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Rereading Cortázar's *Hopscotch* through Joyce's *Ulysses*

by Dr Patricia Novillo-Corvalán

In 1968 a distinguished group of writers, critics, and translators organised a symposium in post-revolutionary Cuba in an attempt to assess the colossal impact that Julio Cortázar's groundbreaking novel *Rayuela* (1963) (*Hopscotch*; 1966) had had in the Latin American literary arena.¹ If the rationale behind the forum was to underline the uniqueness and innovativeness of a work that had shaken the foundations of Latin American literature, then the speakers soon realised that Cortázar's masterpiece could only be approached, ironically, from the perspective of an even greater revolutionary work, James Joyce's *Ulysses*. While Cortázar's *Hopscotch* remained at the heart of the literary debate, the haunting figure of Joyce became a ubiquitous and inescapable ghostly presence that materialised, time and again, in the eloquent and dazzling performances of the speakers. The comparison of *Hopscotch* with Modernism's most revered monument laid the ground for a vigorous debate that would have a long-lasting effect on ensuing critical insights of *Hopscotch*.² How, then, was the phantom of Joyce summoned in a symposium in Havana dedicated to pay tribute to the path-breaking novel of an Argentine author? The panel, constituted by the Cuban writers Simo, Lezama Lima, and Fernández Retamar underlined, above all, Cortázar's experimental use of the Spanish language; invention of an infinite work; transgression and parody of previous novelistic traditions; disintegration of linear models of reading; creation of a polyglot,

multilayered textual labyrinth; use of the variant of Spanish spoken in the River Plate area; and his artistic condition as émigré from his native Argentina.³ Undoubtedly, all these intricate pathways, or crossroads, led them to the aesthetic of Joyce's art. 'I have the impression that *Hopscotch* [...]', affirmed Fernández Retamar, 'is for Latin Americans what *Ulysses* is for writers of the English language'.⁴ Simo energetically agreed and Lezama Lima — Latin America's other true heir of Joyce⁵ — stated that: 'Joyce's legacy is unique, and without his work, it is likely that this book [*Rayuela*] would not have existed'.⁶ Nevertheless, he also remarked that a significant temporal gulf of forty-one years stood between the publication of *Ulysses* (1922) and *Rayuela* (1963). Consequently, Lezama Lima implied that any comparison of both works must take into account their specific historical, cultural, and literary contexts, as well as their overall impact in twentieth-century literature. These concerns prompt important questions such as: how did Joyce's aesthetic penetrate through Latin American literature, especially Argentina? How is Joyce's iconic image as the experimental artificer of intricate verbal labyrinths absorbed into the fabric of *Hopscotch*? Is Cortázar's conception of newness built upon Joyce's own linguistic and literary revolution? And, finally, does Cortázar offer a reinvigorated version of his Irish predecessor, shifting his revolutionary legacy across history, culture, and language in an attempt to forge a New Novel, Anti-Novel, or Ulysean Novel?

This article explores the complex presence of James Joyce in Cortázar's *Hopscotch*. It begins with an overview of the reception of Joyce in Argentina from Borges to Cortázar, as it seeks to reveal a Joycean topography that developed a variety of critical and creative responses. It then focuses on Cortázar's radical rupture with conventional novelistic traditions and his aspiration to create an experimental novel that privileged a non-linear reading pattern, violated the morphological and orthographical norms of the Spanish language, and parodied previous narrative discourses. The article will then reveal the various Joycean echoes that resonate throughout *Hopscotch*. It will conclude with an assessment of the place of *Hopscotch* in twentieth-century literature and will question

whether its groundbreaking, revolutionary quality is still current for a twenty-first century readership.

The *Ulysses* of Argentina

Lezama Lima's contention about the historical distance between *Ulysses* and *Hopscotch* highlights, to a certain extent, the belated appearance of Cortázar's novel; the tardiness of his reaction to the most experimental European artistic currents, particularly as *Hopscotch* also assimilated the French surrealist tradition. Yet Cortázar's overdue novel stands as the result of a long ripening period, a vital gestational stage that filled itself with the nourishing seeds of his predecessors. For Lezama Lima, then, *Hopscotch* remains one of Latin America's foremost representatives of the 'Joycean novel',⁷ a tradition which goes back to his Argentine forerunner, the poet, playwright, and novelist Leopoldo Marechal, whose urban novel *Adán Buenosayres* (1948) is widely considered to be the first novel in the Spanish language deeply indebted to *Ulysses*. At the same time, the root of this rising Joycean growth in Latin America is embedded in the work of Jorge Luis Borges. Indeed, in 1925 the youthful Borges published a pioneering review of *Ulysses* and a fragmentary translation of 'Penelope' in the Buenos Aires avant-garde review *Proa* [*Prow*]. In the late 1930s a more mature Borges, on his way to becoming the modern master of the compressed, metaphysical *ficción*, continued and developed his dissemination of Joyce's works with ensuing reviews of *Work in Progress* and *Finnegans Wake*, as well as a fascinating miscellany of papers on Joyce's life and works which appeared in the cultural and artistic journal *Sur* [*South*] and the mass-marketed, à la mode women's magazine *El Hogar* [*Home*].⁸ It is thus possible to uncover a Joycean trajectory, a map that traces the route of *Ulysses* in Argentina: from Borges's early reception to the first complete translation of *Ulysses* into Spanish by J. Salas Subirat (1945) onto Leopoldo Marechal's *Adán Buenosayres* and its final apotheosis in Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (1963).⁹

The fascinating Joycean curve drawn by this influential group of writers is poised, however, between two opposite gestures: the desire to offer

an Argentine résumé of *Ulysses* (Borges) and the ambition to write an epic of the Argentine Republic based on the Irish model introduced by Joyce (Salas Subirat, Marechal, Cortázar). Yet all these writers shared a single common trait, they aspired to do for their peripheral Buenos Aires, and hence the regional variant of Spanish spoken in the River Plate area, what Joyce had done for his native Dublin and Hiberno-English. In particular, Salas Subirat, Marechal, and Cortázar were attracted to the ground-breaking edge of *Ulysses* as they aspired to inject Latin American fiction with an equally innovative force. Borges's pioneering reception of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* had given them an insight into Joyce's technique of interior monologue, his unprecedented linguistic experimentation, exploration of the human body, rewriting of Homer's *Odyssey*, and painstaking depiction of the city of Dublin. In this way, they searched in Joyce's kaleidoscopic art for the patterns they could then project onto their own creative endeavours. It must be underlined, nevertheless, that Borges had already peeped at the mirror of Joyce's art with a mixture of wonder and horror as he progressively distanced himself from the epic scale of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in an attempt to offer his aesthetic of brevity versus Joyce's gargantuan dimensions. If Borges gifted Hispanic audiences with a fragmentary translation of the last two pages of 'Penelope', Salas Subirat magnified Borges's small-scale task in his complete translation of *Ulysses* into Spanish, and Marechal by transplanting Joyce, Homer, and Dante onto the streets of Buenos Aires. For Cortázar, therefore, the Joycean seeds had already been planted, and *Hopscotch* would bear the final blooming and booming of this momentous period in Latin American literature. As Gerald Martin puts it: 'The process of "Ulyssean" exploration began in the 1920s, not the 1960s, and the "boom" celebrated an arrival, not a departure'.¹⁰

A Daring Novelistic Leap

When *Hopscotch* was published in 1963 it caused an unprecedented stir in the field of Latin American literature. The Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa summarised its powerful impact as 'seismic',¹¹ while the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes deemed it appropriate to quote the

verdict of the influential American magazine, *The New Republic*: ‘The most powerful encyclopaedia of emotions and visions to emerge from the postwar generation of international writers’,¹² and, in Lezama Lima’s eyes: ‘*Hopscotch* has known how to destroy a space to create another space, decapitate time so that time can hold a new head’.¹³ The space–time literary revolution introduced by Cortázar is centred on a number of important features. The most prominent of these lies in the celebrated ‘Table of Instructions’, which appears on the first page of the book and, in a defiant gesture, warns the reader that: ‘In its own way, this book consists of many books, but two books above all’.¹⁴ ‘The first book,’ it explains, ‘can be read in a normal fashion and it ends with chapter 56, at the close of which there are three garish little stars which stand for the words *The End*’. ‘The second book,’ it continues, ‘should be read by beginning with chapter 73 and then following the sequence indicated at the end of each chapter’. In other words, the first book follows a linear and chronological unfolding, which only requires a ‘passive’ type of reader. In contrast, the second book demands a non-linear, discontinuous, and hence ‘active’ hopscotch reading, jumping from chapter to chapter, and shifting backwards and forwards through an ultimately infinite book.¹⁵ Equally, adventurous readers are also encouraged to devise their own itinerary through the book, selecting a plethora of routes which, like Borges’s ‘The Garden of Forking Paths’ (1941) — which had been partly inspired by *Finnegans Wake* — opens up an endless array of possibilities.

Just as the hopscotch reading swings the reader back and forth, from side to side, and from middle to beginning to end ad infinitum, so the book itself oscillates between three textual locations. It opens with a section entitled, ‘From the Other Side’, an exploration of the Parisian cityscape, followed by ‘From this Side’, which transports the reader to the Southern Hemisphere and into the streets of Buenos Aires. The third section ‘From Diverse Sides: Expendable Chapters’ is a sort of encyclopaedia which consists of newspaper cuttings; a wide range of extracts from literary, musical, philosophical, anthropological, and pseudo-theological sources; passages written in an invented language called *glíglico*; additional details about the main protagonists; and, most significantly, the writings of a fictional writer and theorist

called Morelli. The radical Morelli unfolds a series of speculations on the art of fiction which reflect, like a series of shifting mirrors, the novel to which he belongs. He contends, for example, that: ‘You can read my book any way you want to’,¹⁶ thus offering a self-referential commentary about the reading process which operates as an internal duplication of *Hopscotch*. If the figure of Morelli looms large throughout the ‘Expendable Chapters’, then this is reinforced by the fact that he is also attempting to compile his own mosaic of texts or ‘literary almanac’, a label that may equally apply to the whole of *Hopscotch*, in its overall tendency to construct a pluralistic text made up of heterogeneous fragments.¹⁷ This self-conscious, transgressive, reader-orientated impulse remains Morelli’s most ambitious literary aspiration, and a byword for Cortázar’s *Hopscotch* project:

To attempt on the other hand a text that would not clutch the reader but which would oblige him to become an accomplice as it whispers to him underneath the conventional exposition other more esoteric directions [...] To provoke, assume a text that is out of line, untied, incongruous, minutely antinovelistic (although not antinovelish) [...] Like all creatures of choice in the Western world, the novel is content in a closed order. Resolutely opposed to this, we should search here for an opening.¹⁸

The ‘active’ reading breaks the narrative continuity by interspersing the chapters from the first two sections with the heterogeneous group of texts that are clustered in the ‘Expendable Chapters’. Therefore only those intrepid, adventurous readers eager to set off on a bumpy and bouncy ride will be rewarded with this pastiche of curiosities, a scattered treasure made up of the widest range of materials. What the hopscotch reading effectuates, thus, is a constant rupture in the progression of the storyline that chronicles the story of Horacio Oliveira, a postwar Argentine intellectual self-exiled in Paris, who belongs to a bohemian, cosmopolitan group bearing the eccentric name of ‘The Serpent Club’. The Club’s nocturnal meetings involve a powerful cocktail of alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes set against a background of metaphysical discussions, jazz melodies, the complaints of an elderly neighbour, and the cries from baby Rocamadour, the son of Oliveira’s mistress, La Maga (Sorceress).

In the second book, Oliveira has been deported to Buenos Aires after being caught *in flagrante delicto* with the tramp Emmanuèle (*clochard*). He is reunited with his doppelgänger Traveler (who paradoxically has never left Argentina), his wife Talita, and an old flame named Gekrepten, an urban avatar of Penelope who has faithfully waited for his return. He earns his living first as a door-to-door clothes salesman, then as employee of a circus (where Traveler and Talita work) and finally, when his employer sells the circus and buys an insane asylum, Oliveira, Traveler, and Talita decide to follow him. One inevitably wonders about the final outcome of the story, but since the book may be read in many ways, it denies a neat, clear-cut ending, and offers instead a series of possibilities — Oliveira goes mad, commits suicide, resumes his life with Gekrepten — as well as other endings that the ‘active’ reader may come up with.¹⁹

In the meantime, the ‘Expendable Chapters’ act as digressions or interpolations in the development of this gripping, sensational storyline. Therefore, in punctuating the main narrative with the ‘Expendable Chapters’, Cortázar fosters a double — or multiple — writing, wherein several voices, languages, and narrative levels interact, deviate, complement, or clash with one another. As a result of this, the task of the ‘accomplice’ reader is to put together this fragmented and dislocated textual experience. Significantly, the device of narrative interruption remains the cornerstone of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, as it similarly disintegrates linear models of reading in order to propose an encyclopaedic experience which celebrates a polyvalent, multidimensional, and multifaceted textual universe. We can think of the upper-case headlines that intrude into the ‘Aeolus’ episode; the gigantic, anonymous parodies that irrupt — and therefore delay — the main narrative of ‘Cyclops’; the extensive collection of clichés which indolently spread throughout ‘Eumaeus’; and the disproportionate questions and answers that are endlessly generated in the mathematical catechism of ‘Ithaca’. Yet at the same time, how do we navigate through *Ulysses*? How do we traverse its dense intertextual layers, myriad cross-references, stylistic diversity, and linguistic experimentation? This inevitably reminds us that a strict conventional linear reading would not be sufficient,

that Cortázar's lesson about how far a reader can go through the hopping gymnastics of *Hopscotch* is worth bearing in mind as we tackle a book of the magnitude and complexity of *Ulysses*. 'Reading *Ulysses*' — writes Jennifer Levine — 'is often a case of moving backward through the pages (to check a detail, note an echo, revise an interpretation) as much as forward'.²⁰ Equally, Finn Fordham has pointed out in relation to *Finnegans Wake*:

You can read it like a grasshopper, jumping about and producing your own set of musically phrased series, or like an ant, moving in sequence diligently from beginning to middle to end, to finish (again) where you began.²¹

The point here is that the reader — at various stages — can combine most of these reading operations, that one must not necessarily exclude the other, that the journey is open and multidirectional and, like Morelli's dictum, that the book may be read in 'any way you want to'.²²

At any rate, the overall effect of *Hopscotch* is to foreground a complex meta-fictional operation that stems from the awareness that the processes of reading and writing have become the chief preoccupations of the novel. In this way, Morelli stands less as a character than as an inner authorial persona, underlining the fictional status of his own — and Cortázar's — literature about literature, as well as shedding light on other self-referential procedures used in *Hopscotch*. Like James Joyce, Cortázar was, above all, a 'scissors and paste man', in a tongue-in-cheek admission that authorises the activities of citation, parody, and plagiarism.²³ Just as Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* embody the theoretical currents of intertextuality, Bakhtinian dialogism, Umberto Eco's concept of the Open Work, and Roland Barthes's writerly text, so Cortázar's *Hopscotch*, as well as his later work, *62 Modelo para armar* [*62 A Model Kit*, 1968] — which was inspired by chapter 62 of *Hopscotch* — similarly exemplify the major theoretical currents of twentieth-century literature.²⁴

‘A mixture that was not in the least Joycean’²⁵

The purpose of *Hopscotch* is to unsettle the reader in a variety of ways, not only by skipping from chapter to chapter, but also by offering striking examples of narrative experimentation. In this sense, Cortázar stands amongst the most prominent linguistic successors of Joyce in the Spanish language. ‘Word games abound in *Rayuela*’, claims Robert Brody:

Cortázar plays with language frequently — almost obsessively — as did his Irish predecessor who expanded the frontiers of the novel at the beginning of the twentieth century²⁶

Indeed, *Hopscotch* is saturated with linguistic games, puns, riddles, parodies, and a pervasive tendency to transgress the rules of the Spanish language. For example, chapter 68 is written in an invented idiom called *glíglico*, entirely made of neologisms, misspellings, and nonsensical yet rhythmical sounds, which is used as a cryptic code to represent the sexual encounters between Oliveira and La Maga: ‘As soon as he began to amalate the noeme, the clemise began to smother her and they fell into hydromuries, into savage ambonies, into exasperating sustales’.²⁷ At the same time, Oliveira easily shifts from his amorous neologistic creativity to an assault on the orthographic rules of the Spanish language as he adds the silent letter ‘h’ to the beginning of words starting with a vowel in an attempt to debunk grand Western narratives or pretentious novelistic discourse:

Escribía, por ejemplo: ‘El gran hasunto’, o ‘la hencrucijada’. Era suficiente para ponerse a reír y cebar otro mate con más ganas. ‘La hunidad’ hescribía Holiveira. ‘El hego y el hotro’²⁸

This tongue-in-cheek procedure is successfully rendered in the English translation with a ‘wh’:

He [Oliveira] wrote, for example: ‘The great whaffair,’ or ‘the whintersection.’ It was enough to make him laugh and feel more up to preparing another mate. ‘Whunity,’ whrote Wholiveira. ‘The whego and the Whother’²⁹

Therefore, transgressing and experimenting with language is a necessity for a writer like Cortázar, a fact that is acknowledged in one of Morelli's exercises, as he pays tribute to Joyce: "Those sections of the book Morelli called "archapters" and "chaptypes," verbal nonsense in which one could deduce a mixture that was not in the least Joycean'.³⁰ Robin William Fiddian has argued that Morelli's coinages may have been suggested by 'Joyce's own fabrication of the noun "archetypt" in the sentence: "O felicitous culpability, sweet bad cess to you for an archetypt"' [of *Finnegans Wake*].³¹ Another fascinating example of Cortázar's Joycean blends is chapter 34 of *Hopscotch*. This section presents a perplexing printed configuration which interlaces the interior monologue of Horacio Oliveira with extracts from the novel *Lo prohibido* [*The Prohibited*, 1885] by the Spanish realist writer and critic Benito Pérez Galdós. In this manner, extracts from Pérez Galdós's book and Oliveira's reading of it appear on the same page in alternating lines. 'Cortázar represents Oliveira's typically self-conscious thoughts with a clever typographical gimmick', explains Joseph Sharkey:

he writes the chapter in alternating narrative strands, the odd-numbered lines recording Oliveira's rote, aloof reading the novel's words, the even-numbered lines relating his thoughts as he mocks the writing style for being old-fashioned and La Maga for being so unsophisticated as to let it win her over³²

At this crucial point in the story, Oliveira has been abandoned by La Maga following the death of her infant son Rocamadour. He wanders around the now empty room and finds in the drawer of her night-table a copy of *The Prohibited*. Interestingly, La Maga's book choice provokes a series of adverse reactions on the arrogant, phallogentric Oliveira who mocks the type of 'clumsy' nineteenth-century novels she reads in 'cheap editions'.³³ The motive behind this reaction is centred in the fact that, according to Oliveira, their reading habits are utterly opposed: she prefers fiction that presents few challenges to the reader while he favours a current of demanding, experimental, avant-garde literature which is exemplified by *Hopscotch* itself and by the irreverent, against-the-grain theories proposed by Morelli. Therefore, Cortázar conceived chapter 34 as a complex tableau in which he depicted an intricate

picture constituted by the inner thoughts of Oliveira, the narrative voice of *The Prohibited*, and the fusions and clashes between both discourses:

In September of 1880, a few months after the demise of my father, I decided to give up my business activities, transferring besides, but you wonder how she can get interested in things them to another house in Jerez whose standing was as solvent like this. To think that she's spent hours on end reading tasteless as that of my own; I liquidated all the credits I could, rented out stuff like this and plenty of other incredible things, *Elle* and the properties, transferred my holdings and inventories, and *France Soir*, those sad magazines Babs lends her³⁴

What this example makes clear is that Cortázar's chief aim at this narrative juncture was to achieve the illusion of textual simultaneity. How to convey the inner thoughts, feelings, and random associations that pervade a character's mind as he reads a book? In what way can a writer present two stories at once, or give the impression that various thoughts processes are taking place concurrently as it would happen in real-time? The most obvious answer to these narrative concerns at the time was Joyce's *Ulysses*, a novel with which Cortázar was well acquainted, as he demonstrated in his early essay 'Situación de la novela' [Situation of the Novel, 1950]. He argued emphatically that the contemporary novel must still focus on the most fundamental themes — the human being, life, language, metaphysics, history, and so on — but yet this ought to be approached with a degree of playfulness, audacity, and experimentalism:

Just a single day is enough in the history of the city of Dublin, Ireland for language to become Leopold Bloom and his entire circumstance. It seems that by squeezing time, literature expands man.³⁵

He also referred to Joyce's innovative technique of interior monologue, 'the free play of associations [in *Ulysses*]' and, most importantly, he claimed that Joyce's art encapsulates the revolutionary aspiration of

the avant-garde generation, as well as an influential generation of novelists from Proust to Woolf: 'From the symphonic project that is *Ulysses*, a kind of compendium of techniques, branch out by influence or coincidence the many shoots of this widespread impulse'.³⁶ Cortázar aspired to create a similar symphonic work with *Hopscotch*, an ambitious project that orchestrated his own compendium of techniques and verbal experimentation. Thus, Joycean echoes resonate loudly throughout the book, particularly in chapter 34, whose subject matter and stylistic experimentation, I will argue here, resembles the construction of section 10 of the 'Wandering Rocks' episode in *Ulysses*. Regarding this episode Clive Hart has claimed that:

In 'Wandering Rocks' we listen to a greater number and variety of interior monologues than anywhere else in *Ulysses*, the character of the monologues and the contexts in which they are placed often creating in the reader a sense of unease³⁷

In the middle section of this labyrinthine episode, the wandering Leopold Bloom is searching for a book for Molly at the hawker's cart situated under Merchant's Arch in central Dublin. After scanning several titles he stumbles upon a copy of the erotic novella *Sweets of Sin*, and considers it the perfect choice for Molly. Like chapter 34 of *Hopscotch*, this section negotiates a similar multiplicity of voices, as it alternates verbatim extracts from *Sweets of Sin* with Bloom's interior monologue, as well as the voice of the third person narrator. As if all this was not quite enough, Joyce also interspersed the crisscrossing of these voices with a series of interpolations that irrupt into the narrative,³⁸ as well as the interrelationship between this particular section and the other eighteen that constitute the episode:

He read the other title: *Sweets of Sin*. More in her line. Let us see.
 He read where his finger opened.
 — *All the dollarbills her husband gave her were spent in the stores on wondrous gowns and costliest frillies. For him! For Raoul!*
 Yes. This. Here. Try.
 — *Her mouth glued on his in a luscious voluptuous kiss while his hands*

felt for the opulent curves inside her dishabille.

Yes. Take this. The end.

— *You are late, he spoke hoarsely, eying with a suspicious glare.*

The beautiful woman [...]

Mr Bloom read again: *The beautiful woman...*

Warmth showered gently over him, cowing his flesh. Flesh yielded amply amid rumpled clothes: whites of eyes swooning up. His nostrils arched themselves for prey. Melting breast ointments (*for him! For Raoul!*).

Armpits' oniony sweat. Fishgluey slime (*her heaving embonpoint!*).

Feel! Press! Chrished! Sulphur dung of lions!³⁹

On a larger textual level, at this critical point in *Ulysses* and *Hopscotch* both Bloom and Oliveira are deeply concerned about their relationship with their wife/mistress (Molly/Maga); the overall psychological impact of the death of an infant (Rudy/Rocamadour); an alleged infidelity (Boylan/Gregorovius); their affairs with other women (Martha/Pola); and their emotional and sexual longing for Molly and La Maga. Significantly both female heroines pursue singing careers — not very successfully — and have a history of sexual encounters with other men in their native Gibraltar and Uruguay. Both are also depicted as unsophisticated readers from a masculine viewpoint that, inevitably, enforces gender-based stereotypes: Molly's exclusive consumption of semi-pornographic fiction and her inability to understand complex ideas on the one hand:

— Here, she said. What does that mean?

He leaned downward and read near her polished thumbnail.

— Metempsychosis?

— Yes. Who's he when he's at home?

— Metempsychosis, he said, frowning. It's Greek: from the Greek. That means the transmigration of souls.

— O, rocks! she said. Tell us in plain words⁴⁰

And La Maga's diet of nineteenth-century realist novels, her similar incapacity to grasp abstract concepts, and her constant requests for the elucidation of complex words on the other:

When La Maga would ask about Zen [...] Gregorovius would try to explain the rudiments of metaphysics while Oliveira would sip his pernod and watch, enjoying it. It was madness to try to explain anything to La Maga. Fauconnier was right, for people like her the mystery begins precisely with the explanation. La Maga heard the words immanence and transcendence and she opened up two big beautiful eyes which cut off Gregorovius's metaphysics⁴¹

Nevertheless, Molly and La Maga are also able to overturn these patriarchal stereotypes through their possession of a complex and perspicacious view of life that goes beyond their (in)ability to tackle metaphysics, as well as highlighting the male inefficacy at articulating the abstract concepts they believe they understand. Bonnie Kime Scott draws attention to the fact that: 'Privately, in "Penelope," she [Molly] makes fun of Bloom's learned answers, "if I asked him hed say its from the Greek leave us as wise as we were before"'.⁴² Equally significant is the fact that Joyce created Molly's long unpunctuated soliloquy in 'Penelope' as 'the indispensable countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity'.⁴³ Meanwhile, in the Cortázar scholarship Joseph Sharkey states that:

[La Maga] is the earth mother whose intuitive power wins her an understanding that her typically nonintuitive male counterparts lacks, despite his apparent intellectual superiority⁴⁴

Or, as he also puts it, 'La Maga's intuition beats Oliveira's hyperintellectuality'.⁴⁵

Still, what remains central to chapter 34 of *Hopscotch* and section 10 of 'Wandering Rocks' is that Molly and La Maga are present *in absentia*, that is, through the books which are in some way constituent of their imaginations, and which are projected through the male gaze of Bloom and Oliveira. In effect, Bloom and Oliveira peruse the books which they identify as representative of Molly's and La Maga's reading habits; they become commodities intimately bound up with their feelings, attitudes, and expectations. For Bloom and Oliveira, penetrating these products implies a voyeuristic glimpse of Molly's

and La Maga's female world, gazing at their uttermost secrets, and intimating with the books as they would intimate with them. For them, thus, the act of reading is none other than the site of a multiplicity of associations which, predictably, are deeply interrelated to the content of the works themselves: *Sweets of Sin/The Prohibited* (notably both titles allude to acts of transgression against law/religion/marriage). Nonetheless, there is a striking difference between Oliveira's and Bloom's reading processes. While Oliveira launches an acid attack on the nineteenth-century Spanish realist tradition, Bloom, by contrast, is ignited by the semi-pornographic register of the novel.

The readers of *Ulysses* and *Hopscotch* become the spectators of a scene that stages the reading processes of Bloom and Oliveira, who in turn embrace/resist what the books are telling them, as well as creating a cross-gendered perspective, their eyes believe they see what Molly's and La Maga's eyes have seen or will see in both books. In addition, Bloom and Oliveira project themselves into *Sweets of Sin* and *The Prohibited*, namely, they appropriate their meaning and translate it onto their own emotional circumstances. Daniel R. Schwarz asserts that:

[Bloom] transforms the story about how an adulterous wife and her lover betray a husband — with whom Bloom initially identifies — into a fantasy in which husband and lover merge into a sexually successful beloved with whom he can identify.⁴⁶

Correspondingly, Andrés Amorós notes that Oliveira's interior monologue and Galdós's *The Prohibited* at times 'mysteriously interact with each other, producing comical interconnections'.⁴⁷ Equally, we can uncover tragic correlations; the sentiments of loss and bereavement in Galdós's novel find new resonances in Oliveira's amorous and existential grief: '[I] found a secret and most painful sorrow, a thorn driven deep [...] into the heart of that excellent man'.⁴⁸ Similarly, the emotions exteriorised by one of the protagonists of *The Prohibited* cannot but highlight the crucial fact that Oliveira, for all his pride, snobbism, and disaffection, cynically — yet painfully

— refrains from any outburst of emotion: ‘(*weeping until his nose had begun to/eyes water so that one would think that he had been weeping/run?*, but that’s really repulsive)’.⁴⁹

What we may deduce from this comparative reading of Joyce and Cortázar is, ultimately, that in their attempt to portray the inner anxieties of their protagonists, Bloom and Oliveira, and their painful alienation from Molly and La Maga, they construed an experimental narrative device that laced an intricate tapestry of voices and viewpoints. Beneath this textual artifice lie the wounded souls of Bloom and Oliveira, tangled in between the strands of *Sweets of Sin* and *The Prohibited*, and the fragmented crescendo of their thought processes as they read the books that reveal their emotional and sexual desires for Molly and La Maga: singers, muses, whores, goddesses, earth mothers, enchantresses. In both texts, the reader is made dizzy as he becomes the spectator of a book in which the personages are also reading books. The meaning of what Bloom and Oliveira read infiltrates into their circumstances — whether bitter sarcasm or sexual desire — because they inscribe their uttermost feelings upon the pages they penetrate, opening a door between *this* fiction and *another* fiction, letting the printed characters and symbols of both — and all — texts merge onto the larger canvas of *Ulysses* and *Hopscotch*.

Stephen Dedalus’s Argentine Avatar

In the previous section I have shown how Bloom’s and Oliveira’s feelings of loss, isolation, and thwarted love sustained the development of a many-sided, heteroglossic narrative. Yet as much as Oliveira is linked with Bloom as urban wanderer, reader, and frustrated lover, he also bears an even more striking set of parallels with Stephen Dedalus. Both are aspiring artists and solipsistic intellectuals who distrust the languages they inherited from their imperial powers, Britain and Spain. They ascribe to the rebellious satanic dictum *non serviam* and question the spheres of reason of the Western world. Both are trying to awake from the nightmare of history, and believe that in order to fulfil their artistic credo they must fly by the nets of nationality, language, and

religion using for their defence the arms of ‘silence, exile, and cunning’.⁵⁰ Yet ‘in moving from *Hopscotch* to *A Portrait*’, Sharkey reminds us:

we retreat a half-century, and thus Stephen’s fatigue at history is less intense than Oliveira’s; Oliveira has more of it to carry around in his mind, including his recollection of Joyce’s novels, which he, like his author, has surely read.⁵¹

Stephen and Oliveira seek refuge in the culturally vibrant Paris; the city they think will cultivate their artistic consciousness. But the Parisian scene fails to provide the inspiring, uplifting experience they desired and the portraits of the Irish and Argentine artists cannot but reveal their irritability with the world surrounding them and their growing discontent. Equally, both are self-conscious avatars of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, sporting the iconic image of the sombre, dubitative prince, all thought but little action, torn between their duties and desires. Just as Hamlet is haunted by the spectre of his father, King Hamlet, so Stephen is tormented by the ghost of his dead mother, May Goulding, and Oliveira is obsessed by the eerie apparitions of his ex-lover, La Maga. Similarly to Stephen’s refusal to pray at his mother’s deathbed, Oliveira refrains from taking part in the funeral rites of baby Rocamadour and fails to give comfort to the bereaved mother. But the wounded spirits of the otherworld return with a vengeance, casting their long, supernatural shadows over Stephen and Oliveira, and enveloping them with an existential angst. Both disillusioned artists wither away on a diet of liquids and little solid food, consuming large quantities of alcohol (Stephen/Oliveira), watery tea (Stephen) and *mate* (Oliveira), the autochthonous drink of the River Plate area. Their only artistic release oscillates between scattered notes, intricate literary speculations — in which they do not always believe — and the poetical, visionary insights invoked as they pass urine. Thus, if Joyce described *Ulysses* as the ‘epic of the human body’,⁵² then *Hopscotch* similarly celebrates the grand-scale subject matter of the human anatomy and its bodily functions:

In long lassoes from the Cock lake the water flowed full, covering greengoldenly lagoons of sand, rising, flowing. My ashplant will float away. I shall wait. No, they will pass on, passing, chafing against the low rocks,

swirling, passing. Better get this job over quick. Listen: a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, ooos. Vehement breath of waters amid seasnakes, rearing horses, rocks⁵³

[Oliveira] began to piss, leaning against the wall with one hand [...] completely absorbed in the aura of the dream, watching without seeing the stream that was coming out from between his fingers and disappearing down the hole or drifting vaguely around the edges of the dirty porcelain. Maybe the real dream appeared to him at that moment when he felt he was awake and pissing at four o'clock in the morning on a sixth floor on the Rue du Sommerard⁵⁴

Neither Stephen nor Oliveira are strangers to sexual imbroglios or liaisons with prostitutes or tramps, as it particularly occurs in the histrionics of 'Circe' and at the end of 'From This Side'. Both protagonists are deeply drunk and their unacceptable conduct raises the attention of British and French authorities. While Stephen is rescued by the paternal Leopold Bloom and is compassionately taken to the cabman's shelter in 'Eumeus', Oliveira, on the contrary, is neither rescued nor reassured by anyone — except the stinking and intoxicated tramp who is merrily singing by his side in the police car — and is subsequently deported to his native Argentina.

In *Children of Silence*, Michael Wood draws attention to the particular characteristics of the game of hopscotch as it is played in most parts of the Spanish speaking world:

In the Spanish version of the game of hopscotch the space at the top of the chalk pattern is called 'heaven,' and the force of the figure in the novel lies in the fact that heaven, in this game, lies 'on the same plane' as earth, distant perhaps but not theologically segregated.⁵⁵

Wood's remark ought to be read in relation to the publication history of the book, especially since the cover of the first twenty-five editions of *Rayuela*, printed by editorial Sudamericana, displayed Cortázar's own childish sketch of the children's game clearly showing the spaces assigned to 'heaven' and 'earth'. Thus, Oliveira relentlessly longs for the

heaven that awaits at the end of the hopscotch diagram, the paradise lost but not yet regained, and this metaphysical quest amalgamates with his incessant search for La Maga, the other heaven he has irredeemably lost forever. It is highly significant that Cortázar's alternative title for *Hopscotch* was *Mandala*, thus superimposing another figure, the Buddhist spiritual circle that represents world order, to the playful dynamics of a children's game. Both the symbols of the hopscotch and mandala are further superimposed upon the interrelated signification of the omphalos and the labyrinth, the *axis mundi*, and the search for the centre respectively. 'Axis, center, raison d'être, Omphalos, nostalgic Indo-European names',⁵⁶ muses Oliveira, (un)aware that he is echoing the words of his Irish counterpart Stephen Dedalus: 'The cords of all link back, strandentwining cable of all flesh. That is why mystic monks. Will you be as gods? Gaze in your *omphalos*'.⁵⁷ Yet the solipsistic artists can only gaze at their own omphaloi and, therefore, their conceptions of the world will not necessarily transport them to the navel of the earth, but rather rotate around other axes: Dublin, Paris, Crete, and Buenos Aires. Just as Stephen Dedalus embraces the artistic legacy of his mythological predecessor, the pagan Greek artificer Daedalus, so Horacio Oliveira becomes a labyrinthine bifurcation of Joyce's hero also trying to fly over parochial nets and also injuring himself badly during his arrogant flight. But, ironically, the wingless artist is then able to fly far beyond, his cunning and craftiness remain, and his inheritance forges a tradition that travels as far as Argentina in order to be imbued with a renewed afterlife in Cortázar's *Hopscotch*.

Afterword: Towards Joyce and Cyberspace

As one of the most prominent representatives of the Boom generation Cortázar offered an experimental work that would change forever the landscape of Spanish American fiction. In this respect, Cortázar's *Hopscotch* did to the Hispanic world in the 1960s what *Ulysses* had done in the 1920s to Europe and the Anglophone world. The Argentine critic Beatriz Sarlo has argued that *Hopscotch* stands as a 'summa that gathered and disseminated the legacy of the avant-gardist movements of this century [twentieth], as well as it incorporated utopian revolutions'.⁵⁸ And yet at the same

time, the key question lurking in the background is, how do we read *Hopscotch* in the twenty-first century? Has the idea of the new fallen victim to the passing of time, turning innovation into habit and provocation into the out-of-date exhibit of a worn-out experiment? The American scholar Neil Larsen has observed that:

Hopscotch has a profoundly dated quality. It reads like the literary equivalent of, say, a rock-and-roll album cover from the same period: the sixties are written all over it⁵⁹

Whereas Larsen's criticism of the dated quality of a mid-century work is valid, it is also suggesting, paradoxically, that the reader must leap forwards as much as backwards, and hence reallocate the squares of the chalk pattern onto a different historical and cultural context. In this sense, the metaphor of the hopscotch proves extremely suggestive as it continues encouraging the reader to bounce back and forth through an ultimately infinite game. Furthermore, a proving testament of the currency of *Hopscotch* is the important fact that its ground-breaking features have been assimilated by influential Latin American writers, from Vargas Llosa to Carlos Fuentes and Manuel Puig. In addition, like *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, and some of Borges's fictions, *Hopscotch* may be read as a precursor of the World Wide Web, particularly since its model of reading anticipated the myriad, unlimited pathways offered by the hypertext. In relation to the hypertextual energy of *Hopscotch* Alberto Manguel argues that:

Here are the books left open for the reader's construction, like a box of Lego: Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* [...] and Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*, a novel built out of interchangeable chapters whose sequence the readers determine at will. Sterne and Cortázar inevitably lead to the New Age novels, the hypertexts.⁶⁰

Another way to draw new figures into *Hopscotch* is through a detailed, comparative reading alongside Joyce's works, those icons of high-modernism, which have passed the test of time and continue

to generate the most varied critical and creative responses on a global scale. '*Rayuela* begins by simultaneously reaffirming Joyce', underlines Santiago Colás:

Rayuela says, in effect, 'Yes [love is fine], but who will cure us of the dull fire, the colorless fire...?' If nothing else, this speculation offers a dramatic image of Latin American modernity's critical engagement with European high-modernism⁶¹

In this context, reading Cortázar's *Hopscotch* as the pinnacle of a Joycean literary tradition in Argentina would, for the time being, allow the creation of unprecedented combinations across one of the most stimulating literary games of the twentieth century.

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Endnotes

- ¹ See Ana María Simo, José Lezama Lima, Roberto Fernández Retamar, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, *Cinco miradas sobre Cortázar* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo, 1968).
- ² In *Cortázar: la novela mandala* (Buenos Aires: Fernando García Cambeiro, 1972), Lida Aronne Amestoy refers to the Cortázar/Joyce debate and offers a brief discussion of their relationship.
- ³ Simo et al, pp. 8–11; 20–28; 31–36; 46–49; 51–52; 55–64; 69. All Spanish translations are mine unless otherwise stated.
- ⁴ Simo et al, p. 25.
- ⁵ For a comprehensive comparative study of Lezama Lima's relationship with Joyce see César Augusto Salgado, *From Modernism to Neobaroque: Joyce and Lezama Lima* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001).
- ⁶ Simo et al, p. 57.
- ⁷ Simo et al, pp. 55–7.
- ⁸ See Patricia Novillo-Corvalán, 'Jorge Luis Borges, Translator of 'Penelope'', in *James Joyce Broadsheet* (leading article), 79 (2008), for a discussion of Borges's relationship with Joyce. See also Novillo-Corvalán's 'Joyce's and Borges's Afterlives of Shakespeare', *Comparative Literature*, 60 (2008), 207–27, for a comprehensive account of Joyce's and Borges's intersections with Shakespeare.
- ⁹ Cortázar's *Hopscotch* also bears the imprint of some of the most influential writers of Argentina. 'In *Rayuela*', writes John King, 'that compendium of literature, certain River Plate writers are offered as required reading: Roberto Arlt, Juan Carlos Onetti, and Leopoldo Marechal, while Borges constantly haunts its pages'. John King, 'The Boom of the Latin American Novel' in *The Cambridge Companion to The Latin American Novel*, ed. by Efraín Kristal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 59–80 (p. 63). We must add to King's list, however, the name of the writer, humorist, and wit, Macedonio Fernández.
- ¹⁰ Gerald Martin, *Journeys Through the Labyrinth: Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 362.
- ¹¹ Mario Vargas Llosa, 'The Trumpet of Deyá', in *Julio Cortázar*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), pp. 215–226 (p. 219).
- ¹² Carlos Fuentes, 'La novela como caja de Pandora', in *Julio Cortázar, Rayuela*, ed. by Julio Ortega & Saúl Yurkievich, 2nd edn (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura

Económica, 1994), pp. 703–6 (p. 703).

¹³ José Lezama Lima, ‘Cortázar y el comienzo de la otra novela’, in *Julio Cortázar, Rayuela*, ed. by Julio Ortega & Saúl Yurkievich, pp. 710–20 (p. 712).

¹⁴ Julio Cortázar, *Hopscotch*, trans. by Gregory Rabassa (New York: Random House, 1966). The ‘Table of Instructions’ has no page numbers.

¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Cortázar adopted a sexist terminology that associated the female reader with a ‘passive’ reading model and the male reader with the ‘active’ one. He later issued a public apology to all his female readers: ‘I ask all the women of the world to forgive me for having used such a chauvinistic expression and one that bespeaks of South American underdevelopment – and you should print it word for word in the interview –. I’ve done it in all naiveté and have no excuses, but when I started listening to the opinions of my female readers who insulted me cordially, I realized that I had done something foolish’. See Evelyn Picon Garfield, ‘Cortázar por Cortázar’, in *Julio Cortázar, Rayuela*, ed. by Julio Ortega & Saúl Yurkievich, pp. 778–89 (p. 788).

¹⁶ *Hopscotch*, p. 556.

¹⁷ *Hopscotch*, p. 370.

¹⁸ *Hopscotch*, p. 396.

¹⁹ See Steven Boldy, *The Novels of Julio Cortázar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 89–96, for a comprehensive discussion of the three endings of *Hopscotch*.

²⁰ Jennifer Levine, ‘Ulysses’ in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. by Derek Attridge, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 131–59 (p. 141).

²¹ Finn Fordham, ‘Finnegans Wake: Novel and Anti-novel’ in *A Companion to James Joyce*, ed. by Richard Brown (London: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 71–89 (p. 72).

²² *Hopscotch*, p. 556.

²³ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 626.

²⁴ Cortázar himself recognized the interrelationship between *Hopscotch* and Eco’s notion of the Open Work. See Ana María Hernández, ‘Conversación con Julio Cortázar’, in *Julio Cortázar, Rayuela*, ed. by Julio Ortega & Saúl Yurkievich, pp. 728–35 (p. 732).

²⁵ *Hopscotch*, p. 431.

²⁶ Robert Brody, *Julio Cortázar: Rayuela* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1976), p. 62, n.22.

²⁷ *Hopscotch*, p. 373. The translation of an invented language poses serious problems for a translator, yet Rabassa's English translation superbly recreates the Spanish/*Glíglico* passage, preserving its most fundamental aspects: musicality, eroticism, and playful coinages. For comparative purposes I quote Cortázar's original: 'Apenas él le amalaba el noema, a ella se le agolpaba el clémisoy caían en hidromurias, en salvajes ambonios, en sustalos exasperantes'. Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela*, ed. Julio Ortega & Saúl Yurkievich, p. 305. Rabassa evoked the enjoyable experience of translating *Glíglico* in his recent memoir *If this be Treason: Translation and its Dyscontents* (New York: New Directions, 2005) where he did not fail to mention the name of James Joyce as an approving, imaginary reader: 'I had to translate it, [*Glíglico*] however, so I put it into Gliglish rather than English and I think I kept enough of its substance to make even Mr. Frost happy, but I wasn't out to please him, only my readers and perhaps Mr Joyce', p. 55.

²⁸ Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela*, ed. by Julio Ortega & Saúl Yurkievich, p. 343.

²⁹ *Hopscotch*, p. 416.

³⁰ *Hopscotch*, 431.

³¹ Robin William Fiddian, 'James Joyce and Spanish-American Fiction: A Study of the Origins and Transmission of Literary Influence', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 66 (1989), 23–39 (p. 32).

³² E. Joseph Sharkey, *Idling the Engine: Linguistic Skepticism In and Around Cortázar, Kafka, and Joyce* (Washington D. C: The University of America, 2006), p. 77.

³³ *Hopscotch*, p. 191.

³⁴ *Hopscotch*, p. 191. From the Spanish:

'En setiembre del 80, pocos meses después del fallecimiento de mi padre, resolví Y las cosas que lee, una novela, mal escrita, para colmo una edición infecta, uno se apartarme de los negocios, cediéndolos a otra casa extractora de Jerez tan acredipregunta cómo puede interesarle algo así. Pensar que se ha pasado horas enteras tada como la mía; realicé los créditos que pude, arrendé los predios, traspasé las bodevorando sopa fría y desabrida, tantas otras lecturas increíbles, *Elle* y France degas y sus existencias, y me fui a vivir a Madrid. Mi tío (primo carnal de mi padre) *Soir*, los tristes magazines que le prestaba Babs.' Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela*, ed. by Julio Ortega & Saúl Yurkievich, p. 161.

³⁵ Julio Cortázar, *Obra crítica/2*, ed. by Jaime Alazraki (Madrid: Santillana, 1994), p. 219.

- ³⁶ *Obra crítica/2*, p. 229.
- ³⁷ Clive Hart, 'Wandering Rocks', in *James Joyce's Ulysses: Critical Essays*, ed. by Clive Hart and David Hayman (London: University of California Press, 1977), pp.181–216 (p. 190).
- ³⁸ For a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the interpolations see Clive Hart, 'Wandering Rocks', pp. 203–14.
- ³⁹ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler, with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior, 4th edn (London: The Bodley Head, 2002), 10.606–23.
- ⁴⁰ *Ulysses*, 4.337–42.
- ⁴¹ *Hopscotch*, p. 25.
- ⁴² Bonnie Kime Scott, *Joyce and Feminism* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), p. 165.
- ⁴³ Frank, Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), p. 264.
- ⁴⁴ Sharkey, p. 53.
- ⁴⁵ Sharkey, p. 79.
- ⁴⁶ Daniel R. Schwarz, *Reading Joyce's Ulysses* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 161.
- ⁴⁷ Andrés Amorós, 'Introducción', in Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela*, Edición de Andrés Amorós, 17th edn (Madrid: Cátedra, 2004), p. 57.
- ⁴⁸ *Hopscotch*, pp. 196–7.
- ⁴⁹ *Hopscotch*, p. 195.
- ⁵⁰ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 208.
- ⁵¹ Sharkey, p. 195.
- ⁵² Budgen, p. 21.
- ⁵³ *Ulysses*, 3.453–8.
- ⁵⁴ *Hopscotch*, p. 494.
- ⁵⁵ Michael Wood, *Children of Silence: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 47.
- ⁵⁶ *Hopscotch*, p. 15.
- ⁵⁷ *Ulysses*, 3.37–8.
- ⁵⁸ Beatriz Sarlo, *Escritos sobre literatura argentina*, ed. by Sylvia Sáitta (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2007), p. 261.
- ⁵⁹ Neil Larsen, 'Cortázar and Postmodernity: New Interpretive Liabilities' in *Julio Cortázar: New Readings*, ed. by Carlos J. Alonso (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 57-75 (p. 58).

MOVEABLE TYPE

⁶⁰ Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York: Viking, 1996), p. 318.

⁶¹ Santiago Colás, *Postmodernity in Latin America: The Argentine Paradigm* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 31.