renowned for his work *The Human Condition* (1933) which explores humanity's capacity and responsibility for determining its own fate. Consequently Ronald thinks they should do something more tangible to help La Maga but Horacio believes that they have been preparing her in their own way.

Horacio seems strangely unperturbed by the death of his lover's child but is profoundly moved when he later learns that the Romanian classical pianist and composer, Dinu Lipatti, has died aged thirty-three. There is a suggestion that Dinu Lipatti, a musician who has brought so much joy to Horacio and his friends, should merit a glorious destiny. For Talita, Lipatti's death represented tangible proof of the inexistence of God, 'o por lo menos de su incurable frivolidad' (343). Only a capricious god could hew the life of such a gifted person. Horacio cites a spell from the Egyptian *Book of The Dead*, supposedly written by Thoth. The incantation, '¡Oh corazón mío, no te levantes para testimoniar en contra de mí!' relates to the concept of the heart revealing secrets *post mortem* to determine whether the deceased will enjoy a pleasant afterlife. Our actions throughout life decide our fate. Thoth<sup>247</sup>, or Hermes Trismegistus as he was also known was the psychopomp; a conductor of souls to the afterlife and in Egyptian mythology Thoth<sup>248</sup> was the ibis-headed god of wisdom, intelligence, and magic. As a scribe of the gods, Thoth was reputed to be the author of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. Thoth, like the Buddhist Lord or King, also recorded the final verdict on the deceased and determined their fate in the afterlife. It was Thoth who knew the incantation that would open the gates of 'Duat' and allow the soul to enter protected. In the above citation, it is the heart of the dead which can determine the deceased's trajectory into

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<sup>247</sup> Marian Redmond, *Literacy and History - The Egyptians* (R.I.C. Publications, 2007), 22.

<sup>248</sup> Redmond, *Literacy and History - The Egyptians*, 22.

the afterlife. Despite the notable differences between Egyptian mysticism and Tibetan Buddhism, both reflect a view that we are judged by our own thoughts, words and actions post mortem, in a bid to determine whether or not we will be reborn. A synthesis of sorts has been established.

While wallowing in Buenos Aires, Horacio turns to Thoth for consolation. It is Thoth's capacity as god of magic and language that most intrigues Horacio: 'Le había dado esa mañana por pensar en frases egipcias, en Toth, significativamente dios de la magia e inventor del lenguaje' (344). Ironically, Horacio and Traveler argued whether it would be a misconception to be arguing in the first place, 'dado que el lenguaje, por más lunfardo que lo hablaran, participaba quizá de una estructura mántica nada tranquilizadora' (343-344). Language, regardless of their colloquial mode of speaking it, was part of a divinatory structure which perturbed them. The inference may be drawn that language was not arbitrary, but predetermined. It follows a grand plan. Horacio and Traveler concluded, however, that the double ministry of Thoth was a manifest guarantee of coherence in 'la realidad o la irrealidad; los alegró dejar bastante resuelto el siempre desagradable problema del correlato objetivo' (344). Magic or the tangible world - an Egyptian god 'armonizaba verbalmente los sujetos y los objetos' (344). This reconciliation in itself implied a form of magic for Horacio and Traveler. The signifier and the signified were one because of Thoth - the word preceded or 'predicted' the object it sought to denote. Horacio is obsessed with finding hidden reality via language and codes. Thoth's magical correlation between language and reality parallels the Kabbalah in Steiner's work, *After Babel*. Here Steiner asserts that

lexical and syntactic traces of the lost language of Paradise ... ought to be ferreted out, as Kabbalists and adepts of Hermes Trismegistus sought to do, by scrutinizing the hidden configurations of letters and syllables, by inverting words and applying to ancient names, particularly to the diverse nominations of the Creator, a calculus as intricate as that of chiromancers and astrologers ... He (man) would know the truth as

he spoke it. Moreover, his alienation from other peoples, his ostracism into gibberish and ambiguity, would be over.<sup>249</sup>

What power is possessed by this lost language of Paradise which preceded our Babble? Steiner tells us that in the Garden of Eden ‘the Adamic vernacular not only enabled all men to understand one another, to communicate with perfect ease. It bodied forth, to a greater or lesser degree, the original *Logos*, the act of immediate calling into being whereby God had literally “spoken the world”’.<sup>250</sup> Language signified unity between signified and signifier, a harmony was short-lived. When a tower was built by Noah’s descendants in Babylon, reaching up to heaven, God further castigated humans by confusing their language so they could no longer understand one another. Their exile was thus complete and irreversible.

Intrinsically related to this concept of *Logos* or speaking the world into being, the aforementioned Kabbalah is the esoteric or mystic doctrine concerning God and the universe. In particular the Kabbalah is connected with the ‘Sefer Yezirah’<sup>251</sup>, an exceedingly recondite work which details the miracle of creating a three-year-old calf by using the letters of the Holy Name (‘*zeruf otiiyot*’). Both the macrocosm (the universe) and the microcosm (man) are viewed in this system as products of the combination and permutation of mystic characters.<sup>252</sup> Adgalle sends her son, Ossip a ‘moving’ telegram which alludes to the Tetragrammaton – the four Hebrew letters usually transliterated as YHWH (Yahweh) or JHVH (Jehovah) signifying the Hebrew name for God. Ossip tells Horacio that when he received the telegram, ‘yo estaba leyendo ahora el Sefer Yetzirah, tratando de distinguir las influencias neoplatónicas. Adgalle es muy fuerte en cabalística’ (236).

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<sup>249</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62.

<sup>250</sup> Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 60.

<sup>251</sup> Singer, Isidore; Adler, Cyrus; (eds.) et al. (1901–1906) *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk and Wagnalls, New York).

<sup>252</sup> The linguistic theories of the author of the ‘Sefer Yezirah’ are an integral component of his philosophy, its other parts being astrological and Gnostic cosmogony. Singer, Isidore; Adler, Cyrus; (eds.) et al. (1901–1906) *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. (Funk and Wagnalls, New York).

Although one of the basic tenets of *Rayuela* is that language not only represents a false reality masquerading as the truth, there is also the sense that language is dead, a notion reinforced by what are called the ‘cemetery games’ whereby the dictionary houses the deceased entities, words. The ‘Club de la Serpiente’ laments that Surrealist writers clung onto words rather than becoming liberated from them, as Morelli had sought to do. In *Rayuela* we are told that Surrealists simply ‘aceptaron cualquier cosa mientras no pareciera excesivamente gramatical’ (564). Inevitably, the written word could not fully escape the constraints of logic. Language implies dwelling in a reality, and although it betrays us, Etienne believes, echoing Morelli, that it simply does not suffice to liberate language from its taboos; it must be reinvented, not revived.

In addition to dissecting language, there is a concerted effort within the text to delve into the creative process of language. *Rayuela* boasts a series of linguistic experiments which explore hidden realities. *Rayuela* draws our focus to the nature and peculiarities of language homing in on minutiae with laser-like precision. Morelli and Horacio both strive after purity in language. When Horacio is bibulous he not only alludes to the purification of language but also the incantatory power which it possesses. He plays with the phonemes of the term ‘pureza’ and in the processes ridicules it: ‘Pureza. Horrible palabra. Puré, y después za ... Entender el puré como una epifanía. Damn the language. Entender. No entender: entender. Una sospecha de paraíso recobable: No puede ser que estemos aquí para no poder ser’ (105). There must be more to life than what we see. In a litany of ostensibly random references, he alludes to this paradise which may be regained, ‘pero qué bien, estoy pensando clarito, el vodka las clava como mariposas en el cartón, A es A, a rose is a rose is a rose’ (106). This motto, ‘A rose is a rose is a rose’, originally coined by Gertrude Stein, superficially suggests that certain objects simply are what they are and thus defy definition. Stein explains that she uses the phrase akin to a poet of Homer or Chaucer’s era when, ‘the poet could use the name



of the thing and the thing was really there'.<sup>253</sup> Over time the poet lost this power, which led Stein to attempt to recuperate this ability, when she says: 'I think in that line the rose is red for the first time in English poetry for a hundred years'.<sup>254</sup> Redolent of the Adamic Logos, the poet has conjured up the object through the power of words. As language since Chaucer has lost the power of creation, Horacio is painfully aware of the deficiencies of language and, with reference to Morelli's works, he laments:

Lo que él persigue es absurdo en la medida en que nadie sabe sino lo que sabe, es decir una circunscripción antropológica. Wittgensteinianamente, los problemas se eslabonan *hacia atrás*, es decir que lo que un hombre sabe es el saber de un hombre, pero del hombre mismo ya no se sabe todo lo que se debería saber para que su noción de la realidad fuera aceptable (573).

As Boldy highlights in *The Novels of Julio Cortázar*, Wittgenstein asserts that 'language and logic can represent things, make propositions, but can say nothing about how they do so, about the logic or being of language itself' (Boldy 57). Language alone can never fulfil Horacio's needs.

As mentioned, Horacio hopes that Thoth can be of assistance in his quest to invent a new reality and to reach a transcendental truth through alchemy.<sup>255</sup> Alchemy refers to both an early form of the investigation of nature and an early philosophical and spiritual discipline, combining elements of chemistry, metallurgy, physics, medicine, astrology, semiotics, mysticism, spiritualism, and art all as parts of one greater force. The best known goals of the alchemists were the transmutation of common metals into precious metals, the creation of a

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<sup>253</sup> Gertrude Stein, Thornton Wilder. *Four in America* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1947), Vi.

<sup>254</sup> Gertrude Stein, Thornton Wilder. *Four in America*, Vi.

<sup>255</sup> Mark S. Morrisson, *Modern Alchemy: Occultism and the Emergence of Atomic Theory* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007), 33-34.

‘panacea or the elixir of life,’ a remedy that supposedly would cure all diseases and prolong life indefinitely, and the discovery of a universal ‘solvent’.

Alchemy symbolized evolution from an imperfect, ephemeral state towards a perfect, everlasting state.<sup>256</sup> The mystery of alchemy was about a reconciliation of the opposites; by connecting, for example, the macrocosm with microcosm, personal with impersonal, masculine with feminine - and fusing them together into a paradoxical synthesis, as exemplified by the alchemical motto ‘As Above, So Below’.<sup>257</sup> Alchemy’s operations, calcinatio, solutio, putrefactio, mortificatio, coagulatio, coniunctio and so forth, deliberately broke down the natural order of things in order to renew creation. Putrefaction and coagulation in particular provide rich tropes in *Rayuela*. One of the most startling images that Morelli employs, both in relation to himself and his writing, is that of putrefaction. In Chapter 61, Morelli projects onto his death when he talks of his own body being putrefied in a few years. Through this process his consciousness will gain access to a state outside of the body and outside of this world. To him, this will represent the true access to being. He starts off by saying that there is an explosion towards the Light, an irruption or sudden violent occurrence. This is something infinitely crystalline which could coalesce in light, outside of time or space (462). In Chapter 94, Morelli contemplates his prose rotting as if it were meat. Decomposing implies purification into components such as carbon. His prose disintegrates syntactically towards simplicity, by breaking down into its basic building blocks. In traditional chemistry, composition involves combination but here composition implies separation of elements. Morelli holds that when the composition has reached its climax the territory of the elemental opens up. Composition leads to elements in an organic development. Naturally one of the

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<sup>256</sup> Indeed Jung viewed alchemy as a metaphor for individuation and an ideal portrait of soul-work as discussed by Rosemary Guiley in *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 152.

<sup>257</sup> Rosemary Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy*, 180.

paradoxes of putrefaction is that with vegetal organisms the seed must first rot before it can grow.

Another prominent alchemical operation percolating throughout the text is coagulation. Generally to coagulate means to 'jell' or 'congeal'. Coagulation in alchemy allegedly releases an elixir in the blood which rejuvenates the body into a perfect vessel of health. Morelli strives after a narrative which serves as a 'coagulante de vivencias' (506). The narrative allows these experiences to crystalize and take on a definite and clear shape. Emulating Morelli, Horacio's language is laced with imagery of coagulation. He criticizes methods of escapism 'contra cualquier coagulación demasiado brusca de la realidad' (82). Thus coagulation evokes enlightenment or crystallization of the true nature of reality. Later when talking to Traveler, Horacio is reluctant to discuss his life in Paris: 'Falta el coagulante, por llamarlo de alguna manera: zás, todo se ordena en su justo sitio y te nace un precioso cristal con todas sus facetas' (363). He lacks the coagulator which allows him to fully appreciate all facets of his life in Paris, or grasp the metaphorical Paris he sought. Oliveira then laments that perhaps coagulation has occurred without his knowledge, and, that he has been left behind like those who hear others discuss new technology and are befuddled by it.

Horacio intimates that Traveler and Talita had obeyed some hidden dictum to meet him upon his return to Argentina. Enigmatically, he hypothesizes that they represent the missing coagulant which makes everything jell together so that he can make sense of it, 'Ustedes, che, a lo mejor son ese coagulante de que hablábamos hace un rato. Me da por pensar que nuestra relación es casi química, un hecho fuera de nosotros mismos. Una especie de dibujo que se va haciendo. Vos me fuiste a esperar, no te olvides' (366). The coagulant here could be quite simply their mutual love or some secret knowledge which they possess.

Alchemy was also used by Theosophists in their perennial quest for secret knowledge. Modern Theosophy represented a synthesis of Western occultism and Eastern religions, promoting the study of Buddhism and Hinduism in addition to Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Freemasonry, and Rosicrucianism, with reincarnation as one of its core precepts. Many occult societies, which were spawned by Modern Theosophy such as The Golden Dawn sought to highlight connections between alchemy and atomic sciences.<sup>258</sup> The transformation that radioactive elements underwent into other elements was frequently figured as alchemical transmutation, a metamorphosis which in *Rayuela* is viewed as both a spiritual and scientific goal.<sup>259</sup> Aside from Traveler's 'juventud teosófica', Babs evokes one of Modern Theosophy's founding members, Helena Blavatsky in Chapter 28.<sup>260</sup>

Horacio, like Morelli decides to access the realm of science for illumination, not only with a view to burrowing into the veiled reality obscured by our own, but also in a bid to understand how humanity has jeopardized its very existence. Throughout his career as a translator in Europe, Cortázar frequently spent six months of the year in the International Atomic Agency in Vienna translating obscure scientific lexicon which he later used in his own fiction. Horacio mines a dizzying array of scientific hypotheses and we are unsure whether he, or indeed, Cortázar understands the implication of these concepts. In fact, this ignorance may be a virtue. In 'La Muñeca Rota' Cortázar cites the Uruguayan writer Felisberto who claims that a writer should not only write what he/she knows, 'sino también lo otro'.<sup>261</sup> Part of the realm of the 'other' here could be the impenetrable domain of the new sciences. Although

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<sup>258</sup> Morrisson, *Modern alchemy*, 33-34.

<sup>259</sup> Even some of the non-Theosophical scientists concerned highlighted the similarities between the old and new concepts of transmutation. For instance, when the chemist Frederick Soddy and the physicist Ernest Rutherford discovered that radioactive thorium was transforming into an inert gas in 1901 in Canada, Soddy famously exclaimed 'Rutherford this is transmutation', to which his companion retorted 'Don't call it transmutation. They'll have our heads off as alchemists' *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Science* edited by Bruce Clarke, Manuela Rossini (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 21-22.

<sup>260</sup> When she hears steps on the stairs following Rocamadour's death, she whispers in a 'Blavatsky' tone.

<sup>261</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Último round* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 2004), 178-179.

far-removed from the language of the preternatural, *Rayuela*'s scientific jargon is doubly esoteric. Not only is the lexicon used hermetic, but that which it seeks to portray is arcane and devilishly difficult to define. The text uses scientific terminology in an endeavour to capture ontological concepts and answer fundamental conundra such as: Who are we? Why are we here? Where do we come from? How did we evolve? What else exists?

Deep in the mists of time, scientists hold that simple 'organic chemicals concentrated in lakes and tidal pools, forming a rich primordial "soup"'.<sup>262</sup> The simple molecules then condensed into more complex ones which were similar to proteins and nucleic acids.<sup>263</sup> These eventually evolved into an organism composed of a single cell – the amoeba. Horacio employs the image of the amoeba to denote the inner or 'true' self. The name amoeba comes from a Greek word that means 'change' and it is by changing its body shape that the amoeba travels. First it extends a lobe-like portion called a pseudopod, meaning 'false foot'. Then it slowly pours the rest of its body into the pseudopod, which frequently envelops its prey, enlarges and finally becomes the whole body.<sup>264</sup> Horacio sees a person as an amoeba casting his or her pseudopods to grasp intellectual nutrition. We stretch ourselves when we mentally explore uncharted avenues. Humanity's pseudopods coagulate i.e. reaches so-called maturity or what Horacio calls schlerosis of character. Frustratingly, humankind's imagination cannot transcend the limit of its pseudopods or the range of its mind. We are denied access to another reality, which lies beyond our primitive intellectual and spiritual state.

In *Rayuela* there is an organic movement from the simplest form of life, the amoeba, to the most complex, *homo sapiens* and the hint that there could be an evolution to something beyond humanity. Unsurprisingly it is humankind's consciousness which assumes a

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<sup>262</sup> Bernard Walton, *Time machine* (London: BBC Books, 2004), 74.

<sup>263</sup> Walton, *Time machine*, 74.

<sup>264</sup> S.K. Soni, *Microbes: A Source of Energy for 21st Century* (New Delhi: New India Publishing, 2007), 33.

privileged position in Cortázar's explorations. Neuroscience is the fulcrum of Chapter 62, which acted as a springboard for Cortázar's subsequent novel, *62: Modelo para armar*. In this chapter Morelli offers a foretaste of the proposed novel which, among other objectives, aimed to redefine the meaning of 'psychology'. He considered using a 1950's *L'Express* article, detailing the research of a Swedish neurobiologist, Holger Hyden, as point of departure. The article provides a rudimentary outline of the workings of the brain, using the basic tenet that the brain uses electrochemical processes to communicate impulses which constitute thought. Notwithstanding the difficulties inherent in surprising a nervous cell in action, the Swedish scientist was successful in so doing. We bear witness to the cognitive processes and subliminal landscapes of the puppet-like characters in the following novel, *62: Modelo para armar* in the following section.

In Chapter 62 of *Rayuela* Morelli reflects upon overlap between chemistry and electromagnetism and *mana*, an impersonal force, commonly interpreted as the stuff of which magic and the human souls are formed. Love is intimated to be a mysterious guiding force after Horacio kisses Talita in the morgue. Subsequent to witnessing Morelli's traffic accident, Horacio thinks, 'En el fondo no hay otherness, apenas la agradable togetherness. Ciertamente que ya es algo ... Amor, ceremonia ontologizante, dadora de ser' (136). Love is the giver of being. While discussing the merits of Morelli's writing focussing on chapter 62 in particular, Horacio later compares the metaphysical path used by so called 'Gnoseologists' to the methods utilized by scientists. The neologism 'Gnoseology' or love of Gnosis, the knowledge of spiritual truths, sought to free humanity from the material world.<sup>265</sup> Philosophical theories appear insignificant when compared to scientific experimentation into physically capturing the electromagnetic thought process:

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<sup>265</sup> Craig Woods, *How the Churches Got It Wrong: Christianity Revealed* (Indiana: iUniverse Publishing, 2012), 16.

Pero el higiénico retroceso de un Descartes se nos aparece hoy como parcial y hasta insignificante, porque en este mismo minuto hay un señor Wilcox, de Cleveland, que con electrodos y otros artefactos está probando la equivalencia del pensamiento y de un circuito electromagnético' (573).

Horacio exclaims, 'Pensar es el resultado de la interacción de unos ácidos de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme. Acido, ergo sum' (573-574). Descartes' emblematic phrase, 'Cogito, ergo sum' – 'I think, therefore I am' implies that I know myself to be an existing being and that I know myself to have conscious experience. Horacio parodies this, saying that thinking is the result of a coalescence of acids – I exist but what I believe to be consciousness is nothing more than the judicious amalgamation of compounds. Could the genius of Shakespeare be created through the meticulous manipulation of such chemicals?

Horacio says that human thought, the apotheosis of mankind, rooted in a vague region between electromagnetic forces and chemistry, bears more pronounced similarities to things such as the aurora borealis or x-rays. X-rays use high-energy electromagnetic radiation that can penetrate solids while the aurora borealis, or 'Northern lights' comprises a ballet of light influenced by magnetic fields. Both consist of light and are controlled by magnetic forces. We are all energy fields which radiate. Horacio interjects, 'que a lo mejor es al revés, y resulta que la aurora boreal es un fenómeno espiritual, y entonces sí que estamos como queremos ... ' (574). He conjectures that the magnetic fields are not simply a physical phenomenon, but are a manifestation of some esoteric or spiritual force. If this force, be it *mana*, love, or the Ultimate Reality, guides these electromagnetic beings known as humans, then perhaps a key of sorts to mankind's greatest mysteries could be revealed.

Horacio, not unlike the Theosophists, hoped that modern scientists could validate the theories of medieval alchemy and could explain the mysteries of the Universe. Ironically while contemplating La Maga Horacio feels a sort of bitter tenderness towards her and reflects, 'haría falta el amoricidio, por ejemplo, la verdadera luz negra, la antimateria que

tanto da que pensar a Gregorovius' (58). The oxymoron of 'luz negra' or black light<sup>266</sup> is a dialectical antinomy typical of esoteric concepts. The antimatter to which Horacio alludes consists of antiparticles or 'Other' of those particles making up normal matter. When matter and antimatter meet they annihilate one another and a powerful burst of energy is produced by this collision.<sup>267</sup>

Morelli was convinced that the old conceptions of dualism had been fissured by the mutual reduction of both spirit and matter into notions of energy. Energy can be neither created nor destroyed; it can simply be altered from one form to another. According to Albert Einstein: 'Concerning matter, we have been all wrong. What we have called matter is energy, whose vibration has been so lowered as to be perceptible to the senses. There is no matter'.<sup>268</sup> This concept of energy usurps Horacio's perennial quest for the 'centre', which he ultimately realizes is futile:

'Pretender que uno es el centro', pensó Oliveira, apoyándose más cómodamente en el tablón. 'Pero es incalculablemente idiota. Un centro tan ilusorio como lo sería pretender la ubicuidad. No hay centro, hay una especie de confluencia continua, de ondulación de la materia' (315).

This elusive central point does not exist as there is merely an undulation of matter, a wave of energy, which cannot be pinpointed. We cannot see energy or a wave, merely its effect in the form of a ripple. Morelli also believes that the 'New Sciences' chime with more spiritual philosophies such as Buddhism or Vedanta and that this

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 (694).

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<sup>266</sup> In chapter 26, when talking of Horacio to La Maga, Ossip says that she has shown Horacio a glimpse of this phenomenon, 'Entiéndame, quiero decir que busca la luz negra, la llave, y empieza a darse cuenta de que cosas así no están en la biblioteca.'

<sup>267</sup> Timothy M. Kusky, Katherine E. Cullen, *Encyclopedia of Earth and Space Science* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 605.

<sup>268</sup> Gina Mollicone-Long, *Think Or Sink: The One Choice That Changes Everything* (New York: Sterling and Ross Publishers, 2010), 37.



Renouncing mortality could signify embracing reincarnation, or it could simply mean that we are recycled back into the Cosmos through death. By splitting the atom scientists have unleashed a power hitherto unknown to humankind.

Morelli refers to scientists such as Werner Heisenberg and Max Planck, both instrumental in quantum theory which evolved in an effort to explain the behaviour of atoms and subatomic particles. Morelli was fascinated by the notion that these tiny particles do not obey the laws of classical Newtonian mechanics as the microcosm and the macrocosm act according to different rules.<sup>269</sup> On the micro level, a particle can theoretically occupy two places at once, whilst this would be unthinkable on the macro level, i.e. in everyday life. Both form part of the so-called real world, it is just that the micro level is invisible to the human eye. Morelli deliberates how we believe a cup of coffee is just a cup of coffee, when even the most idiotic of journalists ‘encargados de resumirnos los quanta, Planck y Heisenberg, se mata explicándonos a tres columnas que todo vibra y tiembla y está como un gato a la espera de dar el enorme salto de hidrógeno’ (482). Everything trembles in a constant flux – even the cup of coffee does not exist at a certain frequency. As we have learned in *Los Premios*, solidity is an illusion.

One day after Morelli had been studying Heisenberg a young boy delivers the post to him. The boy tells Morelli of his model aeroplane, hopping twice on one foot and three times on the other. Morelli senses that he is following a pre-set pattern, a Morse code of which he is unaware. On one level, hopping implies soaring into the air until gravity, whether it is the natural force or the gravitas which accompanies maturity, drags us down again. The young boy has one foot in the so-called logical world and the other in the world of intuition. Once he matures he will be aligned with Morelli and Heisenberg the physicist; communication with

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<sup>269</sup> Gary Lucas, *Common Denomination: The Thought Field* (Connecticut: Strategic Book Publishing, 2011), 133.

the 'other' world will be lost. Morelli holds that maybe Heisenberg and his indeterminacy principle can provide enlightenment to hidden reality. Once whittled to its core, this indeterminacy principle means that the quantum-mechanical properties of any object are unknown - and unknowable - because the object exists in a superposition of all possible properties at once, at least until a measurement is made. This principle of indeterminacy calls to mind Keats's Maxim of Negative capability which he described thus: 'Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'.<sup>270</sup> The scientist realizes that he can never truly know anything on the subatomic level. The poetic writer exploits the rich ambiguity created by humankind's perception of reality. After Morelli discusses Heisenberg and Planck it is averred that another world potentially exists within this one but that world must be created: 'Ese mundo existe en éste, pero como el agua existe en el oxígeno y el hidrógeno' (485).

One way of reaching a new reality is to create a *tabula rasa* of this one in order to forge the alternative. According to Morelli, the 'monos sabios' (or scientists) wish to nullify both the fantasies of a reality betrayed by their supposed intelligence and their own creative ability. This process culminates in the ultimate regression, the goal of reaching that point at which the last spark of (false) humanity will be lost (626-627). This hypothesis is richly suggestive. Perhaps he means that to return to a primordial state, the world in which we live, replete with false humanity, must be eradicated. History is unravelled and liquidated in this 'especie de encuentro ab ovo' - 'from the beginning', literally from the egg.<sup>271</sup> On a spiritual level, it behoves us to travel to the dawn of the universe to see how we have evolved as we have and perhaps to gauge how we may evolve in the future. From a scientific perspective,

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<sup>270</sup> Keats, John. *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats*, Cambridge Edition. Houghton, Mifflin and Company. (1899), 277.

<sup>271</sup> In literary parlance, 'Ab ovo' may refer to a story which starts from the beginning of the events it narrates, as opposed to one which starts in the middle - in medias res (q.v.). Horace used the expression in *Ars Poetica*.

man's intelligence and research into nuclear energy and weapons may lead to his own annihilation. With all of the intelligence humanity possesses, it has chosen to use it in this egregious manner.

Etienne claims that Eastern and Western traditions are not so very different as both imply intelligence leading to the death of intelligence or intelligent life forms:

Apenas te metés un poco en serio en sus textos empezás a sentir lo de siempre, la inexplicable tentación de suicidio de la inteligencia por vía de la inteligencia misma. El alacrán clavándose el aguijón, harto de ser un alacrán pero necesitado de alacranidad para acabar con el alacrán. En Madrás o en Heidelberg, el fondo de la cuestión es el mismo: hay una especie de equivocación inefable al principio de los principios (213-214).

Both Western logic and Eastern metaphysics in the case of the 'Bardo' are mistaken given that in order to define and to understand we must be outside of what is defined and what is understandable: 'es que para definir y entender habría que estar fuera de lo definido y lo entendible' (214). Humanity is limited to being itself and can never view itself from outside. Once again similar to Clara's depiction of Abel, we have the metaphor of the scorpion, unable to deny his own nature and invariably committing suicide through his action. The scorpion is the symbol of both wisdom and self-destruction and was called by the Egyptians 'the creature accursed'.<sup>272</sup> The human being is equally the creature accursed because of his or her purported knowledge and predilection for self-destruction. After devoting a great deal of time to studying a wide panoply of subjects Horacio feels as if he knows nothing. Having explored magic, spirituality and science, what remains? A potential answer is quite simply, music. As we shall see, not only are divergent genres of music from tango to jazz to classical quarried, but the array of musicians alluded to in *Rayuela* is truly vertiginous.

Tango assumes a less significant role here than either jazz or classical music. In *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, Peiró argues that while tango is a dominant factor in *Los Premios*, its

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<sup>272</sup> Hall, *The Secret Teachings Of All Ages*, 87.

presence is barely palpable in *Rayuela*, a fact which renders them ‘antítesis complementarias’.<sup>273</sup> Horacio does reference tango lyrics when he implies that La Maga is promiscuous:

Después fuiste la amiguita  
de un viejo boticario,  
y el hijo de un comisario  
todo el viento te sacó ... (117).

Generally Horacio, unlike Traveler, does not display any predilection for this typically Argentine music. Cortázar’s own feelings towards tango were ambivalent as he enjoyed its vibrancy and as mentioned he even recorded a compilation of tangos and poetry called *Trottoirs de Buenos Aires*<sup>274</sup>, but felt that compared to jazz it was an impoverished type of music.<sup>275</sup> It is certainly viewed as a ‘sentimental’ type of music, and as an inherently sentimental being Horacio would wish to avoid indulging in its excesses.

Cortázar’s loves the universality jazz, an art form which represents in many ways the polar opposite to the relative provincialism of tango. Jazz has drawn on a myriad of divergent national, regional and local musical cultures leading to the explosion of numerous distinctive styles. As discussed, for Cortázar jazz is fortunate because its ‘takes’ convey a sense of novelty and freshness every time they are performed. Nevertheless, because a truly improvised performance can never be repeated, unlike classical music or tango, for instance, musical genres which are subject to a score with little room for spontaneity, these flashes of brilliance in jazz could be lost forever were it not for recording facilities.<sup>276</sup> The disc etches the music on the fabric of time. Indeed, jazz as we shall see with ‘El Perseguidor’ is *ex*

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<sup>273</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 85.

<sup>274</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 82.

<sup>275</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 272.

<sup>276</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 273-274.

*tempore* - literally outside of time. There is the sense that the supposed arbitrariness of *Rayuela*'s structure it is intended to produce the illusion of improvisation and liberty.

In a *tour de force*, the so-called 'discada' comprising chapters ten to eighteen of *Rayuela*, the narrator brings the reader on a rollercoaster of peaks and troughs, interlarding the narrative with jazz interludes. According to Mac Adam, 'The music played and alluded to in those chapters includes practically the entire history of jazz—from Bix Beiderbecke to Thelonius Monk—an updated replica, of course, of the 200-record collection Cortazar sells in 1951'.<sup>277</sup> Overwhelmed by the plethora of jazz references which suffuse the narrative, we are compelled to seek out and listen to the music recreated in order to appreciate the full effect of the intertextual cornucopia in all of its glory. We hear rather than read the text. Indeed, the sequence resembles a jazz opera, bearing in mind that music often merges with, and takes prevalence over, dialogue. Jazz assumes flesh as the impression is created that the musicians are actually present in the room alongside the members of the 'Club de la Serpiente'. From the outset, we learn via Ossip that in this music-filled enclosure everything, including the very room, breathes; a pulse is palpable and a lost contact is re-established via the music. Faintly illuminated by the light of two candles, shadows lend the scene an eery yet romantic ambience. Ossip compliments La Maga, 'Esa luz es tan usted, algo que viene y va, que se mueve todo el tiempo' (64). Like light, she cannot be grasped, but the effect she radiates is visible. The shadows afford Ossip the opportunity to ingratiate himself with La Maga.

Auditory delectations are lovingly crafted and vividly reproduced with generous quotations, such as the exquisite poetry in the following adumbration of Lionel Hampton's performance:

Lionel Hampton balanceaba Save it pretty mamma, se soltaba y caía rodando entre vidrios, giraba en la punta de un pie, constelaciones instantáneas, cinco estrellas, tres

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<sup>277</sup> Mac Adam, 'Julio Cortázar and music', 49.

estrellas, diez estrellas, las iba apagando con la punta del escaquin, se hamacaba con una sombrilla japonesa girando vertiginosamente en la mano, y toda la orquesta entró en la caída final, una trompeta bronca, la tierra, vuelta abajo, volatinero al suelo, finibus, se acabó (66).

The sheer vigour of the rhythm is breathtaking just as the vertiginous plenitude of the piece is overwhelming. Unsurprisingly, jazz is accorded privileged and variegated significance by those in the 'Club de la Serpiente' and is, in essence, all things to all people. In chapter 15 for instance, the music expresses their desire to lose themselves by whatever means possible:

Say goodbye, goodbye to whiskey  
Lordy, so long to gin.  
I just want my reefers,  
I just want to feel high again (86).

In stark contrast to the mellowness of the above lyrics, jazz equally evokes the Swing motion of a boxing match as is evidenced by the portrayal of Bix and Eddie Lang musically 'sparring' in 'I'm coming, Virginia'. The club discusses the fact that in the 1930s artists such as Bix Beiderbecke had to distil their performances into three minutes. This restriction and intensity honed rather than hampered their craft.

Words are rendered redundant when we experience the saxophone of 'Four O'Clock Drag', oozing protracted notes of exasperation. Vividly the image of a human being wallowing in weariness is evoked. The saxophone becomes the human voice, just as the jazz musician emulates the sound of musical instruments in 'scat' form. Man and instrument merge in jazz, as is the case in 'El Perseguidor' where Johnny Carter's saxophone is an extension of himself. The 'dragging' of 'Four O'Clock drag' echoes Ossip's own tortuous attempts to extract information about La Maga's youth in Montevideo.

Babs sobs as she empathizes with Bessie Smith singing 'I wanna be somebody's baby doll' (73). Both Babs and Ronald are seduced by Satchmo singing 'Don't play me cheap' which encapsulates sexual 'togetherness' for them both:

y después la llamarada de la trompeta, el falo amarillo rompiendo el aire y gozando con avances y retrocesos y hacia el final tres notas ascendentes, hipnóticamente de oro puro, una perfecta pausa donde todo el swing del mundo palpitaba en un instante intolerable, y entonces la eyaculación de un sobregado resbalando y cayendo como un cohete en la noche sexual (77).

Jazz is, in essence, a tangible expression of their love and lovemaking.

Music provides a soundtrack to La Maga's life. As she recounts her youth in Montevideo which inevitably includes her rape by the black servant, Ireneo, the record player blasts forth the lyrics, 'But as you black Mm, mm, brother, get back, get back, get back'. When Ronald suggests that they listen to 'Hot and Bothered', Horacio cruelly interjects, 'Título apropiado a las circunstancias memoradas', in reference to La Maga's recounted violation (90). La Maga inherently connects jazz with love and resents Horacio's insistence on logic where intuition will suffice. In reality, she views logic as an impediment to appreciating music. When Ronald plays a record by Hawkins, La Maga muses that if only Horacio were the person explaining these puzzles to her, everything would be perfect. Horacio's jealousy of Ossip causes a rift between the two lovers.

Oliveira contends that it is acceptable for music to capture emotion: 'Una cosa es la música que puede traducirse en emoción y otra la emoción que pretende pasar por música' (99). He loathes what he regards as cheap sentimentality. Ossip observes Oliveira's lips move silently while he listens to the music. It looks as if he is praying or in a shamanic trance but Ossip fears that he is transmitting telepathic messages to la Maga. Horacio's jealousy leads him to contemplate assaulting Ossip, beating him without pity, 'Sin ganas, sin lástima, como eso que está soplando Dizzy, sin lástima, sin ganas, tan absolutamente sin ganas como eso que está soplando Dizzy' (72). Ironically, Horacio projects his feelings towards Ossip onto Dizzy. He orders Ronald to kill the record, in a sense fulfilling his own fantasy of removing Ossip from their lives, 'Un perfecto asco—. Sacame esa porquería del plato. Yo no vengo más al Club si aquí hay que escuchar a ese mono sabio' (72).

When the dulcet tones of Bessie Smith supplant Gillespie, imploring ‘I wanna be somebody’s baby doll’, they all close their eyes enrapt. For Horacio, these musicians are intercessors, mediating between man and the Absolute. He muses,

Los intercesores, una irrealidad mostrándonos otra, como los santos pintados que muestran el cielo con el dedo. No puede ser que esto exista, que realmente estemos aquí, que yo sea alguien que se llama Horacio. Ese fantasma ahí, esa voz de una negra muerta hace veinte años en un accidente de auto (73).

These unreal intercessors revealing another unreality: these spectral musicians who are all dead, all form part of a game of illusions. They are the illusion of other illusions, ‘una cadena vertiginosa hacia atrás, hacia un mono mirándose en el agua el primer día del mundo?’ (74).

If these intermediates are pointing to the Other, the Yonder, perhaps the greatest illusion is that there is no Yonder. Man sees himself reflected in music just as the ape sees himself mirrored in the pond. The phantasmal aspect of these musicians is of paramount importance. Not only are they dead, by virtue of their resurrection through the replaying of their performances, they are immortal. A human being is the sum of his or her acts. In a sense recorded musicians can never truly die as long as people listen to them. Their performances are etched on the fabric of time.

Throughout the session jazz encapsulates the meaning of life and death. As Horacio burrows into the nature of reality he thinks, ‘era casi sencillo pensar que quizá eso que llamaban la realidad merecía la frase despectiva del Duke, It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t that swing’. Reality doesn’t mean anything if it ‘ain’t that swing [sic]’<sup>278</sup>, that jazz or pulse. As mentioned, the term ‘Swing’ is polysemous. Swing in one sense is an easy flowing music with a vigorous rhythm. Jazz’s special relationship to time is also defined as ‘swing’.<sup>279</sup> For Cortázar swing is palpable if the musician speeds up or slows down particular

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<sup>278</sup> The lyric should be ‘ain’t got that swing’ rather than ‘ain’t that swing’. The correct version is included in Gregory Rabassa’s English translation.

<sup>279</sup> Berendt, 278.



tempos which should be in fact be uniform.<sup>280</sup> As mentioned, time becomes elastic, but always within its own limits. The lyrics, 'It don't mean a thing if it ain't that swing' equate the reality to which he aspires with music, music which merges them into one. This poignant excerpt merits reproduction:

en esa atmósfera donde la música aflojaba las resistencias y tejía como una respiración común, la paz de un solo enorme corazón latiendo para todos, asumiéndolos a todos. Y ahora una voz rota, abriéndose paso desde un disco gastado, proponiendo sin saberlo la vieja invitación renacentista, la vieja tristeza anacreónica, un carpe diem Chicago 1929.

You so beautiful but you gotta die some day,  
You so beautiful but you gotta die some day,  
All I want's a little lovin' before you pass away (92).

All each of them wants is a little lovin' before they pass away. For Horacio, and indeed all the contingent of the club, this epitomizes the essence of life. We are all destined to die so should love while there is still time. Love gives life meaning; it is one form of the elusive Yonder or centre which he seeks. Again, it is as if the musicians are conducting a dialogue with the club members in this dimly lit smoke-filled room:

De cuando en cuando ocurría que las palabras de los muertos coincidían con lo que estaban pensando los vivos (si unos estaban vivos y los otros muertos).  
You so beautiful. Je ne veux pas mourir sans avoir compris pourquoi j'avais vécu (92).

Horacio does not wish to die without understanding why he had lived. Akin to Franz in Kundera's novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Horacio views music as a liberating force, superior to language. Horacio could quite easily have formulated the following of Franz's thoughts:

And suddenly he realized that all his life he had done nothing but talk, write, lecture, concoct sentences, search for formulations and amend them, so in the end no words were precise, their meanings were obliterated, their content lost, they turned into trash, chaff, dust, sand; prowling through his brain, tearing at his head, they were his insomnia, his illness. And what he yearned for at that moment, vaguely but with all his might, was unbounded music, absolute

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<sup>280</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 282.

sound, a pleasant and happy all-encompassing, overpowering, window-rattling din to engulf, once and for all, the pain, the futility, the vanity of words. Music was the negation of sentences, music was the anti-word!<sup>281</sup>

It is ironic that although he fails to grasp the importance of jazz to his own life, on a rational level, Horacio waxes lyrical about the role of jazz as a *lingua franca* of music, superior to linguistic, political and technological advances in the name of bringing mankind together. Jazz is ‘la única música universal del siglo, algo que acercaba a los hombres más y mejor que el esperanto, la Unesco o las aerolíneas, una música bastante primitiva para alcanzar universalidad y bastante buena para hacer su propia historia’ (99). This primitive music makes its own history. Horacio sees jazz as a music which allowed for all varieties of imagination and taste. He believes that this apogee of music transcends politics, language and even tradition, and is ‘una forma arquetípica’, an archetypal form belonging to the world of Ideas, a form revealed to mankind. Roberts challenges Cortázar’s depiction of jazz as an authentic form of expression beyond language and he demonstrates how it is impossible for jazz to escape iterability. As mentioned, despite the fact that jazz may not live up to Cortázar’s ideal, Roberts concedes:

For the power of jazz music, like the power of Cortázar’s writing on it, does not lie in simplistic claims of success in attaining some sort of a beyond of representation, but in the constant search,<sup>282</sup> the constant challenge to language, to music, and to such simplistic claims.

While intoxicated and listening to these ghosts or illusions of Bessie and Hawkins play, Horacio had felt that the ritual initiated him into a descent and had shown him an illusive centre: ‘le mostraba un centro ... algo que otra ilusión infinitamente hermosa y desesperada había llamado en algún momento inmortalidad’ (74). Here the centre is immortality – the eternity of the moment. As we shall see with Carter, jazz does allow the individual access through the Doors of Perception to the infinite instant. Tragically Horacio’s insight is ephemeral as, in his inebriated state, he is overcome by dizziness and nausea. Transcending the paths he has travelled through magic, religion and science, he never intuit

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<sup>281</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, translated by Michael Henry Heim (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 94.

<sup>282</sup> Roberts, ‘Subverted claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz’, 745.

Jazz's true significance or the harmony it represents. Jazz's extemporization not only evokes automatic writing but also the innovative composition of *Rayuela* itself. For Cortázar his writing is a musical operation which must obey the swing, which accelerates or decelerates time.<sup>283</sup> Humanity needs to seize the moment, to recreate the world, to rewrite reality with the rhythm of jazz.

When jazz ends, classical music takes over. La Maga and Horacio separate and without realizing it, Horacio is cast forth from Paradise. Horacio wanders the streets of Paris trying to find himself but witnesses the accident involving Morelli. It dawns on him that, 'Sólo viviendo absurdamente se podría romper alguna vez este absurdo infinito' (139) so he decides to take refuge from the rain in an absurd concert by the performer and composer, Berthe Trepát who, 'tenía un aire guerrero y Ubu Roi' (152). For Horacio, words cannot do justice to the atrocious performance to which she subjects the audience.

Trepát performs a piece composed by her former student Rose Bob, a piece inspired by the slamming of a door. Trepát's own composition 'Síntesis Délibes-Saint-Saëns' which she qualifies as 'sincretismo fatídico' or oracular syncretism was blended together by using a pendulum to determine which sections from Délibes and which of those from Saint-Saëns to incorporate. The protracted silences which dominate Rose Bob's creation were interrupted by outbursts from the unimpressed audience. As well as dusting the episode with a comic element, removing the gravity from the serious form of music which classical music purports to be, this echoes Horacio's musing on Beethoven's work being both echoed and drowned out by the din of traffic. Art and life merge as life imitates music in a most surreal way.

Despite Trepát's intentions, this offering was no *avant-garde* triumph. Rather, for the audience, it was a conceited cacophony, a parody of music (148). Given her delusions of

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<sup>283</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 281.

adequacy, Trepát fails to recognise the true awfulness of her putative masterpiece and is perplexed when her audience leaves. The ludicrousness of the performance is underscored when the penultimate audience member muffles his laughter with a glove as he exits. Incongruously this absurd music mellows the normally self-absorbed Horacio who had just witnessed Morelli being knocked down. He starts to consider visiting him in hospital. As the audience has now been whittled down to one, Horacio believes that the concert was secretly for his benefit alone. There is a sense in which he is correct. Trepát addresses him and asks, '¿Usted cree en la Gran Obra? Fulcanelli, usted me entiende ... No diga nada, me doy cuenta de que es un iniciado. Quizá no alcanzó todavía las realizaciones que verdaderamente cuentan' (157). Fulcanelli was the French alchemist who supposedly succeeded in transmuting base metals to gold. This message flatters Horacio who believes he has been given secret insight, perhaps into the absurdity of life. We could say that as one of the goals of alchemy is immortality and jazz has suggested the potential for timelessness in the previous scenes, Horacio caught a fleeting glimpse of its transcendental power without fully appreciating its relevance.

A pall of surreality hangs over the episode as if Horacio is living the life of somebody else. The person accompanying Trepát through Paris is a Doppelgänger, whilst the true Horacio is somewhere else entirely. He may never have left La Maga and may be with her in the apartment. Music highlights the hidden surreal dimensions of life and this farcical performance was prelude to drama about to unfold with the death of La Maga's infant son. We feel as if Horacio's life is off key and the harmony to which he aspires is now out of reach. Simultaneous to this musical farce, La Maga and Ossip are chatting in La Maga's apartment where music and its enforced absence dominate. Initially La Maga plays a recording of a quartet by Schoenberg, prompting complaints and noisy protestations from the elderly neighbour upstairs. Ironically La Maga and Ossip have to strain to hear the music. La

Maga wishes to play an unspecified sonata by Brahms but is impeded from so doing by the hammering on the ceiling of the cantankerous neighbour. It is poignant that Brahms is the composer whose music falls silent, as Brahms in popular culture is virtually synonymous with his lullaby. There is no lullaby for an infant who is already dead. Instead, the silence is punctuated by the ominous sound of a shoe thumping against the floor in rage.

In light of the distortion of sound in the apartment, Ossip highlights the surprising nature of acoustics, the science founded by Pythagoras. He compares the apartment to the Ear of Dionysus, a cave in Syracuse, Sicily which possesses amazing acoustical properties that let a person inside the 'ear' whisper to someone at the other end. Because of this, Caravaggio claimed that the cave was used as a prison which allowed Dionysus to listen in on the conversations inside. In many ways, this obscure chamber resembles a prison or the site of a ritual sacrifice. Indeed, acoustics were manipulated in ancient sites, inducing strange body sensations through sound, or infrasound, as a central part of religious ritual as we shall learn with 'Las Ménades'. When Horacio arrives to the darkened room, he learns that a recording of Schoenberg has been played but that Brahms has not. Schoenberg was renowned for a form of music known as serialism, a form of atonality, or absence of reference to a key or tonal centre.<sup>284</sup> This lack of centre is ironic in light of Horacio's perennial quest for a centre, but in the context of Rocamadour's death, it would highlight how de-centred and off-kilter they all are or are about to become. Tension mounts as we await the dreaded moment of revelation. Rambling conversations prolong the agony. The neighbour from above intermittently pounds on the floor and the club members hear mysterious noises.

When Babs mentions hearing steps on the stairwell, La Maga intuits the true nature of sound as something palpable, 'La escalera se va dibujando en la oreja - dijo la Maga ... Ahora

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<sup>284</sup> Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (California: University of California Press, 1995), 48.

es como si yo tuviera una mano en la escalera y la pasara por los escalones uno por uno' (208). The path of sound is traced and the listener visualizes what she hears. This depiction of the tangibility of sound is quite accurate. A cursory glance at the manner in which music used to be recorded allows us to appreciate how La Maga's synaesthesia taps into reality. Before the 1920s all recordings were made by directing the sound into a recording horn, which transmitted the vibrations of the sound waves through a cutting stylus to a disc<sup>285</sup>, a process redolent of the way that steps on a stairwell are etched onto La Maga's ear. All sound leaves an imprint, however transient, on its listener.

The flip side of this production of sound is auscultation - the perception of muffled sounds. Morelli is fixated with absent sound or silence as he lies dying in a hospital famous for the discovery of auscultation or 'listening to sounds within the body (usually with a stethoscope)'. The physician listens to these sounds in order to diagnose what is occurring internally. The irony of this pursuit is not lost on Horacio who finds morsels of hope that auscultation could lead to, 'a lo mejor todavía ... Una llave, figura inefable' (704). He can vaguely divine esoteric rumblings whispering to him but, analogous to a medieval alchemist, finds the 'key' to enlightenment just beyond his reach. Concealed or absent sound in the form of silence obsesses Morelli. He wishes he could have understood Mallarmé more thoroughly: 'su sentido de la ausencia y del silencio era mucho más que un recurso extremo, un impasse metafísico' (700). One day in Jérez de la Frontera, he heard a cannon shot and he discovered another sense of silence. A loud explosion can make us temporarily deaf which would make us hear nothing but silence. Morelli talks of dogs who hear whistles which are inaudible to the human ear. They appear to be attuned to a reality with which we have lost contact. Indeed on one level, silence may be denoted as an absence of sound, but poetic silence, 'el silencio desde donde la música es posible' (544), is far richer than this. Conversely, the silence which

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<sup>285</sup> P K Mittal, *Oscillations, Waves and Acoustics* (New Delhi: I. K. International Pvt Ltd, 2010), 482.

suffuses the apartment on the night of baby Rocamadour's death is one of oppression and suffocation. From jazz performances to classical music to silence, it is here that the tragic opera concludes.

Music has underscored their emotions, the vicissitudes of their lives and death, their bid to reach something beyond themselves and is in many ways not simply the medium but also the message. It is ironic that the musical genre which is associated most closely with Argentina, tango, is usurped by both classical music and jazz in this tale of the quintessential Argentine, Horacio. As mentioned, he seeks to eschew sentimentality and disparages tango because of this. Despite Horacio's love for jazz, Babs fears that he can never understand the harmony it engenders, as he cannot help but rationalize. Redolent of the other esoteric paths explored, such as religious faith in the form of Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, Kabbalah, the cult of Thoth, Christianity *inter alia*, in addition to magic in the form of alchemy, music defies logic. Contrasting with *Rayuela*, *62: Modelo para armar* is arid and clinical, revolving around the chemistry of the human mind in the course of its own investigations. Although *62: Modelo para armar* is revolutionary in its own right, the juxtaposition of both novels underscores *Rayuela*'s vibrancy and rich tapestry of influences.

As is evident, the quest for meaning is a salient leitmotif in *Rayuela*, a search which itself takes many forms. One of Horacio's motives is to determine how man ended up on the brink of annihilation, given the gift of his cognitive abilities. Horacio laments the futility of their attempts to unearth the nature of reality: 'Lo absurdo es creer que podemos aprehender la totalidad de lo que nos constituye en este momento, o en cualquier momento, e intuirlo como algo coherente, algo aceptable si querés' (220). In particular, he launches a diatribe against the limitations of logic or reason: 'La razón sólo nos sirve para disecar la realidad en calma, o analizar sus futuras tormentas, nunca para resolver una crisis instantánea' (220). Having quarried mystical, magical and even scientific paths in trying to grasp authentic

reality, a distraught Horacio fails to realize that music provides a potential key to his bid to build reality anew. Jazz is in effect an antidote to reality.<sup>286</sup>

Following on from Morelli's speculations, it is the enigma of cognition which comes into focus in *62: Modelo para armar*. The novel subverts our long-held preconceptions of psychology, exploring all forms of sensory and extrasensory perception and journeys through a labyrinth of alternative realities, in particular psychic vampirism. As mentioned, Horacio believes that reality is absurd and he is unaware of the relationship between himself and what is happening to him at any given moment. Reality in *62: Modelo para armar* appears even more absurd as characters are controlled by external forces or 'fuerzas habitantes' which possess them. Where music is palpable throughout *Rayuela* and reality means nothing if it 'ain't that swing [sic],<sup>287</sup> music's vigorous rhythms, alongside the wealth of spiritual, magical, literary and scientific allusions which pepper *Rayuela*, are all conspicuous by their absence in the experiment of *62: Modelo para armar* which we shall now discuss.

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<sup>286</sup> Peiró, *Las Músicas de Cortázar*, 53.

<sup>287</sup> The lyric should be 'ain't got that swing' rather than 'ain't that swing'. The correct version is included in Gregory Rabassa's English translation.



## 62: *Modelo para armar*

If *Rayuela* is ‘fiendishly esoteric’<sup>288</sup>, then *62: Modelo para armar* could be deemed to be mentally excruciating. Not only does it involve the vivisection of the mental process, but it is indubitably esoteric in its abstruse subject matter and execution. Initially the current chapter aims to examine the multifaceted portrayal of the cognitive process. Essentially our noesis is part of what makes us not simply human, but individual humans. Clearly, even scientists do not fully understand how the human psyche works, but in *62: Modelo para armar* we witness consciousness laid bare. Through the dissection of a thought we shall look at acoustic and visual perception, the act of reflection via a mirror, the instinctive element of cognition, apprehension of the impulse as well as the interplay between thought and time. Chiming with the original intention of the novel, I shall examine the thought process via a predominantly scientific lens. I shall compare and contrast empirical perception with extrasensory perception, and from there I delve into the occult domains of parallel realities and psychic vampirism.

The genesis of *62: Modelo para armar* appears to be crystal clear but as with all things pertaining to Cortázar, this crystalline clarity is but a mirage. Ostensibly the novel was spawned from *Rayuela*. Nevertheless, antecedence may also be ascribed to ‘La Muñeca Rota’ and ‘Cristal con una rosa dentro’ in Cortázar’s mosaic of essays, articles and poems, *Último round*, published in 1969, one year after the publication of *62: Modelo para armar*.<sup>289</sup> In ‘La Muñeca Rota’ Cortázar details why he wrote *62: Modelo para armar* as an experiment and exploration.<sup>290</sup> As counterpoint to the meteorite shower of literary references which punctuated *Rayuela*, Cortázar strove to craft a naked or skeletal text. Now he wishes to flesh

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<sup>288</sup> Salman Rushdie, *The Jaguar Smile: a Nicaraguan Journey* (London: Vintage edition, 2000), 79.

<sup>289</sup> Julio Cortázar, *62: Modelo para armar* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1996). All further textual references to the novel are to this edition.

<sup>290</sup> Cortázar, *Último round*, 172-185.

out the work *post facto* as he knows only too well to what extent daily irruptions change or at times invent or destroy his work, so why not transmit these ruptures to the reader and furnish him or her with some complementary pieces of the model kit to be assembled?

Chiming with this concept of the reader creating the text, we must look to *Rayuela's* Morelli and his intention to write a novel redefining the domain of psychology. He planned to use as a springboard the research of a Swedish neurobiologist, Holger Hyden into the workings of the brain. The basic tenet that the brain uses electrochemical processes to communicate impulses which constitute thought, memory and so forth is still valid today. For Hyden, the act of thinking, remembering, feeling or adopting a decision is demonstrated by the appearance of certain individual molecules which the nervous cells produce according to external excitation. Neurons transmit nervous impulses via electrochemical reactions, in a process which resembles a game of billiards where one neuron impacts the other in a set sequence, like one ball hitting another.<sup>291</sup> Notwithstanding the difficulties inherent in surprising a nervous cell in motion and 'catching it in the act' so to speak, the Swedish scientist managed to do so.<sup>292</sup> The richness and variety of thought can be explained by the fact that the average human brain contains such a vast amount of cells that the number of potential permutations and combinations is astronomical. All of our thoughts and perceptions could be reduced to chemical processes. As Horacio would say, 'Acido, ergo sum' (*Rayuela* 573-574).

Morelli reflects upon the manner in which chemistry, electromagnetism, 'flujos

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<sup>291</sup> In *Rayuela*, Chapter 62 we learn: 'Por ejemplo, el impulso que corresponde a la nota "mi" captada por el oído, se desliza rápidamente de una neurona a otra hasta alcanzar a todas aquellas que contienen las moléculas de ácido RNA correspondiente a esta excitación particular.' Memory corresponds to the sequencing of nucleic acid molecules in the brain which perform a function similar to that of computer storage. For instance, the impulse which corresponds to the note 'mi' captured by the ear glides rapidly from one neuron to another until it reaches all of those containing the molecules appropriate to this particular innervation.

<sup>292</sup> According to the aforementioned *L'Express* article about Hyden cited in chapter 62 of *Rayuela*, it has been proven that the stimulus is translated incrementally, in the neurons of certain proteins, whose molecules vary according to the nature of the message. Simultaneously, the quantity of proteins diminishes as if sacrificing their reserves in benefit of the neuron. The information contained in the protein molecule is converted, according to Hyden, into the impulse which the neuron sends to its neighbours.

secretos de la materia viva, todo vuelve a evocar extrañamente la noción del *mana*' (*Rayuela* 465). Anthropologists such as Roger M. Keesing believed, 'that mana in Oceanic religion was a kind of invisible medium of power, a spiritual energy manifest in sacred objects, a potency radiated by humans'.<sup>293</sup> It may well be the magic of which the human spirit is made. The individuals in the text (or 'puppets' as Morelli perceives them) would labour under the illusion that they are reacting psychologically in the classical sense of the term. However, they represent no more than an instance of this flow of inanimate material of *mana*. Their behaviour defies logic as they obey hidden forces which they do not understand. These hidden forces, according to Morelli, are on a quest superior to us as individuals and use us for their own ends. Morelli concludes that a human does not exist, rather he/she strives to be: 'el hombre no es sino que busca ser' (467). Humankind is in a constant state of becoming, of evolution. Indeed there is dialectic at the heart of *62: Modelo para armar* between man as animal and man as *homo sapiens* or transcendental being.

Morelli conjectures that on the edge of what we perceive to be normal social interaction a personal drama of a different nature is being performed: 'Como si los niveles subliminales fueran los que atan y desatan el ovillo del grupo comprometido en el drama' (*Rayuela* 465-466). It as if certain individuals influence others via chemicals and these individuals 'incidieran sin proponérselo en la química profunda de los demás y viceversa' (*Rayuela* 466). All of this drama takes place below the threshold of human consciousness with the result that the most curious and perturbing chain reactions, fissions and transmutations would be unleashed. Human beings within *62: Modelo para armar* could represent, on one level, neurons which may belong to one individual or to a number of individuals. These neurons react to stimuli which they can never truly understand. It seems as

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<sup>293</sup> Roger M. Keesing, 'Rethinking "Mana"' *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 40, No. 1, Fortieth Anniversary Issue 1944-1984 (Spring, 1984), 137-156.

if they are guided by an invisible hand in the execution of the doll's trajectory and the fulfilment of a mysterious quest.

A number of intertwining threads run through the plot. However, the main narrative tells the story of a group of friends and the events leading up to the violent death of one of them, H el ene, the anaesthetist. Whenever the group congregates in one location it is known as the 'zona'. The story unfolds in three cities: London, Vienna and Paris. Marrast, the sculptor, travels from Paris to London with his partner, Nicole to buy hule stone in order to create a sculpture commissioned by a town in France, Arcueil. They are accompanied by the two Argentinians, Polanco and Calac. Marrast becomes involved with a group of Neurotics Anonymous and befriends one of them, a young student called Austin, who is later seduced by Nicole. Juan, the Unesco interpreter who is besotted with H el ene, goes to Vienna with Tell, his Danish lover, to interpret at a conference. In Vienna Juan tells Tell about Monsieur Ochs's infamous dolls and later, while travelling on a train they see a woman examining a doll as if it were one of Monsieur Ochs's infamous creations. Monsieur Ochs had been imprisoned for concealing what we believe to be lewd objects (but this is only suggested and never specified) in his dolls. He disseminates the rumour that he has hidden money in some of his dolls. The result is a number of Parisian mothers purchasing and splitting open said toys, watched by their horrified daughters. These dolls, as well as representing a bizarre form of lottery, are of course representative of miniature human beings, not dissimilar to the 'fantoques' of this narrative. Later in Vienna Juan and Tell encounter a Frau Marta whom they believe to be a vampire and Tell sends the doll which Juan had given her to H el ene in Paris.

When H el ene receives the doll from Tell, she feels compelled to deliver it somewhere in the *Ciudad*. She does not know where, why or to whom. Distraught after the death of one of her patients, H el ene invites Celia, who has just run away from home, to stay in her apartment. During the night, for reasons she herself fails to understand, H el ene attempts to

strangle and molest the young girl. The following morning, before Celia departs she throws and breaks open Monsieur Ochs's doll, and is horrified by what she sees protruding. Celia later meets up with the other members of the 'zona' in London where she and Austin become lovers before she recounts to him her encounter with H el ene.

Juan later flies to Paris to explain to H el ene that the doll Tell sent was not at his behest. After spending the night together, H el ene also reveals to Juan the incident with Celia. Juan feels as if he has now truly lost H el ene and even starts to regard her as some form of vampire. At four pm that day, the whole 'zona' convenes to see the unveiling of Marrast's statue of Vercing etrix in Arcueil. On the way home, most of the others leave the train early, Marrast must remain in Arceuil with delegates from the town hall. Only Juan, H el ene and Feuille Morte remain on the train. Strangely, H el ene tells Juan to take Feuille Morte with him as they are the only survivors, suggesting that she feels as if she is already dead. Reluctantly, H el ene leaves the train to deliver her package in the *Ciudad* and recognizes the place where she must go (having taken a wrong turn on the previous occasion). H el ene is drawn inexorably to a hotel room where she hears someone call her name. She believes it is her dead patient and thinks, 'Juan hab a tenido raz n, la cita era con  el, el muchacho muerto la llamaba para que todo volviera al orden' (276). However the voice belongs to Austin, wielding a knife and intent on revenge. The last thing she hears is the thud of the doll falling on the ground, as she is cleft in two by Austin.

In the interim, Juan has also left the train and entered the *Ciudad*. He finds H el ene dead in the dimly-lit room with her eyes wide open. He leaves the hotel and heads towards the canal. Incongruously, Juan spots Nicole in the *Ciudad* at this juncture and then observes the silhouette of Frau Marta, taking Nicole by the arm and whispering something into her ear. Blissfully unaware of H el ene's death the other members of the group, race by taxi to meet the train which is carrying the forgotten Feuille Morte. A curious allusion to Feuille Morte's

utterance of phrase, 'Bisbis bisbis' marks the end of the text. This terminus may be a mirage as 'bisbis' in French is used to solicit the encore performance of a verse. What appears to be over may be about to begin again.

In keeping with Morelli and Cortázar's original intention, the characters are portrayed like actors in a play, with little input into the script it behoves them to execute. The first character whose perception is scrutinized from a myriad of perspectives is Juan, the Unesco interpreter (not dissimilar to Cortázar himself). Constantly deducing patterns and interpreting, sometimes overinterpreting experiences, Juan is the character through whose eyes the bulk of the text is filtered and whose cognitive and sensory processes are most graphically described. The most detailed example of Juan's perceptive odyssey is at the very opening section of the novel where he dines at the Polidor restaurant on Christmas Eve. Juan allows us a window into his thinking processes and the manner in which the mind yokes together ostensibly random objects. As Juan incessantly burrows into the motives behind his actions, the reader is forced to scythe through the swathes of repetitions, specifically the phrase, 'un castillo sangriento'. In a galloping sequence of questions, he asks why he had entered into the Polidor restaurant, why he had purchased a book which he would probably never read, why he had chosen to sit opposite the large mirror which duplicated the faded desolation of the room and why he had selected a bottle of Sylvaner wine. Naturally, the reader is impelled to query the motives behind and answers to such questions.

The choice of the Polidor restaurant, for instance, was by no means random. The name Polidor is derived from a Greek term meaning 'well endowed' or 'bearing rich gifts', and the restaurant certainly provides Juan with much food for thought. The name, Polidor has strong vampiric connections and indirectly evokes John Polidori who wrote the novella,

*The Vampyre* (1819).<sup>294</sup> Moreover, in the late 1940s the inheritors of Alfred Jarry's College of 'Pataphysics, held their 'scientific dinners' there.

Our attention is arrested with the opening phrase, "Quisiera un castillo sangriento", 'había dicho el comensal gordo' (9). We wonder why a diner would want a bloody or bleeding castle. It is only when the context becomes apparent that we comprehend that said diner is requesting a rare steak. As they are in a Parisian restaurant, the diner's words were actually, 'Je voudrais un château saignant'. The 'château' in question is an abbreviation or as Juan says, 'mutilation', of the Châteaubriand dish on the menu. The narrator fools us with his literal mistranslation from French into Spanish and renders the reader suspicious. In minute detail Juan reconstructs hearing the other diner's order when there was a lull in conversation, a lull which allowed the request to resonate in his mind, and, as he says, to acquire a halo or to radiate. He believes that this hiatus was produced solely for his benefit as it had no impact on the other diners in the restaurant. The allusion to Chateaubriand jolts Juan who had just opened the book by Butor and had distractedly glanced at the name of the Viscount of Chateaubriand.

Juan obsesses on the sequence of events and the way in which they impact one another. Vertiginously, we start to feel as if we are being swirled round and round, similar to the blood-like wine in Juan's glass. He details how he had purchased the book prior to arriving at the corner of la rue de Vaugirard, which is where he had detected the presence of the Countess, then had remembered Frau Marta and the Basilisk House and later had merged all of this in Hélène's image. He had bought the book knowing that he neither needed nor desired it, 'y sin embargo lo había comprado porque el libro iba a abrirle veinte minutos después un agujero en el aire por donde se descargaría el zarpazo, toda posible ordenación de

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<sup>294</sup> For a more detailed discussion on vampiric references within the text please see Ana María Hernández, 'Vampires and Vampiresses: A Reading of 62' *Oklahoma Books Abroad*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer, 1976), 570-576 Published by: Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40130719>.

los elementos parecía impensable' (25). Akin to any linguist, Juan is sensitive to the intricacies of language and yet he manages to overlook the vampiric connection with the putative blood-soaked castle. He orders Sylvaner wine, 'que contenía en sus primeras sílabas como en una charada las sílabas centrales de la palabra donde latía a su vez el centro geográfico de un oscuro terror ancestral' (22), thus evoking Transylvania. This, in turn, he connects to the book he has bought and the Chateaubriand alluded to therein. He also links the bloody castle with the legendary Countess, who had bound her young victims prior to imbibing their blood. Frequently we think we are progressing through the text, but learn that we are glued to the same spot. At various interludes, Juan repeats this key phrase of 'Quisiera un castillo sangriento' (7), emphasizing the notion that we have not really advanced chronologically from the initial position.

The acoustic experience is accompanied by a visual symphony in the Polidor restaurant. As we shall see, throughout the text there is much emphasis on the eyes as opposed to the other sensory organs. Interestingly, a number of the text's references are redolent of the effects of the Observer in Quantum Physics. For instance, we are told that we touch with our eyes in the same way that we would touch with our hands: 'Los ojos son las únicas manos que nos van quedando a unos cuantos, bonita - dijo Juan' (258). Normally, however, we do not conceive of viewing as touching in some way. Although light touches the optical nerves allowing the seer to see, the act of perception does not generally impact the observed phenomenon other than within the observer's mind. The eye both reflects and absorbs light.

Here it is as if the eyes are massaging or handling the object. Could looking at something change the object substantially? I believe that it may be useful to look at the theories of Heisenberg admired so much by Morelli. In quantum physics, to observe a subatomic particle, you must look at it, in some way, with light, for instance. At those miniscule



levels, the energy of the medium you use to do the 'observing' - i.e. the energy of the light, is sufficiently high in proportion to that which is being perceived that it causes a change in some aspect of that which is being monitored. The act of observing is essentially bouncing some kind of particles off of the sub-atomic particle. Akin to throwing a handful of ball bearings at an inflated balloon, we can see where the bearings bounce back from, but by then the force of the impact has moved the balloon, causing the observation to be imprecise. Thus the very act of observation changes one or more fundamental aspects of the observed. This is, in a sense, a simplification of Heisenberg's aforementioned Uncertainty Principle. An alternative take on the eyes being hands would simply imply that the observer touches the perceived object by holding it in his gaze, literally.

In order to gain perspective on the act of perception, subjective mind and empirical reality are juxtaposed through the trope of the mirror. Subsequent to reading the name of Chateaubriand and prior to hearing the order, Juan had gazed into the mirror. While listening to the order, Juan takes us on a labyrinthine journey through the looking-glass and impels us to reflect on the act of reflection, through both mind and mirror. Mirrors displace our images by transposing them from a three-dimensional plane onto a two-dimensional one. Rays of light strike different objects and produce distorted images of them. They reveal an exact inversion of the subject, simultaneously concurring with and contradicting what they evince. Juan contemplates the manner in which, according to the mirror, the other diner was seated at the second table behind his, 'y así su imagen y su voz habían tenido que recorrer itinerarios opuestos y convergentes para incidir en una atención bruscamente solicitada' (10). Juan sees the diner's mouth opening in front of him and hears his voice emanating from behind, thus he feels trapped in the middle. When he spies his double in the mirror, the focus is shifted from Juan as it evolves from first person, '¿Por qué entré ... ?' to third person, 'Según el espejo, el comensal estaba sentado en la segunda mesa a espaldas de la que ocupaba Juan' (10).

Frequently, the text glides seamlessly between the narratorial perspectives of different characters, often shifting from the viewpoint of one character to another in mid-sentence. Not only is this disconcerting for the reader who must ascertain to whom the words correspond, we are overwhelmed by the sense that identities merge and thus disintegrate.

Juan senses that perhaps, half-closing his eyes, he could substitute the image of the mirror,

territorio intercesor entre el simulacro del restaurante Polidor y el otro simulacro vibrando todavía en el eco de su disolución; quizá ahora pudiera pasar del alfabeto ruso en el espejo al otro lenguaje que se había asomado al límite de la percepción (15).

Recursively, this mirror is now a link to the other images in itself, as it provides an intermediary territory between the simulacrum or semblance of the restaurant and the other image still vibrating in the echo of its dissolution. This evanescent image would explicitly connect Hélène (as vampire or predator) with Monsieur Ochs, the Countess and Frau Marta. A flash of truth manifests itself through the medium of the looking-glass. Traditionally mirrors, like crystals, have often been used for scrying. The diviner normally gazes into the crystal or looking glass and allows images surface of their own accord. Here Juan employs the mirror as a form of distraction - it induces a trance in him as he manages to step outside of his own body metaphorically. Like jazz in *Rayuela*, this intercessor allows Juan to catch a glimpse of a truth which he fails to fully appreciate.

Vertiginously, Juan draws our attention to the contrast between automatic, respiratory processes and forced, intellectual activities, in addition to the extent to which he is subject to both as a human being:

“Sí”, pensó Juan suspirando, y suspirar era la precisa admisión de que todo eso venía de otro lado ... porque al fin y al cabo él era eso y su pensamiento, no podía quedarse en el suspiro, en una contracción del plexo, en el vago temor de lo entrevisto (13).

His sigh signifies that he senses but cannot articulate the vague terror of what he has partially glimpsed. Logic has betrayed him. Juan highlights ‘la crispación en la boca del estómago, la oscura certidumbre de que por allí, no por esta simplificación dialéctica, empieza y sigue un camino’ (12). Intuition, not logical reasoning, provides the only path to enlightenment. Perception, in essence, is merely a springboard for thought; it does not constitute the thought itself. In a recursive manner, Juan explores conditions necessary for ‘meaningful’ perception. Prior to the formulation of the thought comes what may be described as the sensation or impression. This sensation is vague and holds many possibilities. Once the thought is processed, the potential vanishes, and is replaced by something definite, yet frequently disappointing.

Akin to Juan, not to mention Horacio, the reader is reminded of the difficulties inherent in articulating these ‘sensations’, or impulses, both terms which prove somewhat inadequate. We know what we feel but simply are unable to clothe these impulses in thought or language. Frequently, Juan is tormented, as he is cognisant of a small vague image lurking just below the surface of his memory or consciousness. Juan counterpoints ‘pensar cazadoramente’, thinking in an aggressive manner with the passive process of letting the mind below the level of consciousness do the work: ‘Pensar era inútil, como desesperarse por recordar un sueño del que sólo se alcanzan las últimas hilachas al abrir los ojos; pensar era quizá destruir la tela todavía suspendida en algo como el reverso de la sensación, su latencia acaso repetible’ (13). As discussed in *El Examen*, truth resides in this oneiric realm in the form of Noumenon. However, we are outcast from this Paradise like Adam and Eve. To a certain degree, it is true that when we force a connection or a thought, sometimes it is counterproductive as we automatically ignore other possibilities. In ‘Cristal con una rosa dentro’, Cortázar redefines distraction as an alternative form of attention, situated in another level of the psyche; ‘una atención dirigida desde o a través e incluso hacia ese plano

profundo' (*Último round* 272). When we are in a flexible state of distraction all of these options may bubble to the surface. However, once our focus is fixed, only one option becomes crystallized whilst the others sink to oblivion.

Trying to ascertain the associations between the heterogeneous components of his experience is like an itch aching to be scratched, an itch which propels Juan forward in his quest. He endeavours to distinguish the sudden constellation of thoughts which formed of its own accord from that which is tainted by other associations. Initially he tries to capture the impulse which produced his experience, but no words could define this force which converts scraps of memories, anodyne and isolated images into a sudden vertiginous block. He laments, "Ah, no te dejaré ir así", pensó Juan, "no puede ser que una vez más me ocurra ser el centro de esto que viene de otra parte, y quedarme a la vez como expulsado de lo más mío" (14). He feels alienated from his own experience, from that of which he is the fulcrum. He implores, 'No te irás tan fácilmente, algo has de dejarme entre las manos, un pequeño basilisco, cualquiera de las imágenes que ahora ya no sé si formaban parte o no de esa explosión silenciosa' (14). Juan is distraught at the asymptotic experience and the concomitant sense of loss. He feels that there is something he fails to foresee, and rendered 'sardonic witness' to his perception, he capitulates to its plenitude without resistance.

The 'explosión silenciosa' to which he alludes, although an oxymoron is precisely what occurs in the brain when a thought is forged. Neurons produce little bursts of electricity that can be passed from cell to cell. When a neuron activates ('fires') another in this way, it's like a switch being turned on or one of Morelli's billiard balls being propelled. Neurons resemble dams that fill up with electrical charge and then erupt. These bursts emit electrical fields at the surface of the head which can even be recorded via E.E.G. (electroencephalogram). Because of the infinitesimal scale of these 'explosions', we are

blissfully oblivious to their electrical emissions. Juan affords us insight into these detonations, frame by frame from a myriad of perspectives.

Taken as a whole, Juan's perception is the conglomeration of sensations and impulses received from external stimuli, the reticulation his mind creates between these elements and the haunting intimation that he is devoid of some important nexus. Like Hyden, Cortázar through Juan strives to catch perception or thought 'in action'. Reminiscent of the manner in which a film enacts a story by a sequence of images, giving the illusion of continuous movement, the text 'freezes the frames' in slow motion. Juan minutely explores from a variety of angles what transpired within a matter of seconds and obsessively relays the vertiginous experience of thinking about thinking.

Juan speculates that the act of remembering somehow destroys the past and represents a different form of life, a present in a different dimension:

como si el recuerdo sirviera de algo despojado de esa otra fuerza que en el restaurante Polidor había sido capaz de anularlo como pasado ... en el mismo instante en que desaparecía otra vez, una forma diferente de vida, un presente pero en otra dimensión, una potencia actuando desde otro ángulo de tiro (13).

When we dredge it up from our memory, the past is rendered present. It is a distorted present as our recollection colours the experience, whether unconsciously or not. It is a parallel present to the present we are currently experiencing, but exists nonetheless as an alternative reality in our psyche. In this territory of shifting sands and halls of mirrors, he ponders on the way in which

un espejo de espacio y un espejo de tiempo habían coincidido en un punto de insoportable y fugacísima realidad antes de dejarme otra vez a solas con tanta inteligencia, con tanto antes y atrás y delante y después (32).

Like a supernatural interlude, a mirror of space and a mirror of time allow him to glimpse interstitial reality, a portal which closed as abruptly as it had opened.

The reader is compelled to question what constitutes a mirror of time - physical space can have a mirror, but can time? The proliferation of flash-back and flash-forward sequences which permeates the work is not merely stylistic fragmentation characteristic of modernist works. The opposite of time may be timelessness or a temporal rift where everything merges into one and is simultaneous. Juan fuses time by making the past present through memory and even renders the future present as he conjectures a possible future. Akin to identity, time and chronology are thus obliterated. Is it possible to be entrapped in the paralysis of anti-time, stuck in the eternity of this single defining moment? As mentioned, frequently we believe that we are progressing through the text, but learn that we have yet to advance while Juan relays the unfathomable richness and eternity of the instance. In one respect we are reminded of Eliade's concept of 'Sacred time' which may be accessed when one is in an alternative state of perception such as a trance or during a religious ceremony. Sacred time is unreal as it does not flow in the conventional sense. Here time does not pass as time travel unfolds within the labyrinth of the character's mind. In another respect, a sense of stasis predominates, as the character is stuck in a rut.

Juan muses on the vagaries of cause and effect and queries: did the fellow-diner's order cause him to read the page or vice-versa:

de nada valía conjeturar que la lectura del nombre del autor de *Atala* había podido ser el factor desencadenante ya que ese nombre había necesitado a su vez (y viceversa) que el comensal gordo formulara su pedido, duplicando sin saberlo uno de los elementos que harían fraguar instantáneamente el todo (28).

As he had read the page prior to hearing the order, it is improbable that it caused him to read it. However, if this series of events were destined to occur then the reading of the page and hearing of the request are inextricably bound, and one cannot exist without the other, regardless of chronological order. If time can be mirrored, then a preceding event can be provoked or influenced by the event which follows it. If the cause is in fact provoked by the

effect, this ridicules, even invalidates, the concept of causality. Perhaps, like Alice, Juan has slipped into Looking Glass world, a universe where memory of the future co-exists with memory of the past and people are punished for crimes that they are destined to commit in the future. If everything is predetermined, the question arises: does free will exist? As Morelli had postulated in chapter 62 of *Rayuela*, 'Todo sería como una inquietud, un desasosiego, un desarraigo continuo, un territorio donde la causalidad psicológica cedería desconcertada, y esos fantoches se destrozarían o se amarían o se reconocerían sin sospechar demasiado que la vida trata de cambiar la clave en y a través y por ellos' (*Rayuela* 466-467).<sup>295</sup> Life, or more specifically, the life force, the *elan vital*, controls these puppets who have no true free will of their own and act according to the whims of mysterious unknown forces. Even if we, like these characters, believe that we are acting according to our own wishes, it is the combination of environmental factors and neurobiological interactions which dictate our lives.

If Juan's perception of the truth is frustratingly asymptotic, Marrast's perception creates a new reality *ex nihilo*. While in London Marrast procrastinates before acquiring the hule stone for the commissioned sculpture. He visits the Courtauld Institute and incongruously he becomes fixated with both a painting by Tilly Kettle and with an advertisement he has read in the *New Statesman*. What irks him about the painting is the choice of the plant therein, the '*hermodactylus tuberosis* [sic]' (46) placed in the hands of doctor Daniel Lysons - why choose this plant as opposed to any other? The first course of action for Marrast, quintessential Frenchman that he was, 'consistió en explorar la superficie del retrato (pintado en mala época por Tilly Kettle) buscando una explicación científica,

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<sup>295</sup> This depiction mirrors somewhat Cortázar's own 'blurb' of the cover of *Rayuela* which he proposed to Francisco Porrúa in 1963:

Los personajes de *Rayuela* asisten a su propia derrota con una ironía en la que se adivina, quizá, un triunfo secreto. En el vago territorio en que se mueven, donde el amor, los celos y la piedad obedecen quizá demoníacamente a un signo contrario, la casualidad psicológica cede desconcertada, las criaturas se encuentran y desencuentran sin sospechar demasiado que en cada una de las figuras que forma su danza hay un acercamiento a la mutación final: la última casilla de la rayuela, el Igrassil, el centro del mandala.' (*Cartas Completas 1*, 537).

crítica o nada más que masónica' (46), then he consulted the catalogue of the Courtauld Institute, 'que se limitaba insidiosamente a proporcionar el nombre de la planta' (46). Marrast believes that the plant must represent a secret code for something as he refuses to accept that it could be a random choice.

At this time he comes across a puzzling advertisement in the *New Statesman* which read: 'Are you sensitive, intelligent, anxious or a little lonely? Neurotics Anonymous are a lively, mixed group who believe that the individual is unique. Details s. a. e., Box 8662' (47). Humorously Marrast laments to Nicole, that similar to them he believes himself to be sensitive, anxious and somewhat lonely, but, this implies that he cannot be intelligent as he fails to understand the relationship between these characteristics, 'y la noticia de que los Neuróticos Anónimos creen en la individualidad como algo único en su género' (47). Nicole informs him, 'Tell sostiene que muchos de esos anuncios están en clave' (47). The advertisement like the painting may contain a hidden code, for those in the know to decipher. Marrast decides to fuse both concerns by writing to suggest that the Neurotics Anonymous would be far more useful to society and to themselves 'si dejaban tranquilas sus individualidades únicas en su género y concurrían en cambio a la sala segunda del (seguían los detalles) para tratar de resolver el enigma del tallo' (48). Thereafter, the anonymous neurotics flock to the museum in order to study the enigmatic picture without understanding why.

Not dissimilar to Juan's mental acrobatics in the Polidor, Marrast fashions a link between himself and assorted entities such as a painting and the Neurotics Anonymous. In a series of steps he connects the hule stone with Mr. Whitlow, the man charged with finding said stone for him. In turn, Mr. Whitlow is a distant relation (through marriage) to Harold Haroldson, the curator of the museum which housed the portrait which later enthralled the Neurotics Anonymous: 'Las primeras soldaduras habían estado aparentemente desprovistas



de toda relación entre sí, como ir uniendo piezas de un meccano sin proponerse ninguna construcción en particular' (54). He senses that it is all part of an obscure game. Later, Marrast is aware that the neurotics had been touched by the proposed activity, 'una actividad acerca de cuyos fines ninguno de ellos, empezando por el instigador, tenía la menor idea' (50). Without understanding fully the implications of his actions, Marrast senses that the game had upset the order and that a whim had influenced the chain of causality, making it veer off course. The hidden message of the plant and the original newspaper advertisement never become apparent and there is no reason to believe that they were originally connected. Marrast seeks and fabricates intrigue where there is none, looking for hidden messages.<sup>296</sup>

Redolent of George Berkeley's dictum, 'Esse est percipi' ('To be is to be perceived') the pre-eminence of observation as a creative force is echoed by Austin when he tells Celia that she came into being when he saw her for the very first time:

tienes que comprender lo que es haber creado de una vez por todas tu cuerpo como lo hemos creado tú y yo, acuérdate, tú vuelta de espaldas y dejándote mirar, yo bajando poco a poco la sábana y viendo nacer eso que eres tú, esto que ahora se llama de veras con tu nombre y habla con tu voz (253).

Now, he feels as if he is the first person to have truly seen her not just naked but as a whole, undivided being, this imbues him with power over her. He believes that Celia's naked body has been created at the moment where its image is reflected in his brain. Later upon learning the truth about Hélène's attack on Celia, he cannot abide the notion that he was not the first person to 'create' her by seeing her. In a similar vein, Marrast created an obscure Neurotics-Painting nexus in his imagination. Indeed not only did Marrast's nigh synchronous perception

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<sup>296</sup> In a strange twist of fate, the real life 'Harold Haroldson' or curator of the Courtauld institute, Sir Anthony Blunt, was unmasked as a Russian spy in the 1970s.

of these disparate elements set in motion a chain reaction of events but he also unknowingly predicts the murder of H el ene, if we consider his dreams of her being killed by arrows.<sup>297</sup>

The question of whether man creates the future by prognosticating it is a conundrum which has recurred since *Divertimento*. Could Marrast's perception of the constellation of unrelated elements have facilitated the faculty of clairvoyance? As mentioned, in addition to *Rayuela*, the less obvious pretender to the throne of progenitor to *62: Modelo para armar* is to be found in * ltimo round*'s texts 'La Mu eca Rota' and 'Cristal con una rosa dentro'. Recursively within 'La Mu eca Rota' Cort azar asserts, 'Es sabido que toda atenci n funciona como un pararrayos<sup>1</sup>. Lo realmente significativo giraba en torno a un agujero central que era parad jicamente el texto por escribir o escribi ndose'.<sup>298</sup> The embedded footnote denoted by the number '1' in the quote alludes to 'Cristal con una rosa dentro' where Cort azar asserts that the state which we define as distraction could represent a different form of attention; 'su manifestaci n sim trica m s profunda situ ndose en otro plano de la psiquis; una atenci n dirigida desde o a trav s e incluso hacia ese plano profundo'. Just as when we daydream, we are unwittingly focussing on, if not projected onto, a parallel form of reality – be it internal or mysterious. Frequently, for those susceptible to such distractions, the successive manifestation of several heterogenous phenomena 'cree instant neamente una aprehensi n de homogeneidad deslumbradora' (* ltimo round* 272). The perception of these phenomena unleashes a singular chain reaction:

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<sup>297</sup> Marrast recalls, 'entre dos sue os o vagos murmullos de Nicole dormida, hab a tenido como una visi n de H el ene atada a un  rbol y llena de flechas, un menudo San Sebasti n'(101) With his dream of H el ene being killed, he envisages Juan being erased. Strangely he believes that he is stealing images from Juan – 'le estaba robando im genes a Juan, que era  l quien deb a ver as  a H el ene en sus insomnios, as  o de otra manera, flechada o flechadora' (102). The image of the bow and arrow, as well as connoting Saint Sebastian, who was both the patron saint of archers and a martyr, is also evocative of Diana, the huntress who destroyed Acteon. Coincidentally, while in her apartment on the morning of her death, Juan tells H el ene that he was once referred to as Acteon. H el ene laments, 'No soy Diana pero siento que en alguna parte de m  hay perros que esperan, y no hubiera querido que te hicieran pedazos' (265). She feels responsible both for her patient's death and for Juan's suffering.

<sup>298</sup> Within the aforementioned footnote to 'pararrayos' he alludes to 'Cristal con una rosa dentro' and says, 'Al igual que la distracci n. En "Cristal con una rosa dentro", (98) se intenta mostrar una experiencia que habr a de ser m s tarde el n cleo de 62'.

desencadene una figura ajena a todos sus elementos parciales, por completo indiferente a sus posibles nexos asociativos o causales, y proponga - en ese instante fulgural e irrepitable y ya pasado y oscurecido - la entrevisión de otra realidad (*Último round* 272).

This is a reality in which the discrete elements perceived (which could range from the sound of a door closing, his wife's smile or a rose in a vase), constitute something completely different in essence and meaning when merged together. In an interview with Omar Prego<sup>299</sup>, he elaborates on this by recounting his own experience of this concurrent perception of heterogeneous elements. The first suspicion he had of the concept of 'figuras' was when he was a child and became hypersensitive to things that people called coincidences. He intuitively felt that these coincidences indicated a different form of reality, just as valid as empirical reality. He instances hearing a door slam and simultaneously smelling a particular odour and claims that he instinctively knew or predicted that somewhere in the house a dog would bark. These phenomena call to mind Jung's concept of 'synchronicity'; coincidences or events which occur at the same time and appear meaningfully related, but which lack any obvious causal connection.<sup>300</sup> It is as if these 'coincidences' may or may not give Cortázar a glimpse into the future, or perhaps he had a sense of *déjà vu*. Either way, these meaningful coincidences were no accident and showed a reality beyond human perception, a constellation of which we form part but cannot see.

In his essay, 'La Muñeca Rota', Cortázar discusses how the notion of 'provoking interstitial irruptions' had tallied with an Indian text he happened to find around the time of writing this novel, 62: *Modelo para armar* (*Último round* 179). The text was section 61 of 'Vijñana Bhairava', which claimed, 'En el momento en que se perciben dos cosas, tomando conciencia del intervalo entre ellas, hay que ahincarse en ese intervalo. Si se eliminan simultáneamente las dos cosas, entonces, en ese intervalo, resplandece la Realidad' (*Último*

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<sup>299</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 171.

<sup>300</sup> C. G. Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* (Routledge, 15 Apr 2013) Google eBook 27-28.

round 179). In the aforementioned example, reality was his accurate prediction of the dog barking. Did he create this pattern by perceiving it, or was it destined to exist and did he simply foresee it? Through the creation of a mystery Marrast indicates a portal to 'Lo Otro', although he is oblivious to what this entails. In a similar vein, only the reader who brings his or her own understanding to the text will find this door open: 'y por eso el novelista que proponía la puerta de lo otro (Marrast iba a proponerlo concretamente a los neuróticos anónimos) tendría el acceso inicial puesto que lo que traía era precisamente la puerta, el agujero abierto hacia el misterio' (*Último round* 182).

In 'La Muñeca Rota' Cortázar quotes the Uruguayan writer Felisberto by saying that a writer should not only write what he or she knows, 'sino también lo otro'.<sup>301</sup> He contends that neither the writer nor the reader knows 'the Other', but that the advanced novelist is the person who 'entrevé las puertas ante las cuales él mismo y el lector futuro se detendrán tanteando los cerrojos y buscando el paso' (*Último round* 179). His task is to reach the limit between the known and the 'Other', because in this the beginning of transcendence is encountered. If we take 'lo Otro' to represent mysterious dimensions, how does this labyrinth of parallel realities become manifest in *62: Modelo para armar*? When we think of alternative planes of existence, we are automatically reminded of the multiverse - the notion that a myriad of universes co-exist alongside our own. In a different universe, you could be engaged in an activity very different from reading this. Rather, your double could be swimming whilst you here are dry and oblivious to the fact. The theory of the multiverse came to prominence in twentieth century physics and according to Martin Rees, the cosmic accidents which created our world garnish us with evidence for the existence of the multiverse, as 'the only way to resolve the fact that we live within an incredibly tiny band of

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<sup>301</sup> Cortázar, *Último round*, 178-179.

hundreds of “coincidences” is to postulate the existence of millions of parallel universes’.<sup>302</sup>

An alternative reality may invade and supplant our own world, as is the case with Cortázar’s short story, ‘Mudanza’ where tiny, subtle changes accumulate until the narrator is forced to accept that this world is not his own.

Parallel realities may unfurl on both a macro and micro level. We have witnessed the dichotomy between mind and body in the Polidor restaurant, where Juan’s body stays rooted to the spot whilst his mind gallops furiously, treading fugaciously into the realms of the Other. In addition to the duality of the physical and the mental domains, we each experience the alternative worlds of the waking hours and the oneiric realm. While we are awake we believe that this is reality. While we sleep we believe that our dream is the truth. We may have a vague recollection of each realm within the other, but we identify with the context, be it awake or asleep, in which we find ourselves. Invariably we recall Chuang Tzu who did not know whether he was then a man dreaming he was a butterfly, or whether he was now a butterfly, dreaming he was a man.

Dreams represent a crucial element of the group’s dynamic. Whenever the ‘zona’ or part of the group is gathered, they are obliged to tell each other of dreams. Certain clues from their subconscious minds seep into their oneiric adventures and as always, dreams assume a life of their own in Cortázar’s texts. As Juan later recollects, ‘Intercambiábamos visiones, metáforas o sueños’ (44). Curiously by retelling their dreams, the group of friends allows others to participate in these visions, to rewrite the past. For instance, Polanco starts to relay a dream where he encountered a beating heart which he washed and brought to a police station (41-42). This prompts a ludicrous interchange whereby the others contradict what he and in turn the others say, until finally, Polanco concedes that he found not one but numerous

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<sup>302</sup> Michio Kaku , *Parallel worlds : a Journey through Creation, Higher Dimensions, and the Future of the Cosmos* (Doubleday, 2005), 249.

beating hearts: 'Toda la ciudad estaba cubierta de corazones, dice Polanco, me acuerdo muy bien, era rarísimo. Y pensar que al principio solamente me acordaba de un corazón. Por algo se empieza, dice Juan' (46). This communion of dreams within the zone is ostensibly light-hearted but significant as the question arises: how can a person enter the dreamscapes of another's mind? Surely dreams are the last bastion of privacy - the one thing nobody else can alter or lay claim to. Perhaps these characters are simply part of collective human consciousness, a privilege which allows them to trespass through one another's dreams at will. In the aforementioned dream we witness the manner in which one heart becomes many, as the individual is not merely an individual, but part of the whole. We are reminded of the jazz motto of *Rayuela*: 'It don't mean a thing if it ain't that swing [sic],' where reality constitutes that pulse or music which melts resistance, and merges the 'Club de La Serpiente' into one pulsating heart, 'en esa atmósfera donde la música aflojaba las resistencias y tejía como una respiración común, la paz de un solo enorme corazón latiendo para todos, asumiéndolos a todos' (62: *Modelo para armar* 46).

Before delving into the enigmatic *Ciudad*, it may be propitious to appraise the figure of the 'paredro' (or 'inferior divinity' as the term 'paredro' originally denoted in mythology). As intercessor between 'zona' and *Ciudad*, the 'paredro' is a role assumed intermittently by all in the group, both male and female, with the understandable exception of Feuille Morte, a curious character who is only able to say the phrase, 'Bisbis bisbis'. The term 'paredro', introduced by Calac, devoid of irony, was 'una entidad asociada, a una especie de compadre o sustituto o *baby sitter* de lo excepcional, y por extensión un delegar lo propio en esa momentánea dignidad ajena, sin perder en el fondo nada de lo nuestro' (24). Being the 'paredro' is compared to being a wild card, a playing card whose value can be determined by the person who holds it. As in a game, it is the role not identity which matters. They do not know when they start or finish being the 'paredro' of others as it is a fluctuating phenomenon.

Jung held that the human psyche comprised three parts: the ego (conscious mind), the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious.<sup>303</sup> Our psychological predispositions are stored in the collective unconscious; it is the knowledge of the human species, an innate kind of knowledge of which we can never be directly aware. It may be that the 'paredro' is custodian of said collective knowledge, one which they all have but don't realize until they don the mantle of the 'paredro'. In addition to forming part of them, the 'paredro' sometimes appears to assume a separate entity:

a fuerza de cederle la palabra ... de mezclarlo en nuestras vidas, llegábamos a obrar como si él ya no fuera sucesivamente cualquiera de nosotros, como si en algunas horas privilegiadas saliera por sí mismo, mirándonos desde fuera (30).

The question arises: does the 'paredro' serve to abdicate responsibility or speak the truth? It may be that the 'zona' members do not wish to appear arrogant when spouting the universal gems of wisdom attributed to the 'paredro'.

The 'paredro' refutes what he sees as the erroneous conclusions of Sartre that we are the sum of our own acts: 'Mi paredro tiene razón cuando dice que Sartre está loco y que somos mucho más la suma de los actos ajenos que la de los propios'.<sup>304</sup> Sartre's existentialist theory proclaimed the unavoidable responsibility that people bear for their actions, which, when grasped and accepted, is conducive to the freedom to experience an authentic human existence. Conversely, the 'paredro' claims, as does the very essence of the text *62: Modelo para armar*, that we are susceptible to the actions of others and have little control over what befalls us. If we are not responsible for our own acts, then we cannot be held accountable. However, if our acts in actuality just impact the lives of others, we are slaves to the whims of others and have no true free will. As the lowest common multiple we are not simply enriched by association. We are determined by this constellation. A practical example of this 'lowest common multiple' in effect could be when Marrast mentally interlocks the Neurotics

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<sup>303</sup> Albert Ellis, Mike Abrams, *Personality Theories: Critical Perspectives* (SAGE Publications, 2009), 146.

<sup>304</sup> In Sartre's *No Exit*, Inez informs the self-deluding Garcin, 'You are no more than the sum of your acts'.

Anonymous advertisement and the painting by Tilly Kettle. The only binding factor which glues both together is Marrast's perception of both. However, as it transpired, the resulting whole constituted a reality far greater than the multiple of its parts. Like Juan, Marrast compounds everything through his explanations, 'Marrast era de los que tendían a entender complicando (según él, provocando) o a complicar entendiendo (según él y quizá otros, porque todo entender *multiplica*)' (50).

The 'paredro' allows them to explore avenues along which they would not have otherwise ventured and impels them to recount their adventures in the elusive *Ciudad*. All of which begs the question: what is the *Ciudad*? Normally we conceive of a *Ciudad* or city as being a large and densely populated urban area or the people living therein. Here, however, the term *Ciudad* assumes a richer, often more ominous, significance. No definitive answer exists to the conundrum of the *Ciudad*, despite Cortázar's claim that the *Ciudad* had come to him in a dream although he had never been in this *Ciudad* while awake.<sup>305</sup>

Despite similarities to dreams in some respects, the boundaries between dreams and the *Ciudad* are clearly defined: 'cuando a los tártaros les da por los sueños colectivos, materia paralela a la de la ciudad pero cuidadosamente deslindada porque a nadie se le ocurriría mezclar la ciudad con los sueños, que sería como decir la vida con el juego' (45). For the 'paredro', life is serious, if not grim like the *Ciudad*, while dreams are ludic. As with dreams, expeditions to the *Ciudad* must be relayed and appraised: 'Por la ciudad habíamos andado todos, siempre sin quererlo, y de regreso hablábamos de ella. La ciudad no se explicaba, era' (24). The group members appear unable to control when or whether they enter the *Ciudad*.

Even though the *Ciudad* had always appeared to exist, it had initially emerged from a conversation in the 'zona' and became real to them once articulated. Akin to a platonic form,

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<sup>305</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 156.



the cities where they lived were always the cities and the *Ciudad*. The *Ciudad* may be viewed as an archetype, comprising the contents of the collective unconscious, or a pattern as we are told, 'así como cualquier imagen de los lugares por donde anduviéramos podía ser una delegación de la ciudad, o la ciudad podía delegar algo suyo (la plaza de los tranvías, los portales con las pescaderas, el canal del norte) en cualquiera de los lugares por donde andábamos y vivíamos en ese tiempo' (24). From this archetypal city, actual cities such as Paris and London inherit certain traits.

An intangible component of these characters drifts into the twilight zone of the *Ciudad* where their 'Other' or double wanders. Juan sees Hélène in the *Ciudad* in Vienna while we know that the physical Hélène was in Paris. Later Hélène is at home in her apartment while concurrently in the *Ciudad* carrying the packet with the doll. In the *Ciudad* she uses an elevator which starts to slide horizontally, but as the doll becomes too heavy for her to carry in her alternative realm, Hélène in the physical world leaves a glass of brandy on the edge of the table. Hélène herself is painfully aware of the duality of her nature and of her parallel life. She endeavours to explain this dichotomy to Juan by saying that there (in their reality) they decide everything easily, yet, that simultaneously in the *Ciudad* he could be walking naked through the corridor without soap with which to bathe,

mientras yo he llegado quizá a donde tenía que llegar y estoy entregando el paquete, si hay que entregarlo. ¿Qué sabemos de nosotros mismos, allá? ¿Por qué imaginarlo consecutivamente, cuando tal vez ya todo se ha resuelto en la ciudad, y esto es la prueba? (288)

The term 'prueba' can mean a 'test', 'experiment', or conversely it can signify 'proof'. Maybe their existence in what they perceive to be reality is an experiment or proof of their existence in the *Ciudad*. This would reinforce the impression that they are not really human, rather proof of an experiment and that the drama being acted out in the *Ciudad* is that of supra-real or at the very least parallel life. Although they appear to possess some consciousness of what occurs in the other reality, this is a drama over which they have little

control. As discussed, one of the aims of the novel is to destroy and reinvent traditional concepts of psychology. Individuals do not react to the same stimuli as they would in everyday life, as the laws of so-called reality no longer apply.

Another perspective on the incongruous synchronicity of Juan and Hélène was expounded by Cortázar himself in 'La Muñeca Rota'. He refers to Johann Hölderlin's verse which says, 'los tiempos los interpenetramos', and suggests that Peter the Great (1682-1725) and Demetrius Poliorcetes (337-283 BC) existed simultaneously:

esa hora en la que los tiempos se enlazaban y consumían como el humo de diferentes cigarrillos en un mismo cenicero, y Demetrio Poliorcetes coexistía con Pedro el Grande así como en esos días era frecuente que algún personaje mío que vivía en una ciudad saliera a caminar con alguien que quizá estaba en otra (*Último round* 176).

The notion of parallel universes with different epochs running side by side is striking. The double may be explained as an alter ego from a different universe that becomes visible in our own.

In 62: *Modelo para armar*, it is also helpful to view the concept of parallel realities through the microscope of science, with particular reference to the quantum science to which Morelli alludes. Experiments with subatomic phenomena show effects that are difficult to reconcile with our normal view of an objective world. Quantum theory pictures the particles that make up everything that we touch and feel not as little, hard, definite, independent things, but as a tangle of possibilities entangled with every other tangle of possibilities throughout the universe. As alluded to, in quantum physics, particles can have a state called its 'superposition'. This means that a particle can be in two places at once or in two states at once. What if our view of Hélène, Juan etc. in the zone were not of individual characters, rather of the particles which constituted these individuals and their minds, particles which believe or act as if they are people? They could be located within their own and others' minds simultaneously, part of a 'collective perception or thinking', similar to the collective

unconscious insofar as it is common to humanity, however, differing from the Jungian designation somewhat as it does not refer to a collective memory.

An arguably more mystical and more apposite interpretation of the *Ciudad* would be that it is the astral plane travelled by Persio in *Los Premios*. As mentioned, many believe that we travel the astral plane while dreaming, particularly if we engage in ‘lucid dreaming’, the practice whereby we are conscious that we are dreaming. Here the suggestion is that the characters are not asleep but are in a trance-like state. The astral body, an exact energy duplication of the physical form that it encompasses, is also known as the ‘desire body’, as, according to Theosophy, this astral body is the instrument of emotions which relays these emotions to the physical body. As we have discussed, Cortázar wished to reinvent the notion of psychology and it is clear that their astral doubles reveal hidden emotions. The astral plane hypothesis would explain how Héléne could perform the act of bilocation; her ethereal body could be in Paris while her physical incarnation could traverse Vienna. Juan sees Héléne in the *Ciudad* in Vienna after the Frau Marta incident, both because he wants to see Héléne and because he senses a latent connection between the so-called vampire and Héléne. These so-called puppets are manipulated by both subconscious and conscious emotions and appear to possess very little free will of their own. They are literally slaves to their primitive desires and fears. As mentioned, the astral plane was also believed to be crossed by the soul after death and before birth. Interestingly, a few days before he departed this life, Cortázar is said to have comforted his first wife, Aurora Bernárdez with the words: ‘No te preocupes más por mí. Voy a marcharme a mi ciudad’.<sup>306</sup>

As alluded to in *Los Premios*, the astral plane is teeming with extraordinary denizens such as vampires. Manly P. Hall claims that ‘the vampire seeks to prolong existence upon the physical plane by robbing the living of their vital energies and misappropriating such

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<sup>306</sup> As discussed by Solares in *Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 15, this was told to him by Aurora Bernárdez in October 2000.

energies to its own ends'.<sup>307</sup> Traditionally vampires are said to feed on the life essence, generally in the form of blood, of living humans. Embedded in the fabric of *62: Modelo para armar*, subtle vampiric references abound. As observed, while dining in the Polidor restaurant, Juan forges a tenuous link between the vampiric Countess, Erszébet Báthory and the wine he drinks. Curiously, he believes that the Countess somehow prompts him to order the Sylvaner wine, 'como en otros tiempos habría estado presente a través del recelo y del terror, ejerciendo ... una influencia insidiosa que no requería una presencia activa, que actuaba siempre como por debajo' (25). The Countess does not need to be physically present to exert influence on him; such is her power that she enkindles 'psychic vampirism', which impels others to attack young girls, a phenomenon which subsequently contaminates Hélène.<sup>308</sup>

When Juan and Tell travel to Vienna, he fears that he has telepathically affected her by recounting to her tales of the vampiric Countess who had resided there many years previously: 'Sin decírselo, me preocupaba un poco ese vampirismo mental que la condesa había ejercido en Tell por culpa mía' (88). One night, convinced that Frau Marta is the metempsychosis of Báthory, they spy on her as she enters the room of a young English tourist. Frau Marta does not bite the girl, but, removes her pyjamas, mysteriously stops what she is doing and suddenly dresses her again. As Juan says, 'se ha quedado como por fuera de lo que estaba por hacer' (200). Tell later asks Juan 'si no seríamos sin saberlo los cómplices de Frau Marta' (97). They had conjured up this eerie atmosphere in their imagination and had spoken of Frau Marta as if she were in fact the vampiric Countess. Perhaps the whole

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<sup>307</sup> Hall, *The Secret Teachings Of All Ages*, 108.

<sup>308</sup> He relates the Countess's 'Basilisken Haus' of Vienna with the basilisk clip which Hélène used to wear and equates thinking about the Countess with thinking about Frau Marta. Basilisks are serpents or dragons, which in classical mythology could kill with their breath or even a glance. Later he connects this with the basilisk the doll-maker, Monsieur Ochs, had embedded in his silver ring.

incident only occurred in their minds, or perhaps Frau Marta had no intention of approaching the young girl were it not for their vivid speculation and subsequent influence.

By all appearances, their presence in the room deters Frau Marta from completing her 'mission', as Juan says, comforting Tell, 'pero verás que no la va a morder, que todo se ha trastocado, que las cosas han ocurrido de otra manera, quizá por nosotros, por algo que estuve a punto de entender y no entendí' (201). Suddenly, the English girl runs from the room with Frau Marta in pursuit, followed in turn into the *Ciudad* by Juan and Tell, before disappearing into the ether. This episode contains echoes of Hélène's subsequent molestation and attempted strangulation of Celia. It would appear that Hélène fell under the spell of the doll and was not fully in control of her own actions. She views the doll sent by Tell as an oblique message sent by Juan. In addition to the physical attack, Hélène now acts like a psychic vampire, sucking the life force and innocence out of the helpless Celia, just as she had consumed Juan's spirit. Of course, it could be simply the case that she was sexually attracted to Celia and acted on this impulse.

Why is there such emphasis on psychic as opposed to exsanguinatory vampirism? In an interview with Omar Prego Cortázar explains that he had known a married couple who were 'psychic vampires' in Chivilcoy:

yo sentía la presencia de eso que yo llamo el vampirismo psíquico. No se trata de gente que se anda sacando la sangre. Hay gente que se anda sacando alma, que posee espiritualmente, con una fuerza terrible, demoníaca, que puede hacer de una pareja, sin que la víctima lo sepa, un vampiro y un vampirizado a lo largo de toda su vida. Es gente que terminó trágicamente: suicidios, enfermedades inexplicadas y accidentes misteriosos.<sup>309</sup>

The psychic vampire literally sucks the soul from their paramour. The implication is that they control their thoughts and deeds telepathically and that they absorb the energy or life-force from the victim. This notion of life-force is what Morelli had originally intended in the

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<sup>309</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 296.

writing of 62: *Modelo para armar*. In *Rayuela* Morelli used modern science merged with spiritual beliefs such as the role of *mana* as a path to understanding esoteric truths. Here, love is parasitic and needs an object to survive and prosper. Indeed, in Darwinist terms, love's role in the propagation of the species evokes the aforementioned concept of *mana*, a potency radiated by man.

If H el ene is a vampire then it could be argued that they are all vampiric. Marrast longs to possess Nicole again, Nicole longs to possess Juan, Juan longs to possess H el ene and so forth in an unending chain of unrequited passion. As Ana Mar a Hern andez argues:

Tell is indeed nothing more than a "thing" on which Juan "feeds" ("te cosifico" p. 67). The rest of the characters, too, are vampires or are vampirized in their turn: Nicole and Marrast by each other, Celia and Austin by their respective parents, Austin by Nicole, Nicole by Calac (aspiring), "la gorda" by Polanco.<sup>310</sup>

After Juan and H el ene make love, Juan believes that he can save her and that the designated appointed in the *Ciudad* or astral plane was with him. He too has been deceived. When H el ene reveals to Juan that she had attacked Celia, Juan acknowledges that he had suspected her secret at the restaurant on New Year's Eve but even now he cannot bring himself to accept the full truth. Had she always possessed vampiric or predatory tendencies, or was it only after receiving the doll that this behaviour came to the fore. Perhaps the connection Juan forges after the event is one of those false resonances he so loathes - an attempt to salve his conscience with regard to the part he played in H el ene's destruction. If she were already predisposed to this type of behaviour, the doll being sent to her did not contaminate her as such, but merely acted as a trigger. The doll itself could embody hidden desires, in keeping with Monsieur Ochs's hoax, as H el ene feels that the 'doll' which she was sent was actually Celia, who exposed her buried urges.

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<sup>310</sup> Ana Mar a Hern andez, 'Vampires and Vampiresses: A Reading of 62'. *Oklahoma Books Abroad*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer, 1976), pp. 570-576 Published by: Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40130719>.

Indeed, in keeping with the original intention of the novel the cognitive process itself could be viewed as a form of psychic vampirism. Returning briefly to Hyden's findings we learn that as the stimulus is transmitted via the neurons of certain proteins, the quantity of proteins diminishes as if sacrificing their reserves in benefit of the neuron. It is as if the very life-blood is sucked out of them so that the impulse may reach its objective. With vampirism the realms of religion, magic and science dovetail. The life-force or pulse sought by Morelli and Horacio may simply exist within our mind or it may traverse the astral planes or the multiverse. The concept of a parallel reality co-existing within our own where each of us could be an unwitting psychic vampire is certainly unusual, and yet it represents the quintessential Cortázar. The fantastic permeates our reality if only we can perceive it as such.

If we were compelled to pinpoint the shortcomings of *62: Modelo para armar*, its absences rather than its presences would prevail. Aside from Austin's role as a lutist, the dearth of music within the text accentuates the sense of sterility it exudes. There is no jazz 'swing' to this text. It is halting and sketchy, without the carefully crafted jagged edges which lend *Rayuela* its charm. The characters lack verisimilitude and evoke ciphers buoying along the surface. Taking his cue from Morelli, Cortázar had aimed to write a novel which eliminated as far as possible the individual psychology of the characters but later felt that it would be too mechanical. What he does strive to do, however, is to portray characters dominated by a 'figura o una constelación' and who act oblivious to the fact that they are moved by other forces. His bid to avoid the depiction of his characters as being too robotic was not entirely successful. That said, if he had adhered strictly to Morelli's choreography of neurochemicals as the bedrock of his experiment, he would have failed miserably to produce a convincing narrative. If *62: Modelo para armar* proves anything, it is that the notion that human consciousness can be simply reduced to physical components of chemicals ('ácido ergo sum') bereft of any metaphysical dimension is ludicrous.

As counterbalance to the explosion of esoterica in *Rayuela*, Cortázar explores occult elements using a far narrower scope in *62: Modelo para armar*. Although he omits guiding references such as the astral plane, theosophy, et cetera, their presence is palpable throughout. More profoundly, Cortázar succeeds in defamiliarizing the very process of thinking in a process akin to seeing ourselves reflected in opaque shards of a mirror. In the current chapter we have examined all forms of perception and cognition, from where we proceeded to assess the arcane dimensions of clairvoyance, parallel realities and psychic vampirism. It becomes clear that a delicate line separates cognition from precognition once we juxtapose Juan and Marrast's divergent forms of perception. Juan fails to read the signals whilst Marrast crafts a new reality through knitting together various strands of perception. The nexus where perception, clairvoyance, parallel realities and psychic vampirism coincide is, of course, the human mind.



## *Libro de Manuel*

For a more accurate overview of Cortázar's novelistic output, I believe it is helpful to consider all of his novels, whether or not they depict music or the arcane. Just as the absence of music in *62: Modelo para armar* counterpoints the musical elements which hallmarked the novels written before it, the lack of esoteric elements in Cortázar's final novel, *Libro de Manuel*, accentuates the impact of the arcane on his prior novels. *Libro de Manuel*, was explicitly written to be understood by the general public. In the prologue, Cortázar draws attention to the political nature of the novel and its unique position and problems:

Si durante años he escrito textos vinculados con problemas latinoamericanos, a la vez que novelas y relatos en que esos problemas estaban ausentes o sólo asomaban tangencialmente, hoy y aquí las aguas se han juntado, pero su conciliación no ha tenido nada de fácil, como acaso lo muestre el confuso y atormentado itinerario de algún personaje.<sup>311</sup>

The novel was inspired by political tyranny and all of the royalties from the book were donated to victims of political repression.<sup>312</sup> In spite of the horrific acts chronicled, Cortázar aimed to lighten the novel with humour and humanity. Once again in the prologue he declares:

Más que nunca creo que la lucha en pro del socialismo latinoamericano debe enfrentar el horror cotidiano con la única actitud que un día le dará la victoria: cuidando preciosamente, celosamente, la capacidad de vivir tal como la queremos para ese futuro, con todo lo que supone de amor, de juego y de alegría (6).

Set in Paris in the early 1970s, the text resembles a scrapbook as it incorporates *inter alia* a telegram dictated by Fidel Castro, authentic newspaper clippings about political atrocities in Latin America, transcripts from actual interviews with political prisoners who were subjected to torture, juxtaposed with testimony from the guards who had tortured them. The plot of *Libro de Manuel* revolves around the adventures of a group of revolutionaries

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<sup>311</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Libro de Manuel* (Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2004), 5. All further references are to this edition.

<sup>312</sup> Peter Standish, *Understanding Julio Cortázar*, 125. 131-132.

(‘La Joda’) which kidnaps an important diplomat, in exchange for the release of political prisoners.

The protagonist of the text is the Argentine emigré, Andrés, who, by Cortázar's own admission could be his fictive proxy. In a letter written to Ana María Hernández, Cortázar writes that, ‘Andrés (andros, “man”) represents me in a very deep sense in both cases, and that is why on the one occasion when his surname is given I automatically opted for giving the full name from the previous novel’.<sup>313</sup> Not dissimilar to the groups of friends found in Cortázar’s earlier novels, Andrés is accompanied by an array of colourful characters, including his two mistresses, Francine and Ludmilla, an Argentine corpse-cleaner called Lonstein, revolutionaries such as his rival for Ludmilla’s affections, Marcos, not to mention Susana and Patricio, parents of baby Manuel. *Libro de Manuel* is ostensibly created for Manuel, so that in the future he may understand the nightmare of their reality and the demands of their sacrifice. The scrapbook or collage format used eschews the illusion of an easily assimilated whole. The book is collated by ‘el que te dije’, who may be either an anonymous character or may be like the ‘paredro’ in *62: Modelo para armar*, a role intermittently assumed by those in the group of friends. As an explicitly exoteric novel, the esoteric is conspicuous by its absence. The only real suggestion of the arcane is Lonstein’s obsession with linguistic codes, specifically acronyms used by the United Nations. However, this fixation, alongside his belief that he can make a mushroom grow by the power of thought alone, is parodied and represents no more than a humorous interlude.

In many ways, the text hinges on the process by which Andrés’s becomes radicalized. Initially he is portrayed an intellectual who sympathizes with the revolutionaries but does not wish to become involved in their cause. From the outset, he is depicted as one of numerous

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<sup>313</sup> Ana María Hernández, ‘Cortázar: El libro de Andrés + Lonstein = Manuel’, *Nueva Narrativa Hispanoamericana*, enero-septiembre de 1975, Madrid, 55

Argentines living in Paris without really knowing why and ‘escucha una barbaridad de música aleatoria y lee todavía más, anda metido en líos de mujeres, y a lo mejor espera la hora’ (27). Andrés is reluctant to become involved in politics and passes his time reading Heidegger and Anais Nin. He listens to an eclectic mix of Gardel, Jelly Roll Morton, free jazz, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis and Joni Mitchell.

Andrés is mocked for what his friends from La Joda regard as his elitist tastes. It is somewhat ironic that Andrés’s choice of Morton and Gardel would indicate nostalgia for the music of his youth. By contrast, both the singer/song-writer, Joni Mitchell and free jazz are linked to the more overtly political stance of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Mitchell is renowned for music which addresses social ideals and political protest.<sup>314</sup> For French intellectuals of the period following the May 1968 revolution, the greatest champion of free jazz as a political music was LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka), whose book, ‘Blues People’ was widely read and highly influential, with the result that many viewed free jazz in black cultural nationalist terms.<sup>315</sup> Ironically, Patricio Goyalde Palacios discusses the idea that Cortázar sees jazz as an expression of individual freedom, contradicting his own socialist tendencies:

Recordemos, en este sentido, que en el *Libro de Manuel* se reivindica la posibilidad de escuchar free jazz, ante la tentación de determinadas revoluciones de prohibirlo, repitiendo así la historia de coartar la libertad individual de las personas.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Lloyd Whitesell, *The Music of Joni Mitchell*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. 47.

<sup>315</sup> George Lewis, *A Power Stronger than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008. 235-36.

<sup>316</sup> Patricio Goyalde Palacios, ‘Palabras con swing. La música de jazz en la obra de Julio Cortázar’ *Musiker*. 17, 2010, 483-496.

For Goyalde Palacios, this insistence on listening to free jazz represents a rebellion against the revolutionaries, who attempted to prohibit free jazz, a form of jazz which itself emphasizes collective improvisation.

Xenakis experimented with aleatory music and placed musicians among the audience to eliminate boundaries between performer and listener.<sup>317</sup> A number of references are made

to Stockhausen's innovative 'Prozession', a work where the players begin when they wish.<sup>318</sup>

Once a player has completed his first event, he imitates either his own event or the event of another player.<sup>319</sup> As with Xenakis, this too dissolves boundaries and evokes the

improvisation of jazz. In the process of listening to 'Prozession', Andrés is tormented by a paradox. He is distracted by the sound of the piano which he manages to discern among the

synthesizers and electronic filters. The piano appears to be out of place in this 'space-age'

sounding music, yet in spite of Andrés's bid to appreciate experimental music bereft of a

patent melody, he is drawn to the beacon of the piano, an instrument so inextricably

intertwined with the old-world culture, which he strives to eschew:

Es así, a pesar de tantos años de música electrónica o aleatoria, de free jazz (adiós, adiós, melodía, y adiós también los viejos ritmos definidos, las formas cerradas, adiós sonatas, adiós músicas concertantes, adiós pelucas, atmósferas de los tone poems, adiós lo previsible, adiós lo más querido de la costumbre), lo mismo el hombre viejo sigue vivo y se acuerda (25).

Nostalgia overwhelms him as the piano awakens interred emotions and memories from which he cannot escape. Andrés muses that the piano epitomizes a bridge between old

music and new music, echoing a bridge between the past and a new world order such as

socialism. For Andrés, 'todo pasaje donde predomina el piano me suena como un

reconocimiento que concentra la atención, me despierta más agudamente a algo que todavía

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<sup>317</sup> Iannis Xenakis, *Formalized Music: Thought and Mathematics in Composition* (New York: Pendragon P., 1991) 236.

<sup>318</sup> Karl Heinz Wörner, Bill Hopkins. 1977. *Stockhausen: Life and Work* (Berkeley: University of California, 1973), 61.

<sup>319</sup> Wörner, Hopkins. *Stockhausen: Life and Work*, 72.

sigue atado a mí por ese instrumento que hace de puente entre pasado y futuro' (24). In *El Diario de Andrés Fava*, Andrés Fava believes that the piano transforms and enslaves the piano-man.<sup>320</sup> In *Libro de Manuel*, the piano may serve to transform man in a very different way, by helping him to forge a new reality, free from the shackles of the past.<sup>321</sup> Music is accepted as a valid apparatus in the political struggle of *Libro de Manuel*, but it cannot supplant action.

The first milestone along Andrés's journey towards 'La Joda' and its concomitant revolution begins when he dreams of being in a cinema.<sup>322</sup> In the dream, the movie screened resembles a Fritz Lang film. Something impedes Andrés from seeing the screen and a waiter leads Andrés to the Cuban who has just summoned him. A cut in the scene follows. The next thing that Andrés remembers is that he has just spoken to the Cuban, and when he leaves, he knows that he is a man with a mission, but has no idea what said mission is. Upon returning to the film he realizes that he is simultaneously the film and the spectator of the film. Rather than being overwhelmed by this task, Andrés feels that it will liberate him in some way: 'yo voy a cumplirla y a gozarla al mismo tiempo, la novela policial que escribo y que vivo al mismo tiempo'.<sup>323</sup> Just as he resolves to undertake the enterprise with relish, a knock on the door awakens him. The notion that the mysterious deed will only be explained after the fact whets his appetite for action.

Later, once the diplomat has been kidnapped, Andrés tracks his girlfriend, Ludmilla to the safe house where she has accompanied Marcos. By joining them, Andrés is in effect joining 'La Joda'. Andrés's whole life feels as if it has been a dress rehearsal for this event.

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<sup>320</sup> 'a conformar al hombre, a hacer de él un pianista, un hombre-piano, un servidor con negra que corre el mundo'

<sup>321</sup> 'Hombre nuevo, sí: qué lejos estás, Karlheinz Stockhausen, modernísimo músico metiendo un piano nostálgico en plena irrisación electrónica'

<sup>322</sup> As Standish indicates in *Understanding Julio Cortázar* (125) the modern-day Andrés Fava has a dream which Cortázar himself had experienced, a dream which features a Cuban and a mysterious mission.

<sup>323</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Libro de Manuel* (Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2004), 102. All further references are to this edition.

The authorities use Andrés's arrival as a window of opportunity to launch their attack at the same moment that he realizes that this is all part of the dream:

reconstruyo la secuencia, miro al hombre que me mira desde el sillón hamacándose despacito, veo mi sueño como soñándolo por fin de veras y tan sencillo, tan idiota, tan claro, tan evidente, era tan perfectamente previsible que esta noche y aquí yo me acordara de golpe que el sueño consistía nada más que en eso, en el cubano que me miraba y me decía solamente una palabra: Despertate (352).

With this epiphany Andrés demands a pistol before a shootout ensues. The nightmare ends in the death of one of the group's members, believed to be Marcos. Andrés's dream may be interpreted as a supernatural premonition of what is to come, or, it may be simply a message from Andrés's subconscious that it is time to act. Whether a supernatural or merely a psychological phenomenon, the dream acts as a catalyst for Andrés's action.

The erosion of the frontier which separates dream from reality is a recurring topos throughout Cortázar's novels beginning with *Divertimento* and ending with *Libro de Manuel*. Throughout Cortázar's oeuvre the oneiric realm supplants empirical reality as the authentic domain. Echoing philosophers throughout history, Cortázar probes the mystery: Do our dreams predict and create reality, as is the case in *Divertimento*, *El Examen*, 62: *Modelo para armar* and *Libro de Manuel*? The role of both dreams and music changes throughout Cortázar's novels. Dreams start as a supernatural phenomenon in *Divertimento* but end as a political exhortation in *Libro de Manuel*. Music is portrayed as a life form in an alternative dimension in *El Examen*, but is portrayed as an exoteric component of socialist propaganda in *Libro de Manuel*. As mentioned, music is afforded greater emphasis in certain novels. Music reflects emotion in *Divertimento*, attempts to warn the characters of *El Examen* of impending doom, is elevated to god-like status in *El Diario de Andrés Fava*, while 'speculative music' assumes abstract dimensions in *Los Premios*. In *Rayuela*, music attempts to access the Yonder of paradise on earth, to transcend the limitations of human language and logic, to

unite humanity among other lofty aims. Music, in particular jazz, could be deemed a crucial character in *Rayuela* whilst its absence is conspicuous in *62: Modelo para armar*. Music forges a bridge between an old and new world order in *Libro de Manuel*. As shall become evident, music is rendered an even more powerful, supernatural force in the short stories. Jazz allows characters to stop time, whilst tango spiritually possesses and resurrects a dead dancer. Classical music demands blood and revenge, and becomes entangled in telekinesis among other phenomena.

As mentioned, the esoteric themes on which I will focus in the short stories are time, reincarnation and spiritual possession, concepts which have been touched upon in the novels. I have illustrated how time and perception are fused in *Divertimento* where a painting appears to be created in slow motion; a process which apparently takes place at a slower than normal speed, but is actually recorded at a faster rate. Time is equated with being in *El Examen* and *El Diario de Andrés Fava* where Andrés measures time in terms of music yet feels estranged from his authentic time. The Carnival ambience of *El Examen* evokes a 'time outside of time', where stagnation and inertia reign. In *Los Premios*, Persio too longs to travel through time, to grasp the true nature of time and thus control it. *Rayuela* plays with notions of time in the text's manipulation of the reader as well as the characters. For instance, La Maga is outside of time and Horacio aspires to the Nirvana of sacred time. The volley of analepsis and prolepsis subverts chronology in both *Rayuela* and *62: Modelo para armar*, where memory destroys the past and manipulates the present. In *62: Modelo para armar*, characters are able to traverse time and space at will. In *Libro de Manuel*, Andrés fuses historical time with music, in search of a new world order.

As we have seen, reincarnation and resurrection also permeate Cortázar's novels. In *Divertimento*, the ghost of Juan Facundo Quiroga's widow, Eufemia is brought back to life at a séance. In *El Diario de Andrés Fava*, Andrés claims that he has been reincarnated. It is

therefore ironic that this Andrés (who may die at the end of *El Examen*), is subsequently brought back to life for *Libro de Manuel*. Christ's crucifixion and resurrection is intimated by both the musical performances and the *via dolorosa* experienced by the characters of *El Examen*. In *Los Premios*, Persio longs to escape the cycle of reincarnation, *Samsara* through enlightenment. Transmigration assumes a prominent position in *Rayuela* with emphasis on Tibetan Buddhism's 'Bardo' and Egypt's Book of the Dead, as well as allusions to theosophy. In *62: Modelo para armar* there is a suggestion that the vampiric Countess, Erszébet Báthory is reincarnated as Frau Marta, the landlady who attempts to attack a young female tourist in Vienna.

Spiritual possession represents a somewhat subtler presence in Cortázar's novels. The medium, Narciso is possessed by ghosts at a séance in *Divertimento*, whilst music is portrayed as a spiritual possessor or master, who controls musicians in *El Examen* and *El Diario de Andrés Fava*. Horacio believes that Talita has become possessed by La Maga when she plays hopscotch in *Rayuela*. In *62: Modelo para armar*, Hélène appears to be controlled by a psychic vampiric force which impels her to attack Celia.

As demonstrated, I believe that it is crucial to appraise Cortázar's novelistic output overall to gain insight into his treatment of the esoteric and music therein. His novels complement one another irrespective of differences. Within Cortázar's novels I have taken a wide-sweeping view of the prominent esoteric strands and their influences, encompassing religious beliefs, magical elements and scientific theories. Whilst the arcane is no less prevalent in his short stories, references to specific esoteric sources, such as Buddhism for instance, are absent. Therefore, when juxtaposed with the arcane background provided by the novels, an understanding of the short stories is complemented and enriched. The short stories provide a platform to examine in finer detail the execution of specific arcane themes and if



anything, the short stories showcase Cortázar's esoteric interests in a more vivid and fantastic manner than the novels.

### Chapter Three - Time, Reincarnation and Spiritual Possession

Notwithstanding Cortázar's mastery and subversion of the novel form, it is within the short story genre that his command of the fantastic comes into its own. Cortázar's short stories are to varying degrees disturbing, scintillating, hallucinogenic, humorous and vibrant. Before delving into a triad of quintessential esoteric themes, it may be expedient to look at the theory which underpins his short-story writing and in the process juxtapose his novels with his short stories. Whereas the novel is an open form, the short story is circumscribed by its limits, both of time and of space. The novel saunters along a cumulative axis, whilst the short story is incisive; it cuts to the core, taking no hostages.<sup>324</sup> Tension, rhythm, internal pulsation suffuse his short stories. For Cortázar, the efficacy and meaning of the short story depend on values which also hallmark poetry and jazz:

la tensión, el ritmo, la pulsación interna, lo imprevisto dentro de parámetros pre-vistos, esa *libertad fatal* que no admite alteración sin una pérdida irrestañable. Los cuentos de esta especie se incorporan como cicatrices indelebles a todo lector que los merezca: son criaturas vivientes, organismos completos, ciclos cerrados, y respiran.<sup>325</sup>

Its concentrated form renders the short story powerful; as with the splitting of the atom it is the smallest component which releases the greatest potency. Redundancies are not tolerated; it is because of the story's intensity and tautness that the text is rendered unique and unforgettable.<sup>326</sup> Cortázar hypothesizes that a certain spectrum of short stories is born from a

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<sup>324</sup> As Cortázar says in 'Algunos aspectos del cuento': 'Es cierto, en la medida en que la novela acumula progresivamente sus efectos en el lector, mientras que un buen cuento es incisivo, mordiente, sin cuartel desde las primeras frases'.

<sup>325</sup> 'Del cuento breve y sus alrededores' (*Último round*), 52.

<sup>326</sup> Cortázar boasts of his terse short story style in 'Algunos aspectos del cuento':

un estilo basado en la intensidad y en la tensión, un estilo en el que los elementos formales y expresivos se ajusten, sin la menor concesión, a la índole del tema, le den su forma visual y auditiva más penetrante y original, lo vuelvan único, inolvidable, lo fijen para siempre en su tiempo y en su ambiente y en su sentido más primordial ... Lo que llamo intensidad en un cuento consiste en la eliminación de todas las

state of trance: 'cierta gama de cuentos nace de un estado de trance, anormal para los cánones de la normalidad al uso, y que el autor los escribe mientras está en lo que los franceses llaman un "état second".<sup>327</sup> This trance-like state is not only experienced by the writer but often by the characters whose distraction affords them a conduit to another reality. Writing is Cortázar's means of expelling the neuroses which inspire him: 'escribir es de alguna manera exorcizar, rechazar criaturas invasoras proyectándolas a una condición que paradójicamente les da existencia universal'.<sup>328</sup> Indeed without the cathartic rejection of these entities his works would lack the requisite atmosphere: 'el aura que pervive en el relato y poseerá al lector como había poseído, en el otro extremo del puente, al autor'.<sup>329</sup>

If the motive for writing his short stories is exorcism, he contaminates the reader with his obsessions. These pests or possessors invade the reader as they had the author, propelling him into a parallel reality. They represent both a boon and an affliction. Cortázar uses his writing not just to exorcize his demons but to understand himself. As mentioned, time, reincarnation and possession are all bound up with our sense of self. In the tale of reincarnation, 'Clone', Cortázar details the inspiration that drove him to write, and the self-imposed rules of the game to which he must adhere. As we shall see, 'Lejana', a tale of possession echoes an out of body experience he had endured while on medication. In addition to plumbing the fragmented nature of the human psyche, Cortázar is fixated with penetrating his own quirky experience of time, particularly while using the metro. This phenomenon we shall see with 'El Perseguidor', where Johnny Carter provides the perfect platform for this temporal infatuation.

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ideas o situaciones intermedias, de todos los rellenos o fases de transición que la novela permite e incluso exige.

<sup>327</sup> 'Del cuento breve y sus alrededores' (*Último round* 47).

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

## *Time*

Cortázar's short stories probe a plethora of hypotheses concerning the dialectic between what he regards 'authentic' time, which is elastic or paradoxically timeless and the manmade time of clocks. He believes that this fabrication of time was an error and asserts, 'En cierto modo el hombre se equivocó al inventar el tiempo; por eso bastaría realmente renunciar a la realidad (en *Rayuela* se insiste en ello) para saltar fuera del tiempo'.<sup>330</sup> The problem of time and our conception thereof is intrinsically bound with our concept of reality. On occasion Cortázar impishly challenges our concept of chronological time using humour. He underscores the extent to which watches and man-made time control human beings in 'Instrucciones - Ejemplos Sobre La Forma De Tener Miedo', where he recounts the salutary tale of a travelling salesman whose wristwatch started sucking his blood like a vampire (410). In his now seminal, 'Preámbulo a las instrucciones para dar cuerda al reloj', the narrator warns that when we give a birthday present of a watch, it is the watch or tyrant who receives the gift of a human being, not the reverse, and he therefore urges people to emancipate themselves from these tyrants (417). As shall become evident, Cortázar explores time's multifarious mysteries by compelling his characters to experience the true nature of time and in the process contaminate the reader with their incertitude and confusion.

'La Noche Boca Arriba' is the archetypal arcane short story, encompassing a profusion of esoteric motifs from time travel to spiritual possession, premonition to reincarnation. The structure follows a paradigm whereby a realistic setting is established, a certain element of the Other erupts therein<sup>331</sup> and the narrative ends ambiguously. The

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<sup>330</sup> As expressed by Cortázar in an interview with Solares in 'Diorama de la Cultura' in *Excélsior* in June 1975, detailed in Solares's work, *Imagen de Julio Cortázar*, 65.

<sup>331</sup> As Cortázar himself explains, this occurs in an extraordinarily prosaic manner: 'La irrupción de lo otro ocurre en mi caso de una manera marcadamente trivial y prosaica, sin advertencias premonitorias, tramas ad hoc y atmósferas' as quoted in Jaime Alazraki, *Hacia Cortázar*, 62.

prevalence of dualities such as fantasy/reality, the double/the self and magic/science which are contrasted and fused also contribute to the sense of ambivalence and incongruity throughout. Once again Cortázar plunges the characters and reader into a quivering state of anticipation and obfuscation, a state provoked by the depiction of time and, by implication, a questioning of the extent to which our perspective on time dictates our outlook on reality.

In 'La Noche Boca Arriba' opposing realities in the form of two radically polarized epochs, the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, are contrasted and intertwined. The text appears to lack an unambiguous origin or point of departure. As I am opting for a fifteenth century reading, I will attempt to look at time as the protagonist would. In this context I will draw from Mircea Eliade's aforementioned theories on sacred and profane time. As alluded to, our normal concept of time is chronological and linear in contrast with sacred time which is unreal as it does not flow in the conventional sense. The ultimate sacrifice of the protagonist of 'La Noche Boca Arriba' recreates the beginning of time. As Henriksen says, quoting Eliade: 'Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, "in the beginning"'.<sup>332</sup> Hence sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable.

The text exudes cinematic qualities with its panoply of oneiric sequences and volley of analepsis and prolepsis. The text's propensity for speeding up and slowing down time also contributes to this impression. It may even be helpful to think of the narrator as an impersonal video camera which records, manipulates and accentuates a dizzying vector of intertwined events. The modern urban environs and primitive magic context are sliced and spliced skilfully. A marked difference in temporal velocity is evident when the twentieth and fifteenth centuries are juxtaposed. Unlike the ancient Aztec elements which take place

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<sup>332</sup> Henriksen, *Tiempo Sagrado*, 13.

exclusively at night, the modern urban scenes stretch from early morning to very late at night, just prior to the dawn of a new day. Time appears to move at a swifter pace in the twentieth century, even if it is one of many optical illusions experienced by the protagonist. Irrespective of whether the narrator knows which version represents the truth, he tantalizes us with clues but fails to crystallize reality. Nothing is resolved as nothing is resolvable.

Initially the point of departure for the text appears to be a modern day urban dweller running along a dark passage, fretting, like Alice's White Rabbit, that he is late for an unspecified appointment. The anonymous protagonist rides his motorcycle through the generic city, becomes involved in a seemingly minor accident and is taken to hospital to undergo surgery. Contrasting his obvious physical discomfort, his stay in hospital is virtually romanticized. Consideration demonstrated by those who surround him and his own jokes about the mishap form a striking counterpoint to the hostility of the parallel world of the Aztec hunt in which he will soon be embroiled. Indeed the protagonist's first encounter with the Other, the perturbing reality which he believes to be a dream, occurs when he is anaesthetized for the operation. He dreams that he is a *moteca* (a portmanteau term which merges 'moto' and 'eca', which is a common suffix added to adjectives relating to Amerindian tribes and related nationalities) about to be sacrificed to the sun god as part of the Aztec 'guerra florida' of the epigraph: 'Y salían en ciertas épocas a cazar enemigos; le llamaban la guerra florida' (386). The Aztec civilization or 'the People of the Sun', as they regarded themselves, held it to be their divine duty to wage cosmic war in order to stop the sun from disappearing. After a hunt which lasted a set number of days, the beating heart of the sacrificial victim would be extirpated from his chest.<sup>333</sup> The *moteca* protagonist here realizes that his chances of survival are infinitesimal and that his fate will be sealed before the

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<sup>333</sup> John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Pimlico, 2004), 112.

end of the sacred period.<sup>334</sup> This knowledge does not deter him from trying to escape his preordained end. Contrary to our preconception of a human sacrificial victim being little more than a lowly offering or spoils of war, the reality is that these individuals were frequently held in high esteem.<sup>335</sup> This adulation of the sacrificial victim is redolent of the role of Jesus in Christianity. The human sacrifice is not simply a victim, but simultaneously an idol and intermediary with the gods.

It would appear that the *moteca* can travel through linear time to the future and may even be empowered to create aspects of said future such as his modern alter ego. He renders the future present by prognosticating a world abuzz with cutting edge technology, where men with knives cut people open to cure them rather than to sacrifice them. The essence of the narrative prompts us to ask whether we see the future because it already exists or if we cause it to exist by predicting it? Throughout 'La Noche Boca Arriba' time is suffused with haziness as the modern-day patient drifts in and out of consciousness, believing that in his dream he has been apprehended after a relentless chase. Running from his captors, touching his amulet, he prays to the moon goddess (389). Upon hearing a scream he is horrified by the realization that this scream emanates from him. When he endeavours to return to the future hospital by blinking repeatedly, the hostile moon intervenes, denying his access to the other side. Our hero's anagnorisis occurs when he discovers that this is no febrile hallucination: 'ahora sabía que no iba a despertarse, que estaba despierto, que el sueño maravilloso había sido el otro' (392). Ironically, the protagonist's own reality is his nightmare, whilst his fantasy resembles the reader's contemporary reality.

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<sup>334</sup> 'Pero la cantidad no contaba, sino el tiempo sagrado. La caza continuaría hasta que los sacerdotes dieran la señal del regreso. Todo tenía su número y su fin, y él estaba dentro del tiempo sagrado, del otro lado de los cazadores' (389).

<sup>335</sup> Fray Diego Durán describes how the sacrificial victims who were known as god's representative and were 'worshipped ... as the deity' (Durán, *Book of the Gods and Rites*, 42,109,232).

The alternative 'moteca-centred' interpretation is the obverse of the above, transposing the modern into the ancient, the twentieth century into the fifteenth. The protagonist is a primitive *moteca* who dreams that he is a modern day motorcyclist. He goes to extraordinary lengths to delude himself. He mentally creates a future in which to seek refuge. Relentlessly pursued by his captors within the sacred period, fusion with the sacrificial night will, ineluctably, be consummated once his throbbing heart has been extirpated from his chest. At that moment he will become the personification of death – and will experience sacred time outside of time. This 'moteca-centred perspective' appears to defy logic for a number of motives. How would he be adept at riding a motorcycle or assimilate so seamlessly into contemporary, urban life? Perhaps the motorcyclist is the double of the *moteca*, but which is the master copy? In an infinite regression we could equally speculate that the twentieth century motorcyclist is a reincarnation of the *moteca* and that he dreams of his past life as a *moteca*, a *moteca* who in turn dreams of his future incarnation as an urban motorcyclist. This double/self dichotomy ripples throughout Cortázar's works as does this vertiginous, infinite loop of self-referential possibilities.

When the protagonist tries to capture the defining moment of the traffic accident he is overwhelmed by a yawning abyss: 'tenía la sensación de que ese hueco, esa nada, había durado una eternidad. No, ni siquiera tiempo, más bien como si en ese hueco él hubiera pasado a través de algo o recorrido distancias inmensas' (390). His initial belief that it had lasted an eternity, coupled with the view that within this void he had covered immense distances would suggest that this 'collision' was the moment when he had been propelled into the future. In the sacred period of the guerra florida, his *moteca* self, recoiling from the Aztec hunters, had sought refuge when this transformation occurred. Somehow, the 'big bang' or starting point of the physical universe and of time itself was recreated. His safe hiding place was a future into which he was drawn and reinvented.



The broad brush strokes of the opening lines of the story constitute his memory of that day as he tries to piece together the conundrum. The motorcyclist is not anonymous by dint of omission, rather, 'para sí mismo, para ir pensando, no tenía nombre' (386). No-man shades off into everyman, undifferentiated by identity. The hero's idyllic day prior to the accident fails to ring true. Why does he invent an accident if this is his perfect day? Perhaps his physical pain in the Aztec jungle protrudes into his modern day avatar and his subconscious lacks sufficient resilience to deny his intense discomfort as he lies tethered to the sacrificial altar. The accident conveniently provides an alibi for any niggling incongruity.

Within 'La Noche Boca Arriba' temporal elements such as night and day are subtly anthropomorphized. The titular night of the story has been spent 'upside down', reflecting the human which it envelops, a human about to be immolated to prevent the apocalyptic death of the sun. In Aztec lore, the day killed the night and was reborn daily - it was as much a sacrificial victim as the *moteca*.<sup>336</sup> Cortázar's night reflects and bifurcates both man and time itself. Just as primitive man was in tune with the seasons and nature, nature reflects and synchronizes with man.

The text exploits not only syntax but also verbal tenses to convey a nuanced impression of the import of time. As the protagonist travels between centuries, two verbal tenses predominate. According to María Cristina Arostegui, the past simple marks the passive action of his waking hours whilst the past imperfect, a tense of duration and circularity, predominates in the oneiric situations.<sup>337</sup> As the text progresses, it is the latter which usurps the former. This notion of reiterated processes evoked by the imperfect tense would chime with Eliade's sacred time which, echoing primordial time, is re-enacted throughout historical rites. Cumulatively the imperfect tense supplants the past simple as that which occurred no

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<sup>336</sup> Esther Pasztory, *Aztec Art* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1983), 49.

<sup>337</sup> María Cristina Arostegui, "La Noche Boca Arriba", una búsqueda de otro cielo' (19-30).

more than once is dwarfed by that which recurs infinitely. The hero's struggle for survival yields to a passive acceptance of his fate, 'ahora sabía que no iba a despertarse' (392). Time ceases to behave as we expect; there is nothing simple about the past.

The clash and fusion of two timelines (the fifteenth century and the twentieth century) parallels the juxtaposition of two types of time: linear time and the eternal, circular time. Modern time appears linear, successive whilst ancient time is repeated *ad infinitum*. The antinomy between past and present, the primitive and the modern is not only a paradox which enriches the infinite potential of the text; it is the bedrock on which the text is based. Just as the boundaries between past and present blur and crumble, so too do the borders between fantasy and reality. Compelled to re-examine the story we initially accept the facile interpretation of the modern-day perspective as we identify with the reality adumbrated therein. Inherently we view all filtered through the epoch in which we are born and dwell. Where required, we fill in the gaps to create our own psychological constellation. Time defines us – it is our 'Horizon of Being'. Our preconceptions are challenged as our identification with a specific epoch implies our identification with a specific reality. Once we appreciate the spuriousness of this purported reality, doubt is cast on our hitherto grasp of reality and time.

Akin to 'La Noche Boca Arriba' the boundaries between past and present disintegrate in 'El Otro Cielo'. The epigraph states: 'those eyes do not belong to you'.<sup>338</sup> The protagonist sees the world through the nineteenth and twentieth century eyes of Paris and Buenos Aires respectively echoing Horacio's view of Paris as heaven and Buenos Aires as hell on earth. The most startling aspect to 'El Otro Cielo' is not that he moves seamlessly between worlds. Rather, he does so without feeling astonished by this supernatural ability. The narrator does

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<sup>338</sup> Cortázar transcribes Lautremonte's accusation to a shadow which intrudes on his room: 'Ces yeux ne t'appartiennent pas ... où les as-tu pris? ...' from *Les Chants de Maldoror* by the Uruguayan, Comte de Lautréamont (pseudonym of Isidore Lucien Ducasse).

not explicate the process of teleportation or time travel. We have no idea how he dematerializes and materializes in another dimension; simply that he is distracted when the process occurs. Distraction for Cortázar, is the *sine qua non* for many life-changing transformations.<sup>339</sup> One thing flowed naturally into another: ‘hubo una época en que las cosas me sucedían cuando menos pensaba en ellas, empujando apenas con el hombro cualquier rincón del aire’ (590). Zen-like, the less he concentrates on such matters the greater the probability that he can access another dimension.

The protagonist is a stockbroker from Buenos Aires, engaged to be married to his fiancée, Irma. Enslaved to habituation, the predictability of his daily life smothers him. Boredom and a desire for freedom propel the narrator backward. His journey started when he drifted through Buenos Aires, revisiting the streets and shopping gallery, ‘El Pasaje Güemes’, where his eyes were first opened to pleasures of the flesh. He laments the loss of those days and is ‘à la recherche du temps perdu’ (after Proust) when he wanders into a shopping arcade nineteenth century Paris, heaving with bordellos and the promise of adventure.

A serial killer stalks the streets of Paris strangling women, a strangler whom a psychic has named ‘Laurent’. The narrator meets a prostitute, Josiane who clings to him for protection. Gradually he becomes absorbed into her life and neglects his own fiancée to repeatedly return to Paris. A mysterious South American appears throughout, and there is a subtle suggestion that he is the strangler. When the narrator sees the South American in la Rue Saint-Marc he is strangely reluctant to converse with him and is wary of him like Josiane, who claims: ‘No me gustan sus ojos ... Y además que no te mira, la verdad es que te clava los ojos pero no te mira’ (597). Although a Frenchman called Paul is apprehended and executed for the murders, whilst the South American dies alone in his hotel room, the

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<sup>339</sup> ‘Me ocurría a veces que todo se dejaba andar, se ablandaba y cedía terreno, aceptando sin resistencia que se pudiera ir así de una cosa a otra’ (590).

narrator links both deaths: 'las dos muertes que de alguna manera se me antojaban simétricas ... y eran casi una misma muerte' (605). Following a prolonged hiatus, the narrator tries to return to his paradise again but finds that the portal to adventure has been fastened shut. He notices a parallel between the South American's death and the abrupt cessation of his own time travelling. The narrator speculates that the South American has somehow erased him and Laurent with his own demise, 'como si él nos hubiera matado a Laurent y a mí con su propia muerte; razonablemente me digo que no, que exagero, que cualquier día volveré a entrar en el barrio de las galerías y encontraré a Josiane sorprendida por mi larga ausencia' (606). One reading is that the South American was the strangler and was reincarnated as the narrator. Perhaps the narrator's presence protected Josiane from being killed by his former avatar as they appear to repel one another. While the past represented harsh reality in 'La Noche Boca Arriba', here it is the fantasy to which the protagonist aspires.

A vignette which also underscores the theme of time travel is 'La conducta de los Espejos en la Isla de Pascua'. When we look at a mirror on the west of Easter Island, time appears to go backward as the mirror goes slow- 'se atrasa'. When we gaze into a mirror on the east side, we go forward in time – the mirror appears 'fast'. If we possess sufficient skill, we may find the elusive 'exact point' where the mirror reflects the time faithfully, 'pero el punto que sirve para ese espejo no es garantía de que sirva para otro, los espejos adolecen de distintos materiales y reaccionan según les da la real gana' (443). In his shaving mirror on the east of the island the anthropologist, Salomón Lemos catches a glimpse of himself, dead from typhus. Simultaneously, a small mirror forgotten on the east shows him as an infant. The mirror is an all-seeing eye which views every stage of a man's life simultaneously. In a sense

mirrors act as time machines. To paraphrase Jean Cocteau, mirrors allow us insight into death as we behold the ravages of time etched on our reflection.<sup>340</sup>

If time-travelling between decades or centuries is the bedrock upon which 'La Noche Boca Arriba', 'El Otro Cielo' and 'La conducta de los Espejos en la Isla de Pascua' are based, travelling within the moment forms part of the fabric of 'El Perseguidor'.<sup>341</sup> Up until that juncture Cortázar had eschewed psychologically rounded characters in favour of evoking the events which overtook their lives. In 'El Perseguidor' he strives to reflect Humankind in all its gritty realism: 'I wasn't sure of myself anymore in that story. I took up an existential problem, a human problem which was later amplified in *Los Premios* [*The Winners*], and above all in *Rayuela*'.<sup>342</sup> When he came across Parker's obituary detailing his troubled life, addictions and psychiatric illness, Cortázar instantly grasped that this was the complex character he had been seeking.<sup>343</sup>

Johnny Carter, composer, saxophonist *par excellence* is, as mentioned, Charlie Parker's fictive proxy. A number of biographical details are thinly disguised in the text: Johnny's wife Lan represents Charlie's partner, Chan whilst the marquise, Tica echoes baroness Nica, for instance. Unlike the other characters' names Johnny's name is not a rhyme of Charlie, rather it sounds similar but incorporates elements of Cortázar in its initials: J C. 'El Perseguidor' focuses on the latter years of Johnny's tragic life, weaving together crucial points in his downward spiral. Johnny probes a dizzying array of avenues in pursuing his asymptotic and ineffable goals: 'Nadie puede saber qué es lo que persigue Johnny, pero es así está ahí en Amorous, en la marihuana, en sus absurdos discursos sobre tanta cosa, en las

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<sup>340</sup> Cocteau's film *Orpheus* 1950: 'If you see your whole life in a mirror, you will see death at work as you see bees behind the glass in a hive'.

<sup>341</sup> 'En "El perseguidor" quise renunciar a toda invención y ponerme dentro de mi propio terreno personal, es decir, mirarme un poco a mí mismo. Y mirarme a mí mismo era mirar al hombre, mirar también a mi prójimo' (Luis Harss, *La isla final: Julio Cortázar* 273-274).

<sup>342</sup> Jaime Alazraki 'Toward the Last Square of the Hopscotch' in *Julio Cortázar Bloom's Modern Critical Views*, 15.

<sup>343</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 107.

recaidas, en el librito de Dylan Thomas, en todo lo pobre diablo que es Johnny' (250). From the outset we are made aware of Johnny's fixation with all things temporal. The fact that the music which defines Johnny should be jazz is no coincidence. A fluid genre of music characterized by syncopation and its *ex tempore* performances, jazz can simultaneously appear smooth yet fragmented. A kindred mass of contradictions, Johnny is as fractured as his music. His speech patterns ebb and flow with an abundance of anacoluthia; his volcanic personality erupts spontaneously; dissonance is at the core of his very being and his relationship with the world around him. He too is *ex tempore*, literally outside of time. Johnny's benefactor, the melomaniacal marquise, Tica is also contaminated by jazz. Bruno ponders 'cuando la marquesa se echa a hablar uno se pregunta si el estilo de Dizzy no se le ha pegado al idioma, pues es una serie interminable de variaciones en los registros más inesperados' (237).

Johnny believes that he has been conferred with a glimpse of authentic time but cannot fully grasp or articulate it. Consequently, frustration and a desire for self-destruction compel him to repeatedly lose or smash his saxophone, a saxophone which patently represents an extension of Johnny. The narrative is filtered, arguably distorted, through the perspective of Johnny's biographer, Bruno. Johnny is master of a music which Bruno terms metaphysical, a music which eludes Bruno who admits to envying his insight: 'envidio a Johnny, a ese Johnny del otro lado ... Johnny obsesionado por algo que su pobre inteligencia no alcanza a entender pero que flota lentamente en su música ... lo prepara quizá para un salto imprevisible que nosotros no comprenderemos nunca' (240). Through his music Johnny is tuned into a hidden substratum of reality.

The intrinsic relationship between time and visual perception is underscored by Johnny's hypothesis that the putative solidity of the world is a fiction: '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 ... todo lleno de agujeros, todo esponja' (246). For Johnny, as for Persio in *Los Premios*, solidity is an illusion, 'Maya' which obscures the truth. Everything trembles, jelly-like. Our eyes are simply not tuned into this phenomenon. As Insecto discusses in *Divertimento*, if we were able to slow down time, frame by frame, we would have an analogous worldview to Johnny's and select members of the animal kingdom, who are endowed with the ability to perceive the vibration of this energy. The world does not simply pulsate; it is porous and sponge-like. Redolent of a chameleon, Johnny absorbs the reality which envelops him.

By contrast to Johnny, the ever rational Bruno dismisses Johnny's unique ability to appreciate time as the worst of his obsessions whilst Johnny reprimands Bruno for counting chronological time. Johnny intuits that there is another kind of time, one which cannot be measured by clocks and he believes that music helps him to understand this alternative time. From childhood, music allowed Johnny to escape from the tethers of religion and poverty. He says, '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' (229). Music removed him from linear time and put him into authentic time.

Johnny explores a myriad of metaphors to illustrate his thoughts on the quirks of both time and music. Johnny likens the experience of performing music to being in a lift of time. Having left the lift on the twentieth floor, finishing a sentence started on the ground floor, he discovers that the surrounding world has been utterly transformed: 'Yo me di cuenta cuando empecé a tocar que entraba en un ascensor, pero era un ascensor de tiempo, si te lo puedo decir así' (230). In addition to a lift, Johnny draws comparisons between his 'musical time' and a bag. Dwarfing the limitations of his bag which can hold a finite number of items, this 'musical time' can expand indefinitely: 'Esto del tiempo es complicado ... Lo mejor es cuando te das cuenta de que puedes meter una tienda entera en la valija, cientos y cientos de

trajes, como yo meto la música en el tiempo cuando estoy tocando, a veces' (230). He stretches and fills time with his music. His concept of the elasticity of time chimes with the aforementioned quivering of reality. That which appears solid is an illusion: 'Las cosas que parecen duras tienen una elasticidad' (231). A temporal instance may be extended perpetually just as a discrete point in space can be subdivided recursively.

Most significantly, Johnny equates this experience of elastic time or 'musical time' with using the metro. He illustrates all that can be jammed into a brief interval when he starts to mentally reconstruct a piece of music while travelling in the underground. He recalls Lionel Hampton playing 'Save it, pretty mamma' note by note – a process which would have taken at least fifteen minutes in real time. Simultaneously, he retrieves memories of his ex-wife, Lan and their neighbourhood in vivid detail. Incongruously, just as he exhausts these recollections, he arrives at the next stop. He is stunned and baffled to learn that a mere one and a half minutes have lapsed since he had begun reminiscing. He now experiences similar phenomena elsewhere, but claims that only in the metro 'me puedo dar cuenta porque viajar en el metro es como estar metido en un reloj. Las estaciones son los minutos, comprendes, es ese tiempo de ustedes, de ahora; pero yo sé que hay otro, y he estado pensando, pensando ...' (233) For Johnny playing music and travelling by metro evoke being inside a clock. The metro measures out his musical time akin to a metaphysical metronome. Sequential time is abolished while the metro stops punctuate his memories like the minutes on a watch. Tellingly, this sensation of time expanding while reliving memories, echoes Cortázar's own experience of travelling in the underground train, which he denominates as 'superposición de tiempos diferentes'.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 102.

JC: Vos sabés que en 'El perseguidor' hay un episodio en donde Johnny cuenta cómo el tiempo queda abolido. Bueno, eso es absolutamente autobiográfico. Y además no solo me sucedía en la época en que escribía 'El perseguidor' y que en ese momento, en el orden del cuento me vino bien, entró esa intuición que tiene Johnny -



For Johnny, as for Cortázar, this elasticity of time also resembles a form of infinity or immortality. He says, ‘Bruno si yo pudiera solamente vivir como en esos momentos, o como cuando estoy tocando y también el tiempo cambia ... si encontráramos la manera podríamos vivir mil veces más de lo que estamos viviendo por culpa de los relojes’ (233). Akin to the theory that a human year is the equivalent of seven dog years, one of Johnny’s musical years would last centuries, years replete with a cornucopia of experience for human beings. Through Johnny, Cortázar emphasizes that if only we could eliminate the constraints of clockwork time and access primordial time, our lives would comprise the plenitude of infinite moments.

Cortázar underlines his indebtedness to Borges when comparing the instant in an eternity of ‘El Milagro Secreto’ to ‘El Perseguidor’.<sup>345</sup> In ‘El Milagro Secreto’, God gives Hladik one year to complete his work. The crux is that this one year takes place in Hladik’s mind and occurs between his being shot at by a firing squad and the moment of his death. This one year spans between 9am and 9.02am on the morning of the twenty-ninth of March. Time stands still for Hladik, but his mind sprints ahead. It is noteworthy that for Hladik, as for the nameless protagonist of ‘La Noche Boca Arriba’, the catalyst for his mystical experience is the awful inexorability of his impending death, whilst for Johnny music and distraction yield a similar effect.

In ‘A Mythical Re-Enactment: Cortázar’s “El Perseguidor”’ Djelal Kadir places Johnny on a par with Dionysus, god of wine, ecstasy, epiphany and champion of the unconventional.<sup>346</sup> He says, ‘What fascinates Johnny in his obsession with time comes to a

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sino que me sigue sucediendo. Y yo sé perfectamente que entre esas dos estaciones hay un minuto. Entonces, hay una especie de superposición de tiempos diferentes, que yo no puedo utilizar. Ojalá pudiera utilizarlos. Lo he pensado muchas veces con nostalgia, porque si yo pudiera multiplicar mi tiempo sería casi como ganar una especie de inmortalidad.

<sup>345</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Obra crítica 3* (1994), 106.

<sup>346</sup> Hans Oranje, *Euripides’ Bacchae: The Play and Its Audience*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 100.

head in the myth of Dionysus. Thus, we have the miracle of the one-day vines ... These flowered and bore fruit in the course of a few hours during the festivals of the epiphany of the god'.<sup>347</sup> For Kadir, Johnny, as a primordial Dionysiac, intuits the spirit of infinity which lies encapsulated in a single moment. Whether Dionysiac or not, the notion of intuition is pivotal to Johnny's character. In light of the fact that the chosen similes of elevators and underground trains convey the notion of 'travelling within', we cannot help but think of Bergson's hypothesis regarding the distinction between relative and absolute knowledge. We possess relative knowledge of an object in motion if we observe it from without, whilst we can only gain absolute knowledge from travelling within said object. Bergson asserts, 'By intuition is meant the kind of intellectual sympathy by which we place ourselves within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible'.<sup>348</sup> Contravening his professed inability to think, Johnny is nothing if not profound in his pronouncements on time. Intuitively Johnny can place himself within music just as music can place him in 'true' time.

Musical performance is, in a sense, a-temporal. While performing a piece, musicians become 'lost' in the music, being transported into a parallel reality of sorts (especially in a genre so heavily based on improvisation as jazz). The interlude of a-temporality (which, in a way, could be likened to Eliade's concept of 'sacred time') comes to an end when the last bar of the piece is executed. On occasion, music's ability to remove him from time disorients Johnny. He becomes decentred or dislocated when unable to anchor himself temporally, as was the case at a rehearsal in Cincinnati when Johnny was accompanying Miles Davis. Everything appeared to be progressing smoothly until Johnny stopped abruptly, and shouted, "“Esto lo estoy tocando mañana” ... “Esto ya lo toqué mañana, es horrible, Miles, esto ya lo

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<sup>347</sup> Kadir Djelal, 'A Mythical Re-Enactment: Cortazar's "El Perseguidor" "The Pursuer"' *Latin American Literary Review* 2.3 (1973): 72. *JSTOR*. Web. 03 Aug. 2012.

<sup>348</sup> John Mullarkey, *The new Bergson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 120.

toqué mañana” (227). It could be argued that his insistence that he had already played the piece tomorrow confuses past with future, once again abolishing chronology. Out of synch, Johnny appears to charge ahead of himself; time gallops on, unbridled. An alternative way of looking at time would be that to appear to slow down time we have to expedite ourselves, which is precisely what Johnny achieves here. Johnny’s purported ability to alter the pace of time echoes his alter ego, Parker. As Robert W. Felkel argues,

The slowing down of time is something which Charlie Parker effected in real life, although he did it by accelerating himself. In his music, for example, it is a fact that he memorized almost all of Lester Young’s solos and then played them at twice the tempo of the original. He also lived his life in double time.<sup>349</sup>

In jazz, double-timing occurs when a musician starts playing as though the tempo were double: ‘To create double-time he might switch from improvising eighth notes to improvising sixteenth for example’.<sup>350</sup> The effect of this can fool the listener into feeling that ‘the tempo has doubled, even though there is no change in the amount of time each chord’s harmony is in effect’.<sup>351</sup> Just as the listener is deceived into thinking that time has sped up Johnny’s music gives the impression that it can travel into the future, as we have seen. Moreover, as I have alluded to, part of the way in which both Parker and Carter lived their lives in double time relates to their addiction to narcotics and alcohol. They lived fast and died young. Perhaps Johnny’s declaration that he had already played the piece tomorrow was due to a substance imbibed rather than a metaphysical experience.

Later, Johnny’s recording of Amorous, which mirrors Parker’s real-life recording of ‘Lover Man where can you be’, itself a song yearning for a mythical love, represents one of the pivotal junctures in both his life and the narrative. Performed by an intoxicated Johnny, it

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<sup>349</sup> Although he died at thirty-four, Dr. Freymann estimated him to be in his early sixties’ Robert W. Felkel, ‘Genesis Of Story : The Historical Dimension in Julio Cortázar’s “The Pursuer”’, 20-27.

<sup>350</sup> Mark C. Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis* (Upper Saddle River, N.J. : Prentice Hall, 2006), 14.

<sup>351</sup> Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 14.

epitomizes both the zenith and nadir of his musical career, in spite of, or perhaps because of, ‘fallas, del soplido perfectamente perceptible que acompaña algunos finales de frase, y sobre todo la salvaje caída final, esa nota sorda y breve que me ha parecido un corazón que se rompe, un cuchillo entrando en un pan’ (249). Furious that the other musicians want to keep the flawed recording he is tricked into believing that the engineer has indeed destroyed the offending tape. For Roberts, Johnny’s rejection of the solo,

can be understood as coming about because the improvisation was a glimpse of a beyond of language which is now gone and whose repetition would be an immediate negation or loss of that glimpse, since it would constitute its inscription within a system of *différance*, of repeated representation.<sup>352</sup>

I disagree that Johnny regards the repetition of the piece as a negation of this transcendental moment, of going beyond language. I believe that he was disillusioned by the asymptotic experience, of almost recreating the elusive melody which haunted him. If he had been able to capture it, I feel that he would have liked to have recorded and share it so that it might be repeated. He was haunted by what this tantalizing glimpse offered. A number of nights later an unhinged Johnny sets ablaze his hotel room and is subsequently committed to a psychiatric hospital.

‘Amorous’ is fascinating for not only the performance itself, but also the prelude to its recording. Prior to the taping session Johnny claimed to have been at a park where he had imagined treading among hundreds of supposedly invisible urns filled with ashes. He disinters an urn which he believes corresponds to him, expecting it to be empty. Surprisingly he finds the urn full. Johnny is unhinged by the realization that he is absolutely alone, ‘Es terrible andar entre las urnas y saber que no hay nadie más, que soy el único que anda entre ellas buscando’ (260). Johnny fears that no living mortal understands his plight, his relentless quest for the Unnameable. For some, this hallucination provides evidence that life is

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<sup>352</sup> Roberts, ‘Subverted claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz’, 742.

essentially empty. As Effie J. Boldridge postulates, 'Johnny had just been confronted with the stark realization that he was a living dead man moving about in a world of living dead men. What made Johnny Carter different was the fact that he had the courage to admit his life was essentially empty. He refused to deceive himself'.<sup>353</sup> Indeed it is Johnny's refusal to deceive himself which renders him a tortured soul.

Why was the image of the urn chosen? The emblematic urn in Keats's ode, 'On a Grecian Urn', an ode on which Cortázar muses in his own hefty critique, *La Imagen de John Keats*, is a possible inspiration. In the ode the narrator observes and comments on an urn decorated with a lively, bucolic scene. On one level, the ode encompasses a meditation on the immortality of art juxtaposed with the grim ineluctability of the passing of time. The narrator claims that the piper's 'unheard' melodies are sweeter than mortal melodies. Firstly, because they cannot be corrupted by time, they are forever sweet and fresh. Secondly, these unheard melodies represent the platonic ideal of melody, the invisible spirit of music. Like the sound of one hand clapping, the oxymoron of an unheard melody also evokes the Ineffable. In *La Imagen de John Keats*, Cortázar speculates that while contemplating the urn, 'lo que John ha querido aprehender aquí es un instante eternizado, una serie de instantes-cumbre, de instantes perfectos, de total cumplimiento sin decadencia' (302). The urn and the image depicted on it underscore the dialectical tension between the permanence of art and the transience of human life. The urn's ultimate message may be 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'.<sup>354</sup> Art symbolizes the search for beauty and also the pursuit of truth. Art seeks to capture the unheard melodies above, but the mortal artist such as Johnny has to settle for inferior 'heard' melodies. The series of 'instantes-cumbre' or peak moments was what Johnny had glimpsed while travelling on the metro, thinking about music.

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<sup>353</sup> Effie J. Boldridge, *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Sep., 1971), 'The Pursuer. By Julio Cortázar', 126-131.

<sup>354</sup> John Keats, *The Works of John Keats: With an Introduction and Bibliography* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1994), 222.

Not long after the recording of 'Amorous', urns and the fleeting nature of human life come to the foreground with the death of Johnny's young daughter, Bee, a death which recalls the death of baby Rocamadour in *Rayuela*. The urn episode could be construed as a premonition of Bee's death and Johnny certainly regards the 'Amorous' debacle as symptomatic of his overall failures and later blurts out,

es que yo no valgo nada, que lo que toco y lo que la gente me aplaude no vale nada, realmente no vale nada ... ¿Cómo te puedo explicar? ... por ejemplo, es la diferencia entre que Bee haya muerto y que esté viva. Lo que yo toco es Bee muerta, sabes, mientras que lo que yo quiero, lo que yo quiero ... ' (262).

The boundary which divides the living Bee and the deceased Bee is, in essence, her spirit or life-force, her *mana*. Johnny believes that the music which he plays is worthless, the corpse masquerading as the living being. Perhaps what Johnny is expressing here is his regret that his music is not immortal, or that it is not, unlike the music of Orpheus, able to bring the dead to life.

Unflinching, Johnny never forfeits his search for metaphysical truths. He still endeavours to open elusive doors, redolent of the 'Doors of Perception', which Huxley denominates thus: '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 through narrow chinks of his cavern'.<sup>355</sup> For its sheer evocative power, it is worth reproducing a portion of Johnny's dialogue with Bruno on the subject of Johnny's regrets at not having fulfilled this quest:

Bruno, yo me voy a morir sin haber encontrado ... sin ... Lo sostengo por debajo de los brazos, lo apoyo en el pretil del muelle. Se está hundiendo en el delirio de siempre, murmura pedazos de palabras, escupe.—Sin haber encontrado —repite—. Sin haber encontrado ...—¿Qué querías encontrar, hermano? —le digo—. No hay que pedir imposibles, lo que tú has encontrado bastaría para ... —Para ti, ya sé—dice rencorosamente Johnny—. Para Art, para Dédée, para Lan ... No sabes cómo ... Si, a veces la puerta ha empezado a abrirse ... Mira las dos pajas, se han encontrado, están bailando una frente a la otra ... Es bonito, eh ... Ha empezado a abrirse ... el tiempo ... yo te he dicho, me parece, que eso del tiempo ... Bruno, toda mi vida he buscado en mi

<sup>355</sup> William Blake, *The Selected Poems of William Blake* (Wordsworth Editions, 2000), 57.

música que esa puerta se abriera al fin. Una nada, una rajita ... Me acuerdo en Nueva York, una noche ... (262).

In a poignant expression of vulnerability, the sheer musicality of Johnny's language radiates throughout. His anaphora of 'sin haber encontrado' ebbs away like a soft flowing melody. His abrupt change of sentence structure, or anacoluthon, exemplifies his distraction. This distraction coupled with the fragmentation of both his fragile psyche and his utterances evokes the jaggedness and syncopation which typify jazz. Johnny and his words are jazz made flesh, a jazz filled with yearning for Yonder.

Johnny compulsively lingers on the moment in New York when time appeared to stop, when the door started to open: 'Sí, a veces la puerta ha empezado a abrirse' (262). During a jamming session with Hal and Miles, Miles plays something so sublime that it almost propels Johnny from his seat, 'y entonces me largué, cerré los ojos, volaba. Bruno, te juro que volaba ... Me oía como si desde un sitio lejanísimo pero dentro de mí mismo, al lado de mí mismo' (262). Entranced by the music Johnny floats outside of his own body and is swaddled in 'la seguridad, el encuentro, como en algunos sueños ... cuando todo está resuelto' (263). Not only does he cease to occupy space; he no longer feels tethered by time, 'Y lo que había a mi lado era como yo mismo pero sin ocupar ningún sitio, sin estar en Nueva York, y sobre todo sin tiempo, sin que después ... sin que hubiera después ... Por un rato no hubo más que siempre' (263). Successive time is abolished. In an instance of transcendence, there is only timelessness, eternity, a 'siempre' where he hovers in sheer bliss. When the music stops, he collapses in on himself. It is ironic that the overwhelming sensation of temporal exile which had distressed him in Cincinnati exhilarates him in New York. The crucial difference is that he is at one or merged with timelessness. Until his life ends, he invariably aches to relive that peak moment and 'nadar sin agua' (263), but he has been expelled from paradise. This brief interlude of transcendence completes him and devastates him. Although deeply mystical within his own parameters, Johnny resents Bruno for trying to

cast his work in a religious light. As far as Johnny is concerned, even if God does exist and can grant him access through the aforementioned door, Johnny wants nothing to do with him. Johnny's muse, his music is the only supreme being he acknowledges. Music has arguably moulded Johnny in its own likeness. Music, which has granted Johnny intuition into the inner workings of time and timelessness, takes Johnny to a higher plane of consciousness, allowing his soul to soar. Johnny's ultimate affirmation is simply, 'yo toco mi música, ya hago mi Dios' (261). In relation to 'El Perseguidor' we could postulate that music has been endowed with an explicitly mystical trait or, conversely, that the esoteric, the ineffable has been embossed with a musical undertone, enriching both in the process of cross-fertilization.

Not dissimilar to 'El Perseguidor', we saw the way in which time and perception are fused in *Divertimento*. As discussed, Insecto contends that the pivotal painting is photographic as if taken through the eyes of a fly. Flies see reality unfold in slow motion, frame by frame an ability which tallies with Johnny's mystical experience of time-travelling in a metro and performing music in 'El Perseguidor'. In *Los Premios*, Persio too longs for the simultaneity of vision alluded to in *Divertimento*, abolishing his self as well as space and time. By believing that he can move in hyperspace, Persio can mentally journey through time and wishes to reveal the true nature of time and thus control it.

The interlocking of time and being is stressed in *El Examen* and *El Diario de Andrés Fava* where Andrés measures time in terms of music. It is personal, non-chronological time, as experienced by Johnny Carter and the protagonists of 'La Conducta de los espejos en la isla de Pascua', 'La Noche Boca Arriba' and 'El Otro Cielo'. Resonating with Johnny Carter, Andrés reckons that his authentic time is disjointed from his lifespan. Time is not only intrinsically entangled with humanity, personal or individual time applies as much to art and music as it does to *homo sapiens*. As we shall see in 'Clone', Bach's Musical Offering and Gesualdo's madrigals are not only works with a future, they mould the future in their own



image. The nightmarish reality of *El Examen*, a 'time outside of time' recalls the ritualistic aspects of 'La Noche Boca Arriba'. The venerated bone of the 'white goddess' calls to mind the amulet dedicated to the lunar goddess to which the *moteca* prays. Time does appear to stand still as they are paralysed by inertia and ossification. In *Libro de Manuel*, composed more than two decades after *El Examen*. Andrés connects historical time and music. As he attempts to listen to the *avant-garde* music of Stockhausen, he muses that the piano is a bridge between old music and new music, echoing a bridge between an old world order replete with old world values and a new world order such as socialism. In a similar vein, for *Rayuela*'s fictitious writer Morelli, the future, engaged reader becomes concurrent with the writer and travels to his time. For La Maga time as we know it does not exist. The past is never more than yesterday. Horacio's elusive centre also encompasses timelessness and its concomitant unity.

In 62: *Modelo para armar* as Juan contemplates a mirror in the dining hall he ponders on the way in which the act of remembering somehow annihilates the past and represents a present in a different dimension. This mirror of time allows him to glimpse interstitial reality, a portal which closed as abruptly as it had opened. Stylistically, the proliferation of flash-back and flash-forward sequences in the novel obliterates chronology akin to 'La Noche Boca Arriba'. Coincidence is both a chance or accidental occurrence and the temporal property of two things happening at the same time. For instance, Juan and Hélène coincide on a train even though she is dead at that juncture. As mentioned previously, clues to this incongruous synchronicity of Juan and Hélène were touched upon by Cortázar himself in 'La Muñeca Rota' when he refers to Friedrich Hölderlin's verse which says, 'los tiempos los interpenetramos' (*Último round* 176). This notion that one pervades different times reverberates through stories such as 'El Otro Cielo' and 'La Noche Boca Arriba' as we have seen.

Relentlessly throughout the short stories and novels our preconceptions of time and time travel are prodded, challenged and reconstructed. Vertiginously, the texts have explored time by interweaving an incongruous spectrum of disparate images ranging from mirrors, lifts, metros, bags, and ritual sacrifice among others. Clock-time itself has been redefined as a vampire. In addition to these tropes we have caught a glimpse of the nebulous prerequisites for time travel varying from reflection or distraction to ritual and music. We have seen the way in which musical time travel consists of luxuriating within the singular, magical, mystical moment, achieving unity with the 'nowness' of now. The simultaneity and abolition of time, the dichotomy between chronological time and timelessness, profane and sacred repeated time, the linear and the circular, combined with the ability to slow down or accelerate time, or to move into a time outside of time, force us to reassess our own rigid notions on time, if not our perspective on reality. It is the recurrence of time which shall be discussed with 'Reincarnation'.

### ***Reincarnation***

If time is circular and repeats itself, it is not illogical that the notion of reincarnation should be repeated throughout history. Theories regarding reincarnation may vary in their nuances, but essentially reincarnation is literally 're-entering the flesh', signifying the embodiment of a human being in a new form.<sup>356</sup> The most commonly held theory of reincarnation expounds the notion of metempsychosis or transmigration whereby a soul begins a new cycle of existence in another human body after death, although certain traditions hold that a person may be reincarnated in a non-human form such as an animal or plant.<sup>357</sup> It is plausible that primitive man extrapolated from the seasonal life cycles of nature an analogous process of birth, death and rebirth in man. What is beyond doubt is that from magical pagan sects to mainstream religions, the hypothesis of reincarnation has taken root as a central tenet.

The question of reincarnation prompts us to ponder on what happens to us post mortem and to redefine our concept of immortality. If the body dies and the spirit or stream of consciousness endures, does this mean that we are, in essence, immortal? If the body dies and is resurrected, does that not imply a form of reincarnation or literally 're-entering the flesh'? The dichotomy between reincarnation and resurrection in many ways encapsulates the distinction between faith systems such as Hinduism, where even the gods are reincarnated and 'Abrahamic' traditions of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, for instance, which reject reincarnation.

In Cortázar's novels we have seen the way in which reincarnation forms a central tenet of eastern faith systems such as Hinduism and Buddhism, although each has a different

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<sup>356</sup> Mike Morris, *Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) 215.

<sup>357</sup> Morris, *Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 215.

understanding of the concept. Whilst Hindus contend that the soul or spirit is reborn, Buddhists hold that it is the consciousness or 'stream of consciousness' which survives into the next incarnation.<sup>358</sup> Taoism believes in reincarnation but is more concerned with the notion of eternal youth, as depicted by its alchemical treatise *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.<sup>359</sup> Whereas Persio alludes to Hinduism's *Samsara* and makes oblique references to the Tao in *Los Premios*, it is in *Rayuela* that the most detailed debates on reincarnation are mooted. Buddhism's 'Bardo' and the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, both of which epitomize the notion of reaping what we sow, assume a privileged position in the novel.

What if heaven or hell is here on earth, as is the case of the protagonist of 'Una Flor Amarilla'? The narrator asserts that we are all immortal, having met the exception that proves the rule - the only mortal man. This mortal, a retired civil servant, recounts his tale of woe to the narrator. The man's epiphany strikes on a bus, when he meets a young teenager, Luc, who bears a conspicuous resemblance, both physically and mentally, to his younger self (337). This encounter stokes the civil servant's curiosity. He follows Luc and befriends both the boy and his family, ostensibly in an attempt to prove or disprove his outlandish hypothesis that Luc is his avatar (337). Given that metempsychosis implies that after death the soul begins a new cycle of existence in another human body, logic would dictate that the Luc could not co-exist with the civil servant. However, the civil servant believes that owing to a temporal anomaly, Luc had been incarnated before his predecessor had died and due to a further quirk of fate, their paths had crossed. The protagonist claims that flash of insight or divine revelation is the source of his conviction, an epiphany which he attributes to fate and, 'Lo que había empezado como una revelación se organizaba geométricamente, iba tomando ese perfil demostrativo que a la gente le gusta llamar fatalidad' (337).

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<sup>358</sup> Kashi Nath Upadhyaya, *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgita* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), 374-75.

<sup>359</sup> This text prompted Jung to delve into the very core of alchemical themes with his investigation uncovering striking similarities between the Taoists' 'Golden Flower' of immortality and the 'Philosophers' stone' of its Western counterpart.

The protagonist is at pains to point out that Luc's life is not a carbon copy of his but encapsulates a convincing imitation thereof (337). Trivial details vary, such as Luc dislocating his collarbone instead of his wrist (337). The essence and sequence of events remained the same, however. The protagonist goes on to postulate that the local baker could be a reincarnation of Napoleon, with events in his life tallying with those of the original Napoleon, albeit on a more modest scale (338). Notwithstanding minor modifications, this notion of 'eternal return', the theory that contends that the universe has been recurring, and will continue to recur in a self-similar form an infinite number of times is one which has been repeatedly propounded throughout a panoply of cultures. The above mentioned philosophies of the Pythagoreans and Stoics all believe in this hypothesis.<sup>360</sup> Nietzsche held that if we wished our life to be repeated perpetually, this would be the ultimate affirmation of life.<sup>361</sup>

Gradually, the narrator becomes obsessed with the notion that Luc is doomed to become him in later life. He feels the burden of this heaviest weight pressing down on him, both because of Luc's fate and because of his own foreknowledge of its inevitability. When Luc falls ill his predecessor secretly hastens his demise in order to preclude his own rebirth. Immediately following Luc's death the protagonist is initially overjoyed at having put an end to his future self's misery: 'estaba como anegado por la certidumbre maravillosa de ser el primer mortal, de sentir que mi vida se seguía desgastando día tras día, vino tras vino, y que al final se acabaría en cualquier parte' (340). Once he died, he would be utterly dead, free from the unending wheel of life, 'sin un Luc que entrara en la rueda para repetir estúpidamente una estúpida vida' (340).

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<sup>360</sup> G. W. Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California, 1979), 119.

<sup>361</sup> Nietzsche posed the question in *The Gay Science*: 'What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more" ... Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine"' in *Nietzsche: The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 194.

Predictably his relief at being the sole mortal does not endure. One day he stops to examine a yellow flower and is overwhelmed by its beauty. This yellow flower would be repeated *ad infinitum* for future generations to enjoy, but he alone would never revel in such beauty after this incarnation. Denied the chance of reincarnation, the only mortal is thus condemned to wander the city searching for a replacement in the form of ‘alguien que se pareciera a mí o a Luc, a alguien que pudiera ser yo otra vez’ (341). There is no outright condemnation of the protagonist’s actions, simply a lingering sense that he is a paltry excuse for a man. If he had wished to effect radical change, perhaps it would have been better to make his own life worth living rather than cutting short that of an innocent victim. Curiously if he does die outright, he will feel no suffering in the next incarnation, thus implying that he has been rewarded rather than eternally punished for his *actus reus*. In the long run, crime may pay.

No accusations of cowardice could be levelled at the protagonist of the short story, ‘De la Simetría Interplanetaria’. As Hinduism dictates that a human being may be reborn in animal form it is not such a stretch of the imagination for Cortázar that what was human on earth could be reincarnated as an extraterrestrial insect on another planet. Here the narrator explores the planet Faros whose inhabitants, ‘tienen altísimas patas de araña (suponiendo una araña verde, con pelos rígidos y excrecencias brillantes de donde nace un sonido continuado, semejante al de una flauta y que, musicalmente conducido, constituye su lenguaje)’ (91). They extend to him a warm welcome and teach him about their culture. When he enquires about religion, they profess to be monotheist. The narrator expresses concern about an individual called Illi, ‘un fareense con pretensiones de acendrar la fe en los sistemas vasculares’ (91). Illi’s preaching and his ambition to engender love in the hearts of his peers remind the narrator of Jesus and it suddenly occurs to him that the Son of God could have been reincarnated on a variety of planets:

No es novedad la hipótesis de que bien podría el Hijo de Dios pasarse por los planetas convirtiendo a los universales. ¿Por qué iba a dedicarse con exclusividad a la tierra? Ya no estamos en la era geocéntrica; concedámosle el derecho a cumplir su dura misión en todas partes' (92).

In spite of the initial adulation of the Farese crowds, the narrator harbours no illusion that this will end well for Illi. Will he too be sacrificed to save his peers? The narrator speculates whether Illi will end up tormented and crucified as on earth: 'El Calvario era un estigma coterráneo, pero también una definición. Probablemente habíamos sido los únicos capaces de una villanía semejante ¡Clavar en un madero al hijo de Dios ... !' (92) The crucifixion defined the cruelty of the crucifiers as much as the suffering of Christ. The Farese aliens, however, prove to be far more humane and swift in their dispatch of their saviour and administer poison to Illi's food.

It is a moot question whether Illi is condemned to be reborn on another planet and be immolated repeatedly in the process to which I have alluded as 'The Eternal Return'. As was the case with 'La guerra florida' we ask: what would happen if the cycle were broken, would sentient life come crashing to an end? It is ironic that in faiths such as Buddhism and Hinduism, man is condemned to repeat the wheel of *Samsara* until Nirvana, 'non-existence' is accomplished, thus merging man with the Supreme Consciousness. Conversely, the messianic Christ-figure or Son of the Supreme Being is doomed to a cycle of rebirth and sacrifice.

In Cortázar's texts it is worth noting that reincarnation encompasses not just individuals but also groups of individuals who combine to compose a constellation in the story, 'Todos Los Fuegos el Fuego'. The title and story imply that all fires form part of the eternal fire, a fire which according to Heraclitus is the origin of all things. Fire lives only through destroying and is in constant flux. The concept of sacred fire is also a crucial component of reincarnation within the Hindu faith system as Agni is the god of fire and

acceptor of sacrifices. Here the cycle of birth, death and rebirth is interwoven with two human constellations. The first constellation is that of a Roman proconsul, his wife and the gladiator for whom she harbours secret feelings. Her husband subtly taunts her by condemning the gladiator to death in one-to-one combat. The second constellation consists of three residents of twentieth century Paris: Jeanne, her partner Roland and his mistress, Sonia. Reminiscent of 'La Noche Boca Arriba' the narrative switches abruptly betwixt ancient and contemporary epochs. Jeanne takes an overdose of tranquilizers whilst Sonia and Ronald perish as result of a discarded cigarette. Their death parallels that of the proconsul and his wife who are accidentally burnt to death at the amphitheatre. The constellation of this tragic love triangle has been repeated through the ages, albeit with variations. The individuals are subjugated to the pattern and it is the repetition of the constellation of characters, rather than their individual identity that matters.

Where fire heralded death and rebirth of configurations in 'Todos Los Fuegos el Fuego', in 'Clone'<sup>362</sup> the narrative could be redesignated as 'Todas Las Músicas, La Música'. A clone is a copy or a double of an original. Biological clones have shared genetic memories, even though they can evolve in different ways. A reincarnated form is in essence a clone of the original, perhaps free to evolve, but perhaps lacking the conscious memories of its prototype. Previously, the group had garnered accolades for their magisterial performances and according to one character had resembled a clone: 'el canto y la vida y hasta los pensamientos eran una sola cosa en ocho cuerpos. ¿Como los tres mosqueteros, pregunta Paola, todos para uno y uno para todos? Eso, m'hija, concede Roberto, pero ahora lo llaman clone que es más piola. Y cantábamos y vivíamos como uno solo' (CC2 385-386). Originally they had lived, sung and thought in harmony. They had all vibrated in unison, similar to the

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<sup>362</sup> All references to 'Clone' and 'Nota sobre el tema de un rey y la venganza de un príncipe' are from Volume 2 of Cortázar's *Cuentos Completos* and will use CC2 as an abbreviation.



way in which a silent tuning fork that approaches a resonating tuning fork starts to emit a tone of the same frequency.<sup>363</sup> As music and thought are both forms of vibrations it should come as no surprise that they should merge. In a sense, a musical piece is a clone as each performance represents a copy of the prototype. Here art clones life which in turn draws from art. The text represents a musical palimpsest in certain respects, with Gesualdo being overwritten by Bach, which is in turn overwritten by Gesualdo. Similar to *Rayuela* with its ‘capítulos prescindibles’, ‘Clone’ can be read in two ways. On one level, it is an almost hackneyed tale of jealousy and revenge. However, when this narrative is taken in conjunction with the explanation which follows it, a unique insight is provided into the game which inspired the subtext to this composition.

Far from being an overtly esoteric offering, the narrative comprises ‘just another tango’ of passion and revenge, in the words of one of the characters (CC2 383). From the outset, the narrator tells us that everything appears to revolve around the composer, Gesualdo, as famous for his music as he was infamous for killing his wife and her lover on October 16 1590.<sup>364</sup> Plagued by guilt following his crime it is thought that Gesualdo used music to expunge said demons: ‘during the last decade of his life he was tormented by demons and he developed a penchant for being beaten ... But through it all he kept on writing madrigals until his death in 1613’.<sup>365</sup> Gesualdo’s art is a form of exorcism, just as Cortázar viewed writing some of his short stories as a means of exorcizing his own neuroses.

In ‘Clone’ a modern day madrigal chorus travels from city to city performing Gesualdo’s works, works which were sung unaccompanied. The ensemble is increasingly infatuated with understanding Gesualdo and even start to assume characteristics of this ‘Lord

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<sup>363</sup> Randall McClellan, *The Healing Forces of Music: History, Theory and Practice* (Lincoln (NE): ToExcel, 2000) 21.

<sup>364</sup> David Dubal, *The Essential Canon of Classical Music* (New York: North Point, 2001), 20.

<sup>365</sup> William B. Ober, M.D. *Carlo Gesualdo, Prince Of Venosa: Murder, Madrigals, And Masochism* (New York: The Mount Sinai School of Medicine of the City University of New York ), 634.

of Music'. Every madrigal reflected Gesualdo's violent crime: 'Cada madrigal de Gesualdo que agregaban al repertorio era un nuevo enfrentamiento, la recurrencia acaso de la noche en que el príncipe había desenvainado la daga mirando a los amantes desnudos y dormidos' (CC2 386).

Throughout 'Clone' we hear the maelstrom of the characters' voices and thoughts. Punctuation is sorely lacking, in key with the casual, vernacular style of the dialogue. The opening line deceives us into thinking that we are listening to a third person narrator but are in fact listening to Paola, Lucho and Roberto discussing Gesualdo's revenge. Channelling Gesualdo's madrigals inevitably culminates in disharmony, given that, ironically, the more they relive part of Gesualdo's life, the more that their performance of his music degenerates. Inevitably their cohesion crumbles as they become 'un naufragio en cámara lenta' (CC2 386).

Significantly, while members of the group debate Gesualdo's justification in wreaking revenge on his wife in such an egregious way, parallels are drawn with the singers' own lives. Sandro, who is both the conductor and tenor has fallen in love with Franca, who is the bass singer Mario's wife. At first, Mario appears indifferent to Sandro's feelings for his wife until Franca reciprocates Sandro's glance: 'esta vez ella lo miraba a él, era ella que lo quemaba con los ojos y vaya si esos ojos pueden si quieren' (CC2 390). While musing on vengeance as an art form, Mario finds it incongruous that Gesualdo, who was capable of conceiving of such a refined musical universe, should avenge himself in such an unsophisticated fashion, 'cuando le estaba dado tejer la telaraña perfecta, ver caer las presas, desangrarlas paulatinamente, madrigalizar una tortura de semanas o de meses' (CC2 390). Mario equates the creation of a madrigal with torture, perhaps as Gesualdo's madrigals were both a result of his own revenge and corollary to his own torment. He laments that Gesualdo's vengeance lacks finesse and patience, but his own retribution is equally crude. His temporary lapse of sanity evokes an alternative meaning of the term, 'fugue'; in its psychological rather than

music sense, a 'fugue' is a dissociative disorder or altered state of consciousness in which people act without memory of their former lives. They literally flee from their own identity and cease to be themselves temporarily. Mario cannot escape his destiny of assuming the role of Gesualdo, irrespective of his own innate objections.

Six hours before the final concert is due to commence in Buenos Aires, Franca and Mario depart together in a taxi for the last time. Just before the curtain rises, Franca's absence provokes panic among the group. Suspicion of her disappearance inevitably falls on her spouse, 'Mario callado y pálido como acaso callado y pálido salió Carlo Gesualdo de la alcoba' (CC2 391). Franca, the unfaithful wife has met a fate similar to Gesualdo's spouse, whilst Mario is now the living clone or reincarnation of Gesualdo, through his own retaliation. Just as Gesualdo's music was re-enacted in the twentieth century, so too has the human constellation of cuckolded husband, unfaithful wife and her lover been recreated, not unlike the constellation of 'Todos Los Fuegos El Fuego'.

As mentioned, the text represents a musical palimpsest in certain respects, with Gesualdo being overwritten by Bach. This is not immediately apparent from reading 'Clone' as a standalone composition. 'Clone''s corollary text, 'Nota sobre el tema de un rey y la venganza de un príncipe' methodically charts the piece's inspiration as well as the matrix used to determine its structure. In essence, this short story is the result of a game self-imposed on the narrator, as is the case with *Rayuela* and *62: Modelo para armar* in their own ways. The narrator claims that when he writes it feels as if he has been dictated to by some external force. He does little more than transcribe. Therefore, to avoid monotony he imposes restrictions, in this case to adjust an inexistent narrative to Bach's 'Ofrenda Musical' (or 'Das Musikalische Opfer'). The narrator elucidates the genesis of the composition. At the king's behest Bach had improvised variations on a theme and later had sent a more polished offering to the king. This version was accompanied by the inscription : 'Regis Iussu Cantio et Reliqua

Canonica Arte Resoluta' ('At the King's Command, the Song and the Remainder Resolved with Canonic Art.').<sup>366</sup> The initials of the terms spell out the acronym, 'RICERCAR'. In Italian the word 'ricercar' means 'to seek', also evoking the trope of a quest.

Bach did not indicate which instruments should be employed and left the order of the parts up to the discretion of the musicians - a musical model kit to be assembled. The narrator chooses Millicent Silver's version of the piece which furnished him with eight singers whose vocal registers tallied with eight instruments. Eight instruments are thus represented by eight characters:

La regla del juego era amenazadora: ocho instrumentos debían ser figurados por ocho personajes, ocho dibujos sonoros respondiéndolo, alternándose u oponiéndose debían encontrar su correlación en sentimientos, conductas y relaciones de ocho personas' (CC2 393).

These characters are both human and 'dibujos sonoros' (CC2 393), but their interaction felt too contrived for the narrator.

Unable to proceed with this concept, the narrator allowed this embryonic tale to lie dormant awaiting inspiration: 'nada puede ser apurado en la escritura y el aparente olvido, la distracción, los sueños y los azares tejen imperceptiblemente su futuro tapiz' (CC2 393). The future furnished him with a casual conversation which evoked Carlo Gesualdo and everything coagulated in a split second. By combining Bach and Gesualdo, the narrator felt that he could write a piece which adhered to his rules and yet seemed somehow more natural, 'desde la primera frase existiría así la cohesión de un grupo, todos ellos se conocerían y amarían u odiarían desde antes; y además, claro, cantarían los madrigales de Gesualdo, nobleza obliga' (CC2 394). He merges the instruments of Bach with the singers of Gesualdo. For instance, Sandro is both a flute and a tenor, and we hear the characters of Lucho and Franca in parts of the composition which feature only the violin and oboe of Bach's 'Ofrenda'. In the coda of Bach's musical piece seven characters or instruments remain. Therefore in the text Franca is

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<sup>366</sup> Daniel R. Melamed, *Bach Studies 2*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 100.

eliminated, echoing the fate of Gesualdo's wife. Death is thus depicted by the absence of a musical instrument.

Significantly the translation of Bach's *Musikalische Opfer* as 'ofrenda musical' or 'musical offering' is itself open to question. The term 'Opfer' (in the neutral form) generally means 'sacrifice' rather than the less emotive 'offering'. For Gesualdo, the sacrifice of his own wife was the *sine qua non* for extirpating his guilt through writing madrigals. The music is replayed throughout the centuries and now recreates the jealousy and revenge from which it was originally brought into existence through the forfeit of Franca's life. Her death is literally a 'Musical Sacrifice', and, like the unending loop of the Ofrenda's 'Canon per tonos' therein, this cycle of sacrifice and musical creation could recur *ad infinitum*.<sup>367</sup>

The text evokes music in its very form. In his article 'Cortázar, ou l'œuvre d'un compositeur Analyse du conte "Clone"', Francis Buil details the manner in which Cortázar's work is really the work of a composer, 'un compositeur littéraire'.<sup>368</sup> Buil explains that Cortázar uses the techniques of composition favoured by Bach, namely the fugue, the canon, counterpoint and polyphony.<sup>369</sup> Even in the very first paragraph the characters discuss Gesualdo, 'with all the voices together singing together around a common theme but each with its uniqueness and its sound, giving an impression of polyphony'.<sup>370</sup> Perhaps *Clone's*

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<sup>367</sup> In his seminal work *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Braid*, Douglas Hofstadter points out on page 18 that the 'Canon per Tonos', 'is so constructed that this 'ending' ties smoothly onto the beginning again; thus one can repeat the process and return in the key of E, only to join again to the beginning. These successive modulations lead the ear to increasingly remote provinces of tonality ... And yet magically, after exactly six such modulations, the original key of C minor has been restored! All the voices are exactly one octave higher than they were at the beginning, and here the piece may be broken off in a musically agreeable way. Such, one imagines, was Bach's intention; but Bach indubitably also relished the implication that this process could go on *ad infinitum*, which is perhaps why he wrote in the margin 'As the modulation rises, so may the King's Glory.'

<sup>368</sup> Francis Buil, 'Cortázar, ou l'œuvre d'un compositeur Analyse du conte "Clone"'. *Bulletin d'informations du département d'études hispanophones Université Jean Moulin Lyon n°3* 2008.

According to Buil, 'Il va utiliser les techniques de composition de Bach, à savoir la fugue, le canon, le contrepoint et la polyphonie. 'Clone' devient, alors, un véritable travail d'intertextualité et de transposition.'

<sup>370</sup> As Buil indicates, 'Dans sa structure narrative Cortázar introduit la polyphonie en nous montrant des personnages en pleine conversation, intervenant par des phrases courtes pour donner une impression de rapidité mais aussi de différence de voix, de mélodies, l'ensemble se faisant quasiment simultanément ce qui donne une impression de polyphonie.'

hidden virtue is that it is not really a written text rather a musical composition masquerading as such.

How evident is this palimpsest of Bach and Gesualdo in 'Clone'? Although tantalizing clues were dropped with allusions to Gesualdo in 'Clone' itself, references to Bach were conspicuous by their absence. Bach's influence is far subtler, as befits a composer renowned for secret codes embedded into his work. Admittedly we could posit the theory that the impact of Bach is palpable in the *modus operandi* of the text, particularly in the anthropomorphization of musical components. As Hofstaedter explains, 'Bach himself used to remind his pupils that the separate parts in their compositions should behave like 'persons who conversed together as if in a select company'.<sup>371</sup>

Likewise, the merger of man and musical instrument is not unheard of in Cortázar's work. Johnny Carter's saxophone is an extension of him and Andrés Fava elucidated his theory on the musician as a 'hombre-violin' or 'hombre-piano'. Perhaps Music and life become one as Music is a form of life in another dimension as had been postulated in *El Examen*. In terms of reincarnation, if music is a life-form it appears to be nourished by human passion, as demonstrated by short stories such as 'El Perseguidor', 'Las Ménades' and 'Clone'. What is particularly fascinating in 'Clone' is that it is not merely human characters who are reborn. Rather, they are reborn as musical tools or 'instruments' whose purpose it is to serve Music. If we take this re-creation literally, this renewal process transcends even that of human to animal reincarnation. Perhaps a musical instrument represents the ultimate goal of our evolution. As outlandish as that may sound, nobody knows the true origin or purpose of music and theories abound as to its evolutionary role. There is no obvious biological

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<sup>371</sup> Douglas Hofstaedter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Braid*, 36.

imperative for music and yet it is a universal constant. Steven Pinker views music as ‘auditory cheesecake’<sup>372</sup>, in his 1997 work, *How the Mind Works* where he claims:

Compared with language, vision, social reasoning, and physical know-how, music could vanish from our species and the rest of our lifestyle would be virtually unchanged. Music appears to be a pure pleasure technology, a cocktail of recreational drugs that we ingest through the ear to stimulate a mass of pleasure circuits at once.<sup>373</sup>

I would disagree with the notion that our lives would continue virtually unchanged if music were to disappear. Our lives would be immeasurably impoverished without music. Music can be many things, such as a highly mathematical science, or indeed a means to reach the understanding of hidden realities. Music as such affects us physically as well as emotionally. Therefore it is not only recognized and ‘imagined’ but its perception is physical. The vibrations of the musical sound cause, in turn, the vibration of the inner membranes of our body, which causes us to experience it in a ‘visceral’ manner. Those physical experiences have the power to evoke strong psychological and emotional reactions, depending on the sensibility of the individual. As counterbalance to Pinker’s clinical and derogatory perspective on music, others such as Daniel J. Levitin hold the view that music is a core component of our identity. Levitin underlines the role played by music as

a core element of our identity as a species, an activity that paved the way for more complex behaviours such as language, large- scale cooperative undertakings, and the passing down of important information from one generation to the next.<sup>374</sup>

We now know that music uses every area of the brain and is inextricably intertwined with emotional bonding and with memory. If amoebic life forms emerged from the primordial soup to later develop into man who knows into what *homo sapiens* shall metamorphose over

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<sup>372</sup> Pinker, Steven. *How the Mind Works*. W.W. Norton: New York, 1997. 534.

<sup>373</sup> Pinker, Steven. *How the Mind Works*. W.W. Norton: New York, 1997. 528.

<sup>374</sup> Daniel J. Levitin, *The World in Six Songs: How the Musical Brain Created Human Nature* (Canada: Viking/Penguin Canada, 2008), 3.

the course of millions of years? Is it such a stretch to surmise that the *élan vital* which drives man forward is Music? In 'Clone' Music inspired, controlled and destroyed the characters and is reborn within the musical instruments. Singers become oboes in a parallel dimension. It is the Music that survives, irrespective of its vessels.

In 'Las Puertas del Cielo' the notion of music being the destination of life is further explored as Marcelo recounts the death and putative resurrection of his friend, Celina. Following her demise from respiratory difficulties, Marcelo tries to distract Celina's overwrought widower, Mauro by taking him out to Palermo. They decide to go to the milonga at Santa Fe Palace, similar to an establishment where Celina had worked as a dancer prior to meeting Mauro. For Marcelo, a lawyer accustomed to a more refined ambience, this dance hall depicts a form of hell: 'justamente el caos, la confusión resolviéndose en un falso orden: el infierno y sus círculos', a hell populated by 'los monstruos' (160). Marcelo depicts as grotesque these supposed freaks or monsters, commonly known as 'cabecitas negras', who were migrant workers from the countryside. A morbid fascination draws Marcelo towards these 'creatures of the night' (160). At night, while dancing, Celina was among her peers.

Marcelo loves to spend time with Mauro and Celina, basking in the glow of their apparent married bliss. Mauro had purportedly made a respectable woman out of Celina by whisking her away from Kasidis's milonga. Mauro may have taken the girl out of the dance, but he couldn't take the dance out of the girl. She whiled away her time listening to music when possible: 'Celina se le escapaba un poco por la vía de los caprichos, su ansiedad de bailes populares, sus largos entresueños al lado de la radio, con un remiendo o un tejido en las manos' (158). For Mauro Celina had renounced 'su Cielo de milonga' even if she never completely felt comfortable in the mantle of respectability conferred upon her: 'Cuando la oí cantar, una noche de Nebiolo y Racing cuatro a uno, supe que todavía estaba con Kasidis, lejos de una casa estable y de Mauro puestero del Abasto' (158). Her respiratory illness also



conveys this notion of being suffocated by her environs. Marcelo believes that leaving the world of dance had been an error for Celina, a misguided sacrifice in the name of love. Had she not been obliged to work in such a den of iniquity, 'le hubiera gustado quedarse. Se le veía en las caderas y en la boca, estaba armada para el tango' (158). Her body evokes the culmination of a musical evolution, similar to the musical instruments of 'Clone'. Aside from her hips and her mouth, even her forehead evokes a guitar: 'una frente baja que brillaba como nácar de guitarra' (156).

The Santa Fe bar is evocative of Celina, 'tan en su casa aquí, justamente aquí donde Mauro no la había traído nunca.' The gravelly voice of a tango singer called Anita Lozano suffuses the hall, a voice which reminds Marcelo of Celina's huskiness when she had partaken of alcohol. The grieving widower starts to dance with a young woman who resembles Celina. However the memories prove to be too painful when one of Celina's favourite tangos is played. Mauro and Marcelo are united by this shared memory of her as they watch other couples dance. They are mesmerized by Celina's tango, a song whose lyrics portend Mauro's asymptotic pursuit, 'tanto, tanto como fuiste mío, y voy te busco y no te encuentro' (162). Such was the power of music and the memory of Celina's tango that suddenly Celina appears to materialize before their very eyes, emerging from the smoke, dancing : 'y Celina que estaba sobre la derecha saliendo del humo y girando obediente a la presión de su compañero ... y alzó la cara para oír la música' (163). Inexplicably the narrator knows, as if by divine revelation, that this is Celina: 'Yo digo: Celina; pero entonces fue más bien saber sin comprender, Celina ahí sin estar, claro, cómo comprender eso en el momento', (163). The reader expects Mauro to acknowledge her presence, when he asks Marcelo :¿Vos te fijaste cómo se parecía?' (164) The truth is simply too much for Mauro to countenance. He trembles as Celina continues to 'drink' the tango, 'su cara arrobada y estúpida en el paraíso al fin logrado' (163). Whilst Mauro claims that the dancer merely looks like Celina, deep down

he realizes that she is his wife and tries to follow her. We are led to believe that she has been fleetingly resurrected prior to being assumed into the all-encompassing embrace of her tango. Mauro can never reach Celina as they belong to different worlds. She dances in her musical paradise, free from the burden of clients or even her husband: 'Nada la ataba ahora en su cielo sólo de ella, se daba con toda la piel a la dicha y entraba otra vez en el orden donde Mauro no podía seguirla. Era su duro cielo conquistado, su tango vuelto a tocar para ella sola y sus iguales' (163). Celina is back where she belongs in the tango of her personal paradise. Redolent of Johnny Carter, Celina's entire life was wrought by music and she is brought to life by dance. In many ways the reincarnation implied by 'Clone' and the resurrection portrayed in 'Las Puertas del Cielo' are flip-sides of the same coin. Music was the conduit for Celina's brief resurrection and her access to Paradise, just as music signified a singular form of hell for the avatars of Gesualdo and his group. Music is, in a sense, Heaven and Hell, if not rebirth.

As we have seen, reincarnation and resurrection are peppered throughout Cortázar's novels. A resurrection of sorts occurs in *Divertimento*, when the ghost of Juan Facundo Quiroga's widow, Eufemia materializes at a séance. Eufemia appears quite solid and is able to feel as a living person can. She needs a medium to be restored to our dimension, but can be resurrected given the correct circumstances. This is indeed a terrifying prospect. In *El Diario de Andrés Fava*, Andrés feels as if he has already died before and believes that he does not end with his body, but does not expand on this hypothesis in any great detail. In *Los Premios Samsara*, the endless cycle of birth and suffering and death and rebirth, a cycle which can only be ruptured by Nirvana or enlightenment, is the concept which drives Persio forward in his quest for enlightenment. He appears to regret the fact that he lacks the courage to follow Medrano's path to find out what happens both on deck and beyond death.

If we believe that Andrés Fava was killed at the end of *El Examen*, it follows through that he has been resurrected for *Libro de Manuel*. Ironically the Andrés Fava of *El Examen* and *El Diario de Andrés Fava* believed that he had already died but did not wish to presume that he would be reborn after his then incarnation. With this possible exception of Andrés Fava, the novels characters merely discuss reincarnation as a hypothesis, in sharp contrast to their short story counterparts who appear to experience reincarnation directly. Hinduism's *Samsara*, Tibetan Buddhism's 'Bardo' and Egypt's *Book of the Dead*, the hint of Taoism all leave their mark on the novels whilst in the short stories reincarnation is presented without any intimation of Karma or any spiritual element at work. The protagonist of 'Una Flor Amarilla' is not destined to suffer in a future incarnation, even if he is somewhat distressed in this life. Even Illi/Christ, despite being a paragon of virtue and altruism, is condemned to be reborn and suffer for sins he did not commit. Resurrection involves entering the same flesh from whence the deceased's spirit originated whilst reincarnation entails the spirit entering into a new vessel which had never been occupied. Both imply a spirit possessing a body. However, the principal difference between these phenomena and the spiritual possession discussed next is the idea that spiritual possession invades or dislocates a distinct, pre-existing entity. Reincarnation fills a blank canvas while resurrection returns the spirit to the same entity which it had originally occupied. With 'Spiritual Possession' we shall see that in many respects the possessed and the act of possession are just as significant as the possessor.

## *Spiritual Possession*

Spiritual possession implies that the spirit of a human being is invaded or usurped by another entity, most frequently a demon or evil spirit. Often physical and spiritual domination go hand in hand within Cortázar's short stories, both in the realms of love and violence. The psychic invasion of Pierre follows the corporal possession of Michèle in 'Las Armas Secretas'. The telepathic vampirism of *62: Modelo para armar* is a salient instance of spiritual possession which we have explored. The novel's characters appear unable to control their emotions and their actions, as if they too have been spiritually possessed by some force beyond their ken. These so-called 'fuerzas habitantes,' may represent a parasitic or symbiotic force that feeds off the energy of others. They may embody a motiveless malignity; they may encapsulate love or may even symbolize evolution. According to the angle from which 'Las Ménades' and 'Clone' are appraised, each of these attributes of this inhabiting forces could equally apply to Music. A delicate boundary separates obsession from possession as the individual becomes dominated by both the emotion and object of his or her obsession. Invariably our curiosity is stoked to delve into the following fundamental questions: who is possessed, by what and how?

'Lejana' was inspired by Cortázar's own neurosis. One day he began to hallucinate after taking prescription drugs while ill. He believed that he saw his own double walking by his side, a vista which provoked a bizarre sensation. He mined this experience of the double and translated it into 'Lejana'. Essentially the story depicts the spiritual possession of an Argentine socialite, Alina Reyes, by an unnamed Hungarian beggar. In Alina's private diary, Alina details her insomnia and her subsequent soporific strategies involving word games. As if they were magical formulae, Alina obsessively creates palindromes and anagrams. Anagrams destroy the order of characters and recycle the same letters, whereas a subset of

anagrams, palindromes, are verbal mirrors, ironically distorting and reflecting the truth. Her own name, when rearranged as an anagram produces 'es la reina y ...' (119). The combination of being a monarch with this enigmatic 'and ...' offers up an infinity of possibilities: 'Tan hermoso, éste, porque abre un camino, porque no concluye.' (119) Alina is enchanted by this putative 'truth' contained within the letters of her name: 'A esa que es Alina Reyes pero no la reina del anagrama; que será cualquier cosa, mendiga en Budapest, pupila de mala casa en Jujuy o sirvienta en Quetzaltenango, cualquier lejos y no reina' (119). In the process of probing these anagrams another reality starts to emerge.

This fashioning of anagrams calls to mind 'Satarsa', whose human protagonist, akin to Alina, is fixated with word games. In 'Satarsa' the narrator toys with the phrase, 'Atar a la rata'. The palindrome which means 'to tie the rat' is manipulated by pluralizing the Word to 'ratas' to create a new phrase, 'Satarsa', the 'supreme rat' the sum of all rats. By vanquishing Satarsa, all of the rats could be defeated. Was the existence of this rat divined through the anagram or did the anagram bring Satarsa into being? As alluded to in *Rayuela*, according to the Kabbalah, the miracle of creating a three-year-old calf by means of the 'Sefer yetzirah,' was accomplished by the letters of the Holy Name ('zeruf otiiyot'), So why not create *ex nihilo* a super-rat through manipulating characters in 'Satarsa'? Likewise we are impelled to ponder, did this plethora of actual identities concealed within the soup of letters pre-exist, or did Alina conjure up her Hungarian double by concocting the anagram?

Their lives had started to merge in Alina's mind once a telepathic link is magically established between the two. Alina empathizes with the mendicant and feels beaten, cold and desperate: 'Anoche la sentí sufrir otra vez. Sé que allá me estarán pegando de nuevo. No puedo evitar saberlo' (124) and yet she resents her alter ego for being a victim. The subtle shift from third person to first person when referring to the woman being beaten signals the gradual dissolution of self into the double. Alina convinces her fiancé to go on honeymoon to

Budapest in order to see her alter ego. Her feelings are mixed as she fears that she will find herself there and suspects that she is insane. While in Budapest, a city whose two main parts, the west-bank Buda/Obuda and the east-bank Pest are united by bridges, Alina ventures to the very bridge where she is destined to encounter her Double, the absence which has haunted her thoughts: 'En el puente la hallaré y nos miraremos. Y será la victoria de la reina sobre esa adherencia maligna, esa usurpación indebida y sorda. Se doblará si realmente soy yo, se sumará a mi zona iluminada' (124). If the beggar is truly her double, Alina believes that she can save her from her awful fate.

Upon meeting, the two women embrace and weep profusely. Their souls swap bodies in a subtle and seamless process.<sup>375</sup> When Alina opens her eyes, she shrieks upon realizing that she is now her Hungarian counterpart, and helplessly she cries as she observes her own elegantly clad figure depart 'yéndose camino de la plaza iba Alina Reyes lindísima en su sastrero gris, el pelo un poco suelto contra el viento, sin dar vuelta la cara y yéndose' (125). More questions than answers linger with this process of spiritual possession. Frustratingly we never become party to the Hungarian's perspective. Did she exist independently or was she a creation of Alina's? Whereas the beggar escapes to a better life, Alina's incantations and anagrams have created an aperture to the Other, a grim destiny to which she is ineluctably condemned.

If being trapped in the body of an abused mendicant represents a horrendous fate, spare a thought for the protagonist of 'Axolotl', who is condemned to languish the remainder of his days in the form of a salamander. The boundaries between man and amphibian are perturbingly eroded as the therianthropic process is calmly conveyed through the eyes of the anonymous narrator. He declares, 'Ahora soy un axolotl' (381) before charting said

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<sup>375</sup> In Evelyn Picon Garfield's *Cortázar por Cortázar* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, 1978), Cortázar asserts: 'Para mí es absolutamente fantástico el final del cuento. Como en realidad la mendiga es el doble de Alina lo que pasa es que hay un intercambio psíquico, el alma de Alina queda en el cuerpo de la mendiga y el alma de la mendiga se apodera del cuerpo de Alina y la que se va triunfante es en realidad la mendiga en el cuerpo de Alina ...', 92.

transmogrification. A stroke of fate had led him to observe the axolotl in the aquarium at Jardín des Plantes and he falls under the spell of these salamanders, incapable of thinking of anything else. Compelled to consult a dictionary, he learns a great deal about these Aztec salamanders who are in perpetual larval form: 'Eran larvas, pero larva quiere decir máscara y también fantasma' (383). As a larva is both a mask and a ghost; something that is not quite crystalized, it encapsulates a mutable, spectral self.

Day after day he visits the axolotl as he intuits a nexus with him and senses that 'algo infinitamente perdido y distante seguía sin embargo uniéndonos' (381). The narrator here is transfixed by the axolotl's lidless golden eyes, which revealed to him the existence of a different life, of an alternative form of vision that seared and provoked dizziness in him. While staring into their eyes he feels as if he is consumed by them in a cannibalism of gold, suggesting that the axolotl can assume the form of any species it desires, even human, as it is in a perpetual state of becoming, but never being. The frontier between self and Other fluctuates as he alternates between referring to the axolotl in first and third person forms. He interprets their stillness as a spiritual contemplation and claims, 'Oscuramente me pareció comprender su voluntad secreta, abolir el espacio y el tiempo con una inmovilidad indiferente' (382). To abolish space and time is to become eternal, infinite - in short, god-like. The narrator imagines that he can sense their thoughts, and that the axolotls, condemned to be slaves to their body, importuned him for help.

We bear testament to the gradual erosion of the narrator's sanity and his self, as, even when apart from them he is unable to escape from their hold on him. It appears almost inevitable that one day as his eyes endeavour to penetrate the mystery of the axolotl through the glass, their spirits exchange place, 'Sin transición, sin sorpresa, 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' (384). Now he is transformed into an axolotl. Distinction is abolished, man

becomes lost in the inner mystery and the eyes of the axolotl have become a portal to the Other side. Mesmerized by the creature, now the narrator observes the world through his vision. If the eyes are the window to the soul, his soul has jumped or been pushed out of this window into the Other. The narrator has ultimately become possessed by the object of his obsession and is literally petrified by his imprisonment.<sup>376</sup> The human visitor, whose body he once occupied, stares at him from outside the tank, trying to reach an understanding of the axolotl, an understanding beyond his grasp.

Notwithstanding the horror of being transmogrified into a salamander, unforeseen rewards become apparent. He is comforted by the presence of the other axolotls, who think as he does: 'O yo estaba también en él, o todos nosotros pensábamos como un hombre, incapaces de expresión, limitados al resplandor dorado de nuestros ojos que miraban la cara del hombre pegada al acuario' (384). In stark contrast with his former isolation he now forms part of a 'figura' or configuration. The telepathic connection which he, in human form, had forged with an individual axolotl now extends to the species. He has become possessed by a collective consciousness. The only fact that strikes him as unusual is that he continues to think as before. He believes that if he thinks like a man it is only because every axolotl thinks like a man. This startling admission that not only he but all axolotls think like a human being has enormous philosophical implications. The only discriminating factor between human and amphibian appears to be our gift of language and all of the advantages which that implies.

Undoubtedly, the narrator's obsession with these remarkable beings has led to this metamorphosis, a transformation somehow desired by the protagonist. Ironically the characteristic which most perturbs the narrator i.e. their aforementioned larval form is what renders the axolotls unique. Axolotls embody the idea of infinite potential as they exhibit

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<sup>376</sup> 'El horror venía -lo supe en el mismo momento- de crearme prisionero en un cuerpo de axolotl, transmigrado a él con mi pensamiento de hombre, enterrado vivo en un axolotl, condenado a moverme lúcidamente entre criaturas insensibles', (384).



neoteny, the retention of juvenile characteristics into adulthood, thus implying that they remain youthful until death. Axolotls have the extraordinary ability to regenerate limbs that have been amputated, an ability exploited by scientific research today. In sharp contrast to a mere human, these attributes would signify a god-like power.<sup>377</sup> Unlike Alina Reyes, is it possible that having been somewhat enriched rather than impoverished by his metamorphosis, this narrator has been spiritually possessed by a superior life form or even a demigod?

Whilst possession by a supernaturally natural being occurs in a serene fashion in 'Axolotl', such tranquillity is absent from the spiritual possession in 'El Ídolo de las Cícladas'. Tactile rather than ocular transference is the conduit through which spiritual possession takes root, transporting us as in 'La Noche Boca Arriba' to the gore of oblatory exsanguination. In 'El Ídolo de las Cícladas' it is a stone fetish which seizes control of *homo sapiens*. An archaeologist named Somoza smuggles into France a Cycladic statue excavated while on expedition in Greece with his colleague, Morand and Morand's girlfriend, Thérèse. After two years of safeguarding it Somoza refuses to relinquish the relic, and it becomes clear that he is infatuated with the artefact. The extreme lengths to which he has taken this obsession arrest our attention. Even when he had unearthed the artifact he had confessed a foolish hope, 'de llegar alguna vez hasta la estatuilla por otras vías que las manos y los ojos y la ciencia' (330). In order to truly become intimate with the statue, to experience it directly, Somoza has doggedly carved a considerable quantity of replicas of the piece. As he wrought each replica, the forms grew to know him intimately; they moulded him and converted him into a sculptor.

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<sup>377</sup> Intriguingly, in light of the reference to the axolotls' 'caras aztecas' the Aztec themselves believed that the present universe and present humanity were created by Quetzalcóatl, The Feathered Serpent, and his twin, Xólotl, the dog-headed god. The axolotl have ostensibly evolved from this demiurge and the human narrator returns to this primordial form.

Undeterred by initial failure to establish primordial contact, Somoza had maintained that his 'obstinado acercamiento llegaría a identificarlo con la estructura inicial, en una superposición que sería más que eso porque ya no hallaría dualidad sino fusión, contacto primordial' (331). Within this primeval fusion, duality would cease to exist – everything would be united into a whole. Somoza asserts that he had finally attained this goal forty eight hours before Morand's final visit, during the night of the June solstice. Midsummer's night or the night of the June solstice was traditionally a time pulsating with magic, when the veil which separated the natural world from the supernatural world was at its flimsiest. It is a sacred time when time itself can be abolished. For Morand this prehistoric statue represents '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' (333). The idol had provoked terror in prehistoric rites and now it seeks to do likewise in the sacred time of Midsummer.

Once Somoza believes that he has forged a connection with the Other, the numen controlling the artefact, he realizes where he had been mistaken: 'Siempre sentí que la piel estaba todavía en contacto con lo otro. Pero había que desandar cinco mil años de caminos equivocados' (333). Echoing Horacio, he contends that it is necessary to undo the damage wrought by five millennia of logic and reasoning in order to regress to the purity of unadulterated, visceral experience. He places one hand on the statue's chest and stomach while, 'La otra acariciaba el cuello, subía hasta la boca ausente de la estatua, y 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' (333). He channels the voice of the spirit with which he believes to have forged contact, a spirit which demands sacrifice. His incantations help to bring forth its spirit. Somoza's caressing of the statue calls to mind the myth of Pygmalion, the sculptor who fell in love with his own statue and had it brought to life by Venus.

Foolishly Morand attributes Somoza's unhinged behaviour to his putative jealousy over Thérèse, unaware that like Pygmalion, Somoza no longer cares about mortal women.

When quizzed as to the nature of the aforementioned sacrifice, Somoza explains that it is the sacred unification. This union evokes the double flute of the statuette they had seen in the museum in Athens, with the sound of life on the left counterpointing the sound of discord on the right. Once the union between the two components or sacrifice is consummated, the flautists stop blowing in the pipe on the right a 'y sólo se escuchará el silbido de la vida nueva que bebe la sangre derramada. Y los flautistas se llenarán la boca de sangre y la soplarán por la caña de la izquierda, y yo untaré de sangre su cara, ves, así, y le asomarán los ojos y la boca bajo la sangre' (334). The ceremony which unleashes the spirit and its ensuing bloodshed in the creation and destruction of life, concludes with the smearing of blood on the face.

In an interlude of macabre humour, Somoza offers a condemned Morand whiskey. When Morand enquires as to why he is abstaining from alcohol, Somoza asserts that he has to fast before the sacrifice. A confused and naive Morand laments, 'Una lástima... No me gusta nada beber solo. ¿Qué sacrificio?' (333) Morand then slays Somoza in self-defence. Initially horrified by his own brutality, Morand is still rational. His hands become stained by the blood that flowed over the face and hair of the dead man and physical contact with the sacrifice triggers a startling metamorphosis in him. For Morand, Somoza is now rendered anonymous, reduced to the sacrificed one. The axe 'estaba profundamente hundida en la cabeza del sacrificado, y Morand la tomó sopesándola entre las manos pegajosas' (335). He is now possessed by the spirit of the Haghessa. The purported sacrificial victim has been transformed into the executioner as his girlfriend's blood is destined to be offered. Upon hearing her taxi approach, he hears the sound of the mysterious flutes and licks the axe in anticipation of the immolation (335). Man's baser instincts emerge once the spirit of the Haghessa has been fully

awoken. Although Morand had desired possession, Somoza is an unwilling participant in these rituals, contaminated and bewitched by the blood spilled. The ferocious cycle recommences.

A further grotesque rubicon is crossed with Cortázar's dramatic deviation into cannibalism, 'Las Ménades'. Once again questions which suggest themselves are : who is spiritually possessed, by what and, perhaps more crucially, how? Briefly, 'Las Ménades' exposes the manner in which a modern day, ostensibly conventional Argentine audience dismembers the beloved conductor of the Teatro de Colón orchestra prior to gorging on his flesh. The title of 'Las Ménades' gives us a clear indication as to the supernatural forces at work. The Maenads were devotees of the aforementioned Greek god, Dionysus, god of wine, ecstasy, epiphany and champion of the unconventional.<sup>378</sup> Raucous rites associated with Dionysus, were meant to temporarily free celebrants' souls from their terrestrial bodies, allowing them a tantalizing glimpse of what they could experience in the afterlife.<sup>379</sup> By eating Dionysus's body and drinking his blood, the celebrants became possessed by Dionysus. In addition to having reared Dionysus, the Maenads are also renowned for having torn to shreds Orpheus, who spurned their advances. Orpheus was the arch musician who could charm even beasts with his musical prowess. The present story draws from the myths of both Dionysus and Orpheus. The conductor like Orpheus rebuffs the audience and his flesh is devoured in a similar manner to those who symbolically ate the flesh of Dionysus. Led by a woman clad in red, possessed by the very spirit of music which bewitches them, these purported pillars of the community willingly lose themselves in a frenzy.

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<sup>378</sup> Oranje, *Euripides Bacchae: The Play and Its Audience*, 100.

<sup>379</sup> The rituals frequently culminated in an act called 'sparagmos', the tearing apart of a bull (the symbol of Dionysus) with their bare hands prior to eating its raw flesh.

In his article “‘Las Ménades’ de Julio Cortázar: mito clásico y recreación literaria”,<sup>380</sup> Patricio Goyalde Palacios describes the dionysian ritual practices which were designed to provoke a state of trance - ‘la manía - en los adeptos que celebraban los misterios, los cuales eran vividos como una toma de posesión por el dios y una comunicación extática con él’.<sup>381</sup> Interestingly, Goyalde Palacios portrays the story as a ritual of transformation of the attendees, like the metamorphosis of Apollonian tranquility into Dionysian hysteria.<sup>382</sup> He contends that in ‘Las Ménades’ Cortázar juxtaposes the traditions of Dionysus and Apollo and underlines the need to complement the Apollonian with the Dionysian.<sup>383</sup>

The concert arrests our attention because it celebrates the conductor’s silver anniversary as conductor and more importantly his fifth anniversary as conductor in that provincial town. Initially his attempts at broadening the town’s cultural horizons had met with resistance. However, eventually, given his ability to sniff out a good line-up agreeable to their tastes, he had won them over. He quenches a thirst of which they had hitherto been unaware, so much so that he becomes their idol, ‘al final lo ovacionaron por cualquier cosa, por solo verlo, como ahora que su entrada estaba provocando un entusiasmo fuera de lo común’ (318). Like a lightning conductor which literally draws power towards it, he attracts their energy. Once converted, his followers are slavishly devoted to him, and the narrator is amused by La Señora de Jonatán’s exultations: ‘Ahí tiene, ahí tiene a un hombre que ha conseguido lo que pocos. No sólo ha formado una orquesta sino un público. ¿No es admirable?’ (318). The public view themselves as part of his musical ensemble and long for

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<sup>380</sup> Patricio Goyalde Palacios “‘Las Ménades’ de Julio Cortázar: mito clásico y recreación literaria’ *Faventia* 2001: Vol.: 23 Núm.2. 35-42.

<sup>381</sup> Goyalde Palacios “‘Las Ménades’ de Julio Cortázar: mito clásico y recreación literaria’, 36-37.

<sup>382</sup> For Goyalde Palacios cannibalism here as a primitive practice which harks back to prehistoric times before civilization had straitjacketed mankind and is ‘una expresión de un estado salvaje hacia el que el dionisismo se orienta, de una forma de bestialidad que la ciudad rechaza’.

<sup>383</sup> ‘con el afán de cuestionar la preeminencia del segundo, de interrogar sobre una “normalidad” que se da por supuesta’ *Ibid.*

recognition. As La Señora de Jonatán says, 'A veces pienso que debería dirigir mirando hacia la sala, porque también nosotros somos un poco sus músicos' (318). This approach would be in keeping with Classical ideas regarding music and musicians. As Calvin M. Bower explains,

In the closing chapter of the first book, Boethius elaborated his threefold division of those who might be named musicians: instrumentalists (or performers), poets (or composers), and those who adjudicate performers and composers; only the last class is a true musician, according to Boethius, for only this class is concerned with knowing, through reason, the fundamental essences which determine the value of performances and compositions.<sup>384</sup>

In light of the fact that it is his audience who adjudicates the performance, by Boethius's standards its members are the true musicians.

This evening's program is in fact a departure from the habitual owing to the fact that the audience has chosen it themselves; perhaps believing that tonight is the night he will acknowledge them. Instead he turns his back to them as always - hell hath no fury as an audience scorned. Indeed the selection of music is of particular significance, comprising Mendelssohn's 'A Midsummer's Night's Dream', Strauss's 'Don Juan', Debussy's 'La Mer' and Beethoven's 'Fifth Symphony'. To the narrator this commingling of music is 'contra todos los mandatos humanos y divinos' (317). Smugly, he speculates on the audience's reaction to the selected pieces: 'Con Mendelssohn se pondrían cómodos, después el Don Juan generoso y redondo, con tonaditas silbables' (317). Later their egos would be massaged by Debussy, as his music is suitable only for the select few: 'Debussy los haría sentirse artistas, porque no cualquiera entiende su música' (317). The pièce de resistance would be Beethoven's knock of destiny at the door, his 'Fifth Symphony'.

The first work performed, Mendelssohn's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', based on Shakespeare's play of the same name, paints the adventures of lovers and actors, who are

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<sup>384</sup> *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* Edited by Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 146.

manipulated by fairies, at Midsummer, a time of magic. From the beginning the music appears to metaphorically transform some of the female audience members into chickens. At the interval the narrator meets an acquaintance, the appropriately named, Dr Epifanía and his daughters who are flushed with excitement. Dr Epifanía's daughter proclaims breathlessly, 'el scherzo estaba tocado como por manos de hadas' (318) resonating with Cayo Rodríguez's claims: 'en vez de una orquesta son como susurros de voces de duendes' (319). As with Shakespeare's play, fairy-dust appears to be blinding and mesmerizing the audience. Unimpressed the narrator feels that the conductor's performance is below par.

Mendelssohn is followed by Strauss's Don Juan, the prototype of licentiousness. Throughout the concert the audience appears to be both illuminated and energized by the music. Infernal heat is produced by both their enthusiastic appreciation of the Maestro and the mutual frenzy into which they are whipped. Such is the fervour with which they applaud the Maestro that the narrator suspects that somebody is secretly carrying out an experiment on the concert goers. It is intriguing that similar to Juan in *El Examen*, the narrator is initially irked by the audience's excessive applause which, similar to the spinning of the earth's magnetic core, feeds off its own momentum. The narrator emphasizes the bonding of the crowd as they mellow towards one another, a loss of individuality which, as mentioned, forms part of the objectives of the Dionysian rites. Dehumanized they start to resemble animals, birds, insects and even lobsters.

During the interval the narrator notices a coterie of men flanking the woman clad in red. These men with black suits evoke a murder of ravens: 'daban la impresión de bandadas de cuervos; algunas linternas eléctricas se encendían y apagaban, los melómanos provistos de partituras ensayaban sus métodos de iluminación' (320). These melomaniacs or music lovers read the scores to the concert and flash on and off their lamps as if emulating the beat of the music using long and short bursts of illumination, somewhat redolent of Morse code.

Synaesthesia may equally be suggested by this substitution of light for music as the music performed here is not simply acoustic rather it is also a visual phenomena. When the interval concludes the narrator remarks on the dimming of the chandelier thus: 'Me pareció curiosa esa sustitución progresiva de la luz por el ruido, y cómo uno de mis sentidos entraba en juego justamente cuando el otro se daba al descanso' (320). The question which springs to mind is: can we see music in the same way that we can see light? The acoustician Ernst Chladni (1756-1827) cleverly demonstrated ways to make sound waves generate visible structures. He showed how patterns were created by drawing a violin bow across plates covered in sand.<sup>385</sup> In short, it is possible to see music and the ripples of its effects, which would imply that music is as much a visual phenomenon as an acoustic one.

It is fascinating that the ocular rather than the sonic is continually emphasized in a concert, not just in this short story but in many of Cortázar's works. A curious parallel emerges between Clara's reaction to the blind violinist in *El Examen* and the present narrator's attitude towards the blind man. Clara feels 'illuminated' by the violinist's blindness whilst this narrator longs to identify with the stoic aloofness of the blind man who evokes Tiresias, the blind prophet. This blind man finds the performance sadly lacking. The fairy dust which was apparently sprinkled into the eyes of the audience in the enactment of Mendelssohn's 'Midsummer night's dream' coupled with the aforementioned visual aspect to music may explain why the blindman remains inured to its influence.

From the erotic hedonism of 'Don Juan' we are transported to the raw, unbridled power of the sea. Giving free rein to the imagination, Debussy's 'La Mer' evokes the sea, the invisible sentiments of nature. 'La Mer' marks a notable change in the narrator's perspective on proceedings. With his cynicism eroded, even the narrator becomes swept away by the tide

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<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.



of the last movement, 'Yo mismo me dejé atrapar por el último movimiento, con sus fragores y sus inmensos vaivenes sonoros, y aplaudí hasta que me dolieron las manos' (321). La señora de Jonatán was reduced to tears and whispered, 'Es tan inefable ... Tan increíblemente inefable' (321). Equally moved, the infamous woman in red sprints towards the conductor and practically prostrates herself at his feet, as if worshipping a holy man or deity.

The ineffable nature of 'La Mer' primes the audience for the sublime experience that is to follow. A dam bursts with the performance of Beethoven's legendary 'Fifth Symphony'. What can be said about the piece that has not been said? With its dark, ominous tones it epitomizes fear, infinite yearning and the sublime<sup>386</sup>, the 'Fifth Symphony' represents a flash of insight into the Absolute. The crackle of lightning which epitomizes the work's leitmotif is set to ignite an already electric atmosphere. The narrator alludes to 'el gran masaje vibratorio beethoveniano, así llama el destino a la puerta, la V de la victoria, el sordo genial' (317).<sup>387</sup> Legend has it that when questioned about the famous unison opening, Beethoven replied: 'Thus Fate pounds at the portal' ('So pocht das Schicksal an die Pforte').<sup>388</sup> Even if the anecdote is apocryphal, it conveys the majesty of the opening bars. The extensive description afforded to the performance of the Fifth Symphony in 'Las Ménades' is quite extraordinary, particularly when juxtaposed with the brief depiction of the three preceding compositions. In essence the narrative pattern or rhythm evokes the 'short', 'short', 'short', 'long' or 'dot', 'dot', 'dot', 'dash' quintessential musical motif of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. It is a common misconception that the Fifth Symphony begins with these thunderous notes, whereas

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<sup>386</sup> For a fuller discussion of the 'infinite sublime' nature of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony please see Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought- listening to the symphony in the age of Beethoven* (New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 2006), 45 where Bonds states: 'The essential qualities of the sublime were vastness of scope, unpredictability, and a capacity to overwhelm the senses. Unlike the beautiful (with which it was invariably contrasted), the sublime was perceived to elicit reactions of fear and pain rather than pleasure'.

<sup>387</sup> The reference to 'V for Victory' alludes to Morse code as the first four notes represent the letter V (dot, dot, dot, dash), a letter which was used as a symbol for victory by the British Forces in World War II. It is important to add that the code could not have been embedded into Beethoven's composition intentionally, as the piece was composed decades before the invention of the Morse code.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

in fact it opens with a silence. The four notes are then followed by a quivering chill of silence which creates further suspense. Has the piece finished as quickly as it began or will the orchestra continue to play? The interstitial silences serve to heighten the motif's intensity.

Although the narrator had endeavoured to emulate the blind man by keeping his eyes closed, his resolution cracks when Beethoven's 'Fifth Symphony' explodes in his ears with the force of a bulldozer. Now he too has been spellbound by the music and views the Maestro as the others do. After the first movement, the second movement resonates in a room which gave the impression 'de estar incendiado pero con un incendio que fuera invisible y frío, que quemara de dentro afuera' (322). Just as radiation is an invisible fire which burns from the inside out, they too are being irradiated by the music, sizzled by the Sublime. The ensemble carries on undaunted when a young girl near the narrator shrieks in ecstasy, marking the veritable climax of the performance: 'su convulsión me sorprendió ... Un grito seco y breve como de espasmo amoroso o de histeria' (322). Analogous to the portrayal of the concert hall as a hysterical woman or 'histerica', the girl's screams represent the entire theatre crystallizing into one woman. In like manner as the music reaches a climax we are told of 'ese jadeo de amor que venía sosteniendo el cuerpo masculino de la orquesta con la enorme hembra de la sala entregada' (323). The connotations are clear. Sexual congress of a supernatural kind has been consummated between the audience and the orchestra. Beethoven's 'Fifth' is indeed 'El éxtasis de la tragedia'(322), as La Señora de Jonatán perspicaciously predicted.

As Beethoven's opus concludes, 'saltaban los primeros grandes acordes finales desencadenados por el Maestro con espléndida sequedad, como masas escultóricas surgiendo de una sola vez, altas columnas blancas y verdes, un Karnak de sonido' (323). Beethoven's music is compared to a Karnak of sound, whose final chords spring up like colossal pillars. This calls to mind Goethe's allusion to architecture as 'crystalized music' given that here it

feels as if the music forms a temple of sound. The Maestro assumes the air of a matador, thrusting his baton into the wall of sound and doubles over, drained of all life, 'como si el aire vibrante lo hubiese corneado con el impulso final' (323). The throngs surge forward to embrace the musicians and confusion reigns. Even La Señora de Jonatán displays extraordinary agility as she vaults toward the Maestro. The woman in red grasps his ankle and he struggles to break free. Up until this juncture the narrator had viewed the proceedings with a kind of 'espanto lúdico' (324) but now he runs to the stage where the crowd has surrounded the violinists and divested them of their instruments, crushing them like cockroaches, before they disappear.

We surmise that the conductor and possibly his musicians have been devoured in this frenzy and the spectacle of women with bloodstained handkerchiefs, as well as the now dishevelled woman in red licking her lips suggestively, confirm our suspicion: 'se pasaba la lengua por los labios, lenta y golosamente se pasaba la lengua por los labios que sonreían' (326). The combination of syntax, the euphony of liquid 'l' sounds and repetition used convey the notion of hypnosis, consolidating the notion that the narrator is also under a spell. The narrator betrays an ambivalent attitude towards the proceedings and does nothing to stop the orgy of violence. Even the sight of the blind man, whose dignity had previously inspired him, now flailing on the ground, trying to drag himself to safety, fails to move him. He is stupefied by his own complacency and the barbaric action is neither condoned nor overtly condemned.

How could this wantonly cruel act unfold? To a certain extent, the four pieces of music chosen act as a catalyst, a molotov cocktail of emotion as 'A Midsummer's Night's Dream', 'Don Juan', 'La Mer' and Beethoven's 'Fifth Symphony' embody magic, lust, the raw force of nature and a glimpse of the Absolute or the Ineffable. The program, although eclectic and potent is probably not unprecedented; somewhere the same program must have

been performed in the same order without triggering anthropophagy. What renders this particular concert so singular?

Coupled with the cumulative impact of the music performed, it is expedient to look at the setting of the concert, in order to better understand the extraordinary events. The theatre reveals whimsical acoustic quirks, such as 'instrumentos dan la impresión de apartarse de la orquesta, flotar en el aire, y es así como una flauta puede ponerse a sonar a tres metros de uno mientras el resto continúa correctamente en la escena, lo cual será pintoresco pero muy poco agradable' (317). Spectral flutes which appear to be playing three metres apart from the orchestra in which they are located may be picturesque but somewhat disturbing. Magic seeps through the auditorium's very kernel. The acoustic idiosyncrasy alluded to here calls to mind sacred architecture erected by the Dionysiac Builders who believed it possible to provoke distinct emotional reactions such as awe in the onlooker through their edifices, which were deemed 'sermons in stone.' For instance, in one chamber they were able to amplify the voice of the priest causing the very room to vibrate, whilst in another they were able to soften the voice, making it appear as if supernatural forces were at work.<sup>389</sup> The relationship between music and its setting is one that has surfaced throughout Cortázar's works. As discussed, in *Rayuela*, Ossip compares Oliveira's spooky apartment to the Ear of Dionysus, a cave which possesses amazing acoustical properties. In the Teatro Colón the fact music can liberate itself from its instruments parallels the manner in which society's inhibitions are flung to one side by the audience. A Karnak of sound sprouts from the Beethoven piece performed. This is no ordinary auditorium.

One of the most startling if not bewildering aspects to the story is the apparent ease and speed at which the audience reverts to normality. How could this aberration appear so

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<sup>389</sup> Hall *The Secret Teachings Of All Ages*, 174.

natural? Admittedly in nature the black widow who eats its mate after conjugation is a precedent for cannibalism. Interestingly, the female of this species is black with an hourglass-shaped red mark on the underside of the abdomen, and, it could be posited that the conglomeration of the notorious woman in red flanked by the men in black actually evokes the appearance of a colossal black widow spider. Originally the narrator had felt estranged from the audience and he implies that they have insect-like attributes as he was impelled to 'mirar a esa gente desde fuera, a lo entomólogo' (320). As apogee to this particular fertility rite, the throng ingests the conductor, a conductor who like Orpheus could charm beasts with music. Nonetheless despite intimations of therianthropism, the audience members do not view themselves in animalistic terms. If anything, they yearn to approximate the superhuman or the divine.

Far from exorcising an occupying spirit, they wish to become possessed or dominated by it. Do they believe that by consuming the conductor that they are somehow possessing or devouring Orpheus or even the god of music, Dionysus? How can eating the flesh and imbibing the blood of their idol sacralize or even deify them? This begs the question: is what they are doing so different from receiving the Eucharist at Catholic Mass where the transubstantiation of the host<sup>390</sup> entails the consumption of the body and blood of Christ? For melomaniacs such as Johnny Carter, the Madrigal ensemble of 'Clone', Celina from 'Las Puertas del Cielo' and this audience in 'Las Ménades', music, quite simply, is God. Perhaps this provincial audience feels that it has become sacralized by devouring this musician, whether he embodies Orpheus, Dionysus or the spirit of music itself, or indeed a fusion of all possible interpretations, natural or supernatural. As individuals they appear quite normal. But, bolstered by each other's frenzy, the individuals metamorphose into one entity, and yield to

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<sup>390</sup> Transubstantiation is the Roman Catholic doctrine that the whole substance of the bread and the wine changes into the substance of the body and blood of Christ when consecrated in the Eucharist.

latent unbridled urges in their orgy of cannibalism. Whether this was their initial intention prior to attending the concert remains a mystery. Nevertheless, the crux is that the audience members allow themselves to be spiritually possessed simply because they want to be controlled, in a bid to form part of something greater than themselves, to transcend their sublunar limits.

In *El Examen* Clara and Andrés discussed a dimension where music is a form of life: ‘Puede concebirse una dimensión (en otro planeta, por ejemplo,) donde lo que aquí llamamos música sea una forma de vida’ (290). If music is in fact a life form, Andrés’s portrayal of Music as a jealous mistress, who spiritually possesses musicians, would certainly resonate with the depiction of Music in ‘Las Ménades’. If music is capable of possessing man, then it is unsurprising that man can psychically control music. It is by chance that the narrator in ‘Manuscrito hallado junto a una mano’<sup>391</sup> discovers his ability to sabotage musical performances when he simply thinks of his aunt. It appears extraordinary that something as absurd as reflecting on a family member should provoke such a pronounced effect by disrupting music, but is it possible that thoughts, which we have seen emit ‘silent explosions, could unleash an invisible chain reaction with a so-called ‘butterfly effect’ and that each of us is a ticking telepathic time-bomb?

The narrator experiments with his ability to sabotage music psychokinetically and blackmails violinists that he will thwart their concerts unless they pay him handsomely. Obsessively he flits around the world in aeroplanes, which he designates ‘violins of space’. Greedily the saboteur undertakes ‘collateral’ experiments to expand his enterprise. Whilst the cello reacts to the memory of his aunt, the harp and the guitar are impervious to its effects. It appears that only stringed instruments which use a bow fall prey to his telekinesis, but it is

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<sup>391</sup> ‘Manuscrito hallado junto a una mano’ was discovered posthumously and first published as part of *Papeles Inesperados* in 2009.

not quite as simple as that. In the course of his experimentation he discovers that he can psychically affect non-musical objects. The one caveat is that this power, ‘sólo se ejerce en aquellas cosas que guardan alguna analogía -por absurda que parezca- con los violines’.<sup>392</sup> A parallel between music and the selected object is key to our understanding of this power. If he thinks of his aunt while observing a swallow in flight, ‘es fatal que ésta gire en redondo, pierda por un instante el rumbo, y lo recobre después de un esfuerzo’ (81). The swallow’s trajectory is disrupted as if the creature were a violin. Let us consider why this should be so. Outside of the musical connection between bird and instrument, when we look at a violin in frenzied action, it does resemble a bird in full flight, with the bow traversing the body like wings. The analogy or ‘secret affinity’ also applies to a street artist whom the protagonist observes while thinking of his aunt. The unfortunate artist rapidly sketches on the pavement ‘con líricos vaivenes de la mano. La carbonilla se le hizo polvo entre los dedos, y me costó disimular la risa ante su cara estupefacta. Pero más allá de esas secretas afinidades ...’ (81).

On a plane bound for Istanbul the narrator carelessly allows an uninvited thought to sneak in: ‘Me imagino que a pesar de su experiencia, el piloto debe estar un poco crispado, con las maferradas al timó. Sí, era un sombrero rosa con volados, a mi tía le quedaba tan ...’ (81). This aposiopesis or gap at the end of the sentence signals the void into which he is drawn, the destruction of the plane or so-called ‘violin of space’ when he thinks the forbidden thought. The law of resonance which the narrator had discovered in his experimentation has triggered his own demise. Although while flying he had often thought about thinking about his aunt, this was the first (and last) unmediated thought about his aunt on a plane. Taking our cue from Persio who conjectures the existence of antimusic or an antiguitar, we could speculate that its antiviolin counterpart is embodied by the protagonist here. The corresponding ‘violin de espacio’ has become an agent of death, punishing those who would

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<sup>392</sup> Julio Cortázar, *Papeles Inesperados* (México: Alfaguara, 2009), 80.

annihilate music, through the destruction of its own 'celestial violin'. 'Manuscrito hallado junto a una mano' explores the resonance between a violin and a variety of disparate objects such as an aeroplane or a swallow. We are reminded of the occult philosophy espoused by Henry Cornelius Agrippa which conjectures that the universe is articulated by a lattice of 'occulted' correspondences.<sup>393</sup> Like a primary cause, Music's influence may be palpable in areas with no visible connection to musical performance. As we have seen, it seeps into the minds of people, controlling their thoughts and actions.

Cortázar's treatment of spiritual possession explores the phenomenon in its many distinct forms and pushes the envelope in his charting thereof. Anagrams which resemble magic incantations, the penetrating act of visual perception, obsessive touching and recarving of the fetish, not to mention a highly-charged musical performance all comprise conduits towards becoming the Other. With 'Lejana' the transfer of control over self transpires between human and human, with 'Axolotl' it is between salamander and human, for 'El ídolo de las Cícladas' the transfer is from numen to human and with respect to 'Las Ménades' it proceeds from the spirit of music to human. In each case there is a level of compliance on the part of the possessed, a complicity which would contravene our expectations of this aberration. The victor dominates in order to advance, quite simply because it is able and allowed to do so. As we saw in the novels, ghosts temporarily direct the medium in *Divertimento*, hopscotch acts as a portal for possession in *Rayuela*, and psychic vampirism controls characters in *62: Modelo para armar*. Spiritual possession afforded us enhanced insight into the perspective of the possessed and overlapped substantially with reincarnation.

In many ways, Cortázar has dispelled the generally accepted notions of time, reincarnation and spiritual possession. The image of chronological time being a vampire or

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<sup>393</sup> Godwin, *Music and the occult*, 3.



the notion of Christ being reincarnated as an alien could be deemed provocative. Who would have imagined that gazing into the eyes of a salamander would result in telepathic dispossession of self? Embedded in these three motifs we have witnessed the re-invention of Music as a 'superpower'. Even Einstein never postulated music as a conduit for time travel as was evinced by 'El Perseguidor'. Music raises the dead in 'Las Puertas del Cielo' and embodies a form of evolution in 'Clone'. The unnerving portrayal of Music as a sanguinary tyrant and possessor of souls in both 'Clone' and 'Las Ménades' subverts a common view of music as a wholly benign influence. Within Cortázar's short stories music is reborn as both creator and destroyer of man.

## Conclusion

My initial aim was to provide an outline of Cortázar's deployment of the arcane within his prose. By unravelling and juxtaposing the dizzying array of his arcane influences, the mosaic of their variety and depth reveals itself in his unparalleled literary endeavour. Cortázar said that *Rayuela* contained the philosophy of his short stories<sup>394</sup> but, as we have learned, he explores a wide range of esoteric traditions throughout the bulk of his novels and many of the theories expounded in his other novels also feed into his short stories. We have seen the extent to which dreams, ghosts, rites, astral travelling, mysticism, alchemy, magical incantations, particle physics, neuroscience and psychic vampirism all leave an indelible imprint on his novels. From the appearance of an historical ghost in his earliest novel to increasingly ambiguous depictions of the supernatural, it becomes evident that Cortázar's treatment of the esoteric becomes more nuanced and perhaps more sophisticated over time, arguably too sophisticated in the case of *62: Modelo para armar* which is frequently impenetrable.

In relation to the short stories I have focussed on a trinity of topics, namely time, reincarnation and spiritual possession. I have examined time in all its inconsistencies, both as man's aspiration for eternity and his greatest error ever committed (the invention of the time of clocks). An attempt to rectify this mistake is outlined in 'El Perseguidor' where I have also appraised the variations of, and the prerequisites for, time travel, whether this consists of journeying within the moment or traversing centuries as in 'El Otro Cielo'. I have cast a glance at the myriad possibilities regarding reincarnation and its intimate associate, resurrection. A dichotomy of randomness and predeterminism is palpable throughout.

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<sup>394</sup> 'La filosofía de sus cuentos, una indagación sobre lo que determinó a lo largo de muchos años su materia o su impulso' Cortázar, *La Vuelta al Día en Ochenta Mundos*, 25.

Tellingly a sense of fate and fatalism pervade reincarnation in his short stories; irrespective of the character's actions in this life, he or she is destined to be reborn. Ironically in the case of Christ/Illi, resurrection is followed by reincarnation in an unending cycle. With respect to spiritual possession generally the fundamental questions explored were simply: who was possessed, by what and how? Far from being an uninvited incubus, spiritual possession was frequently elicited and at times resulted in an enriching experience. Cortázar has redefined and re-wrought each of these strands of the arcane in a most extraordinary manner.

Where apposite, within the esoteric elements of his prose I have investigated how our understanding of the esoteric is coloured by the prism of music. In his first novel, *Divertimento*, music predictably does little more than to express emotion. The music of *El Examen* is divided into performance and abstraction, as Music is anthropomorphized as a mistress of man. The music performed, from folk music and tango to classical music, underscores the Carnival atmosphere and the sense that this rite takes place in a time outside of time within this nightmare. In the latter part of *El Examen* Clara and Andrés consider a dimension where music is a form of life. If music is a life form, Andrés's portrayal of Music as a jealous mistress who spiritually possesses and enslaves musicians such as Heifetz the violin-man, would certainly echo with the depiction of Music in Cortázar's short stories, such as 'Clone', 'Las Ménades' and even 'El Perseguidor'. In *Los Premios* Persio conjectures the pure abstraction of celestial music which he hopes can reveal a hidden reality and perhaps even foretell the future.

In *Rayuela* tango assumes a subdued role as its sentimentality is something which Horacio seeks to eschew. Jazz is accorded a privileged and variegated significance. As a universal form of music, superior to language, politics and technology, jazz is a unifying force, music outside of time which means all things to all men. Classical music takes over from jazz as La Maga and Horacio separate and Horacio attends an absurd classical concert

by Berthe Trepát. Horacio believes that this concert holds a hidden message for him, but it may simply symbolize that life itself is absurd. Concert halls appear to be propitious for epiphanies as we have seen in 'Las Ménades' and *El Examen* also. In the 'tomb' where baby Rocamadour lies dying, a quartet is played by Schoenberg, a composer whose music was renowned for being devoid of reference to a key or tonal centre. The protagonist Horacio spends his time in pursuit of a key or centre but with little success. Later, no music can be played in the aforementioned death chamber despite La Maga's best efforts. From jazz to classical music, the tragic opera concludes in death. *62: Modelo para armar* distinguishes itself because of its dearth of music - the deafening and sterile silence following the symphony of *Rayuela*. Cortázar's final novel, *Libro de Manuel* is an exoteric novel - a political blueprint. Whereas *62: Modelo para armar* lacks music, *Libro de Manuel* lacks arcane influences. Music does leave its mark on *Libro de Manuel* as it is used for political propaganda. Andrés listens to an eclectic mix of Gardel, Jelly Roll Morton, free jazz, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis and Joni Mitchell. The piano in Stockhausen's innovative 'Prozession' rouses strong feelings of nostalgia in Andrés, as he muses that the piano epitomizes a bridge between old music and new music, between the past and socialism.

The scant attention afforded to similarities in the execution of the three main musical genres within both the novels and short stories is an imbalance I have tried to redress. Taste in music defines the characters and their prejudices, not to mention their fate. Whilst the tango embodies sentimentality and eroticism in *Los Premios* and 'Las Puertas del Cielo', the classical music of Bach and Gesualdo play a pivotal role in Cortázar's depiction of reincarnation. Classical music contains hidden codes and exerts subtle manipulation. In *El Examen*, Bach's cryptic message may serve as a warning of death, its potency underscored by the disparity of where it is performed, both in the street and at the concert hall. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony forms part of the incongruous cocktail of classical music that whips the

audience into delirium in 'Las Ménades'. In 'Clone' it is also possible that messages below the threshold of conscious perception within Gesualdo's music provoke the characters to act as they do, just as it is possible that they have been reborn through music. In *Rayuela* the lack of key or centre in Schoenberg's music is a subtle cipher related to Horacio's enigmatic quest while, as alluded to, the classical cacophony inflicted on the audience by Berthe Trepát could mask a hidden reality beyond our ken. Jazz encapsulates immortality, unity and the vital force itself in *Rayuela* whilst for Johnny Carter in 'El Perseguidor' it opens up a conduit to time travel and epitomizes the eternity of the moment. Along with double-time, we have seen that jazz's concept of swing allows not only the musician to speed up and slow down time, but is used by Cortázar to determine the tempo of his short stories.<sup>395</sup>

Indeed upon surveying the esoteric themes coupled with music, we see that Cortázar has rewritten the script or score of music, both by performing it and also by redefining it. In 'El Perseguidor' a considerable proportion of Johnny's speech patterns conjure up jazz. The pure musicality of Johnny's language radiates throughout, as certain phrases ebb away like a soft flowing melody. His abrupt change of sentence structure, coupled with the fragmentation of his utterances evokes the jaggedness and syncopation which characterize jazz. He literally recreates jazz through language. Furthermore, as discussed, according to Frances Buil, in 'Clone' Cortázar uses Bach's favoured techniques of composition, namely the fugue, the canon, counterpoint and polyphony.<sup>396</sup> As adverted, the mystery of 'Clone' may be that it is not really a short story, but rather a musical composition disguised as prose. Music is no longer tied to sound; like the occult itself it comprises a network of correspondences and analogies, as we have seen within 'Manuscrito hallado junto a una mano', not to mention the

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<sup>395</sup> Prego Gadea, *La fascinación de las palabras*, 281-282.

<sup>396</sup> According to Buil in 'Cortázar, ou l'œuvre d'un compositeur Analyse du conte "Clone"', 'Il va utiliser les techniques de composition de Bach, à savoir la fugue, le canon, le contrepoint et la polyphonie. "Clone" devient, alors, un véritable travail d'intertextualité et de transposition.'

hidden hyperreality of synaesthetic perception which suffuses the texts. Within the short stories in particular we have witnessed that Music is simultaneously creator and destroyer of man and can equally represent heaven and an eternally recurring hell. In both his novels and short stories music provides a potential key to the path of confusion which is the Unknown and Unknowable. In short, the Ultimate Supreme Being of Cortázar's universe, if one exists, may indeed be Music.

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