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CORTÁZAR AND THE APPARATUS OF WRITING

Keith Cohen

A text that proposes to recount its own generation: nothing particularly new about that, except, perhaps, the recognition of its prevalence. Proust and Gide both wrote metalinguistic novels, Sterne did it long before them, and for contemporary North American, Latin American, and French writers, it's stock in trade. Writing about writing has indeed become a cornerstone of that still dimly lit edifice called modernism. The *Tel Quel* critics went through a period of discovering this self-consciousness about the writing process nearly everywhere they looked. Narrative configuration, they might have said, holds little interest today unless its coming-into-being is laid bare.

In what precise sense, though, is the metalinguistic impulse fundamental to modernism? What are the other attributes of the modernist text associated with this one? A seemingly inevitable, though by no means exclusive, way to begin answering such questions is to construct a model of the traditional fiction text—the text in which representation takes place automatically, as it were, without any reference whatsoever to its own construction. One contrasts, in short, the “realist” text of the nineteenth century with whatever it is that comes after. This is Barthes’s approach in *S/Z*.¹ By examining in detail the means of codifying reality in a Balzacian text, the reader may discover precisely the manners of artifice used to denote the “natural.” And in this way, presumably, the earmarks of the modernist text—“writerly” instead of “readerly”—will become apparent.

Barthes’s analysis goes only so far in delimiting the “writerly.” It is clear by implication, however, that a metalinguistic narrator will

¹Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970).

break out of nearly all the constraints set by the readerly codes. As soon as the narrative says, “This is how I operate,” the reader’s whole mechanism of suspending disbelief becomes impossible. As in the aesthetics of Brecht, the intrusion into the picture of the text’s own elaboration distances the reader from the represented fiction and hence reduces the impression of reality. Most important, a wrench is thereby thrown into the smooth-running machinery of representation, suggesting that the naturalness of the fiction is a trap, the truest means of maintaining and legitimating dominant cultural structures. Better to look into the machine itself.

Here contemporary analysis flags. What constitutes the machinery of writing? It is at this point that technology becomes important, along with models of artistic continuity other than literary. It is also here that Julio Cortázar’s “Blow-Up”² can serve as a useful case in redefining the dynamics of the modernist text.

I place emphasis not so much on the purely literary divergences between nineteenth- and twentieth-century narrative as on the technological awareness of craft that is thrust upon the twentieth-century writer. The prime mover in this modern coming-to-awareness is, as I have argued elsewhere, the cinema.³ It is not so much a question of cinema having influenced our modern text as cinema having presented an *other* model of the relationship between apparatus and fiction. Cinema, the art that of necessity interposes the machine of its own engendering between the spectator and the spectacle, possesses a more immediate potential for calling attention to its hardware—and hence for distancing, breaking illusion. For one thing, the film actor’s performance, unlike that of the stage actor, is etched into the celluloid, once and for all, by mechanical means. Effects of lighting, focus, and lens size all can be controlled by the cameraman or his technicians in the course of shooting, so that the final image presented to the film audience is far more artificially contrived than the image we perceive of the stage actor. The camera will never, in fact, reproduce the theater experience unless it remains perfectly still and merely records what is in front of it. This, we know, was exactly how the

²*Blow-Up and Other Stories*, trans. Paul Blackburn (New York: Random House, 1963). Orig. “Las Babas del diablo” in *Las Armas secretas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1964). References following quoted passages are to the translation.

³*Film and Fiction: The Dynamics of Exchange* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).

early filmmakers proceeded. But truly cinematic expression became possible only after the camera began to tilt, dolly, pan, and crane. In other words, the dynamization of the filmed objects results also in calling attention to the means of filming. Finally, another apparatus is needed to project the film. The lights dim; the screen lightens; there's a dull whirring sound – and the image appears. We are clearly aware of another machine at work – somewhere vaguely behind us. Effects of fast and slow motion call attention to the otherwise regular speed at which actions are projected.

Film aesthetics are inscribed within a twentieth-century tradition expounded best by Brecht. Contrary to Aristotelian concepts, the audience must not become so involved with the mimetic action that it loses self-consciousness altogether. Spectator art must keep the audience's critical faculties sharp and address the audience in a way that allows it to think, judge, and choose rather than simply identify. A fundamental means of keeping the audience critically aware is to cause a break in the fictional illusion unfolding before it. Brecht uses music, signs, filmstrips, and intrusive storytellers to break the illusion. Film does this in an even more integral way when the camera makes an unmotivated move or goes out of focus, or when the action suddenly halts in a freeze-frame.

It is now generally agreed that a principal aim of the dominant form of cinematic representationality – Hollywood cinema of the 1930s and '40s – was to minimize in whatever way possible the telltale signs of the interloping apparatus. Counter to this trend were the self-conscious Russians, Eisenstein and Vertov, and the surrealist and “impressionist” filmmakers in France during the 1920s, whose metalinguistic cinema reappears in the New Wave of the 1960s and in the American “underground” movement of the same period. In the meantime, there develops a peculiarly self-aware prose, which proceeds to lay bare the means of its own engendering in ways remarkably similar to those of the avant-garde cinema.

“Blow-Up” complicates its fictional content primarily within the two areas in which cinema has always offered a unique practice: perspective and voice. From the outset we are told that this story can have no consistent voice or person: “It’ll never be known how this has to be told, in the first person or in the second, using the third person plural or continually inventing modes that will serve for nothing” (p. 100). If the question, “Who speaks?” (dear to Genette) yields only a vexed answer, the question, “Who sees?” offers equivalent problems. In this case, however, the kink lies more in the “seeing” than in the

“who.” Aside from the constant vacillation within the subject Roberto Michel between “yo” and “él,” it is the always uncertain perspective with which he views first the scene, then the photo, that concerns us most of all.

Cinematic practice as regards perspective and voice is unique. As a visual medium, a film is composed of shots in which distance and angle between the camera and the recorded objects are ascertainable through mere observation. Yet by virtue of this plasticity, cinema is obliged to construct with varying degrees of completeness its three-dimensional fictional space, only implied in any one shot, by means of editing. It is an art, therefore, that, like photography, opens onto the world but, unlike photography, undertakes, in greater or lesser measure, to portray the developing, interrelated qualities of this world.

Narration in cinema takes place in a unique way. Deprived of the “voice” linguistically inscribed in literary language, the language of cinema could almost be conceived of as autogenerative. Is it accurate, though, to say that the camera is the narrator of a fictional film? In silent films like *The Great Train Robbery* or *The Last Laugh*, such is the effect — putting aside the intertitles, which function like a traditional literary narrator. The sound film can complicate the question severely, however, by introducing a voice-over narration that, as in *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* or *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d’elle*, guide the image in contradictory ways. Resnais’s narrative voice is at one moment that of a solitary wanderer in search of a past relationship, at another moment that of the actor on the stage appealing in a stilted manner to the actress standing in front of him. Godard’s narrative voice is that of an inquisitive social commentator who, whispering, no sooner introduces us to the fiction and its players than he begins to pose questions about the film’s construction.

“Blow-Up” deals with an action whose understanding depends on a complex and subtle perspective and whose very existence is, in the end, undecidable. The voice of narration reflects this perspectival instability by constantly switching from first to third person and by constantly wavering between the “now” of the writing and the actual time of the events. It is ironic in this respect that, given Cortázar’s natural affinities with the narrative practices of filmmakers like Godard and Resnais, Antonioni should have chosen this text to adapt into a movie that transforms nearly all the problems of the apparatus into problems of the story, into the relatively banal problem of appearance vs. reality for the protagonist.

In Cortázar's text, we are never allowed to forget the apparatus of writing. The text opens and closes with a hypostatized moment of writing. The opening includes references to the apparatus most traditionally associated with writing: the typewriter. But the fantasy of the narrator suggests an impossible function for the typewriter: the power to take over the writing all by itself while he goes off to have a beer. Nor is this, he adds, "a manner of speaking," since poetically speaking, the writing machine might know better than he how to tell the story of another machine: the camera, "a machine (of another sort, a Contax 1.1.2)" (p. 100). At the outset, then, is a humorous reference to two fundamental aspects of the text — the highly desired though impossible situation of a story without a human narrator, and the assignment of such a condition to another area of technology, photography, or rather to sequentialized photography: cinema.

Besides the typewriter itself, the primary signifier at the moment of writing is the passing of clouds, along with a few birds. The objects in constant flux — the content, presumably, of the scriptor's gaze as he turns his eyes from the typewriter — will form a thread of interruptions through the text in the form of inserted parentheses. Each such interruption begins with a deictic adverb, such as "there" or "now," reminding us forcefully of a here-and-now to which we will have to return before any true resolution takes place. Even at this level there are witty complications, as when the narrator uses "now" in referring to the past as well and inveighs against the word itself: "what a word, *now*, what a dumb lie" (p. 103). Yet precisely at such a moment, when one metalinguistic utterance seems to be stacked against another metalinguistic utterance, the text points rather clearly to one of its thematic nuggets: the scriptor's despair at adequately mediating between a present confusion and a past experience that is its cause.

Up to this point, the text can be seen to call attention to its own production in a more or less traditional manner — compare the parenthetical digressions by Proust on the moment of writing. But as forewarned, we discover that the body of this text has for its principal protagonist a different machine, a machine that writes merely with light: the camera. Here the cinematic aspects of Cortázar's text take a new turn, for the peculiar issues of vision and perspective raised in this context would never be possible without the convenience of the camera itself. Our third-person character — more spectator than actor — is therefore introduced to us as an amateur photographer and, in a few lines, goes out with his Contax. Indeed, Roberto Michel seems

somehow incomplete without his camera, practically unable to see the world without his apparatus of vision:

Michel knew that the photographer always worked as a permutation of his personal way of seeing the world as other than the camera insidiously imposed upon it . . . but he lacked no confidence in himself, knowing that he had only to go out without the Contax to recover the keynote of distraction, the sight without a frame around it, light without the diaphragm aperture or 1/250 sec. (p. 103)

Photography is introduced both as a primary narrative element and as a metaphoric means of alluding to verbal and visual perspective. We have been told that Michel wants to avoid becoming distracted as he writes (p. 100), and here the diaphragm of the camera serves as a useful emblem for the framework his verbal discourse seeks. Since we are not to find out until the last pages of the text why this discourse is such that its verbal boundaries are difficult to determine, we pursue this visual analogy by itself, witnessing the gradual “framing” of Michel’s subject in terms of the camera.

(Since literary language has for so long been pervaded with visual metaphors, like “point of view” and “distance,” for essentially non-visual phenomena, it is hard to say if photography functions here actually as a metaphor or as merely a logical extension at the symbolic level of the semantic field of “observing.” Whatever the case may be, we are cued from this point that what Michel is at pains to frame in literally visual terms may not be so easy to frame in verbal terms—in other words, that the conveniently cropped photographic image may lead to a verbal “frameless vision,” and thus to an explosion of the text.)

Vision hold surprises. Such might be the innocent motto for a good deal of this story, as when Michel is unable to decide if it’s a couple he’s watching or a mother and a son (p. 104). But photographic vision has an entirely different dynamic and forgoes innocence altogether. Photography appropriates: one *takes* a picture. Hence the world offers itself not so much for purposeless observation as for consumption. In photographic terms, then, “every looking oozes with mendacity.” Michel’s whole enterprise consists in choosing between this innocent observation and the interested voyeurism afforded by the camera: “to choose between looking and the reality looked at” (p. 104).

The scene of the couple, with all its unheard yet undoubtedly erotic overtones, has for the voyeur a “disquieting aura” (p. 107). The anxiety associated with the scene must be returned to later. For the moment, it is important to note how Michel convinces himself that the photo—

far from revealing something hidden to his naked eye — will objectify the situation, neutralize the aura, “reconstitute things in their true stupidity” (p. 107). The entire question of what he is really seeing — mother and child, lovers, sex by proxy — is displaced onto the camera. Now he must simply catch the right gesture, “the revealing expression . . . that would sum it all up . . . the essential imperceptible fraction . . .” (p. 108).

The transformation of the lived into the photographed — “the seeing” into “the seen” — cannot for Michel dispel the disquieting aspects of the scene. The photo has an uncanny ability to repeat “exactly the position and the vision of the lens” (p. 111). Far from producing a tranquil fixation of that morning onto photographic paper, the camera has turned out to be the machine that recapitulates, Michel realizes as he stares beyond his typewriter, all the undecidability of the scene. What is foregrounded for Michel in the photographic process, what distinguishes it, for example, most notably from verbal transcription, is the doubleness of its objects. First the scene, then the scene seen again, as in the recounting of a dream. While at the first stage taking the photo gave Michel the impression of calming the anxiety produced by the scene, at the second stage he is a victim of “the seen”: “there was nothing I could do, this time I could do absolutely nothing” (p. 114).

The doubleness of the experience is emphasized over and over, as when Michel, reliving the scene, exclaims to himself, “For the second time he’d escaped them, for the second time I was helping him to escape” (p. 115). The most horrifying doubleness is of course the double interpretation of the two figures. Michel had originally been obsessed simply with the seduction of the young man by the older woman, consigning the clownlike man to the status of scenery (p. 107). In the hallucinatory re-vision of the photo, the man’s presence insinuates itself anew, and Michel is convinced that the woman was being used as bait for the old man’s homosexual appetites. This new interpretation has the power of turning the image inside out — “like a spell of weeping reversed” (p. 115). Thus, instead of preserving the humdrum “truth” of the scene, the photo has forced Michel to discover something that makes him burst into tears, “like an idiot.”

Through the figure of photography, the text goes beyond simple metalanguage. It traces succinctly its own generation, as though we were watching the colors define themselves in a chemical bath. The figure of photography, in other words, doubles for literary description. Just as the first stage of the experience is demolished by the photo,

so the initial pretextual experience is by definition demolished—and hence redefined, clarified—through the process of writing.

Walter Benjamin has explained in brilliant detail the profound changes in attitudes toward art ushered in by photography. Along with lithography, photography put an end to the “aura” surrounding the original piece of art by offering an object that can be infinitely reproduced and diffused. In photography, as in cinema, the original piece loses all claim to priority: it is the print that we look at. The displacement of the original, the source, is the first of several subsidiary effects of photography that will take us further into Cortázar’s text.

The inherent voyeurism of the photo or film spectator is another such aspect. “The audience takes the position of the camera,” says Benjamin. Unlike the theater spectator, the film spectator tends not to identify with the actors so much as to test.⁴ In other words, the audience uses the camera to test its own awareness—very much in the manner of Cortázar’s Michel.

The emphasis, then, in these visual arts is on the human apparatus of perception. When it comes to cinema, the very conditions of projection and the movements we follow with the camera induce a state in the spectator that, according to many commentators, resembles that of the dreamer. Benjamin holds that “the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses” (p. 237). But such a comparison can be taken further. Jean-Louis Baudry points out that the dominant Western idealist metaphor for reality, Plato’s cave, is arranged in exactly the manner of a cinema projection and that, furthermore, this same manner of projection resembles one of Freud’s dominant metaphors for explaining the activity of the unconscious during a dream. Baudry finds that “Dream is ‘an hallucinatory psychosis of desire’—i.e. a state in which mental perceptions are taken for perception of reality.” We need merely change the term “mental perceptions” to “the perception of cinematic projections” and the definition of dream becomes the definition of watching a film.

The connection between film viewing and dreaming depends on the notion of the apparatus. The apparatus of cinema includes the various recording and projecting devices along with the celluloid and screen. In the case of dreaming, it includes the complex network of

⁴Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 228–29.

conscious and unconscious perceptions, memories, and fantasies: the mind. “The subject is an apparatus. The apparatus is lacunary, and it is within this lacuna that the subject sets up the function of an object as lost object.”⁵ If we return at this point to Cortázar’s text, I think it becomes evident that Roberto Michel begs to be interpreted in terms of the psychoanalytic model of the subject. Michel’s initial experience, in these terms, takes on all the qualities of a dream, or of some trauma that is later dreamed about. His position as voyeur, both during the scene and afterwards as he stares at the photo, has been established above. But it may well be asked what pertinence this line of reasoning has, or how it can possibly explain Michel’s final bursting into tears, followed by a mysterious, unsettling serenity.

Let us return, then, to the initial scene, that scene which returns to Michel with the force, of course, of something repressed. Mother and child, or lover and mistress? This is the fundamental undecidable as Michel first catches sight of the two people. He resolves that question to his satisfaction for the moment, dissolving its “disquieting” quality, by deciding in favor of an older woman propositioning a boy. Indeed, he details for himself, in true voyeuristic fashion, the erotic sequence that might ensue once they go off to the woman’s apartment (pp. 106–7). But since Michel is privy to no concrete evidence (“Any of this could have happened, though it did not”), his thoughts remain pure fantasy. It is only when the “real” presents itself in photographic form that the motivation for this fantasy comes into question. What Michel fantasized seeing was what unconsciously he saw from the start: mother and child. But now mother and child coupled sexually. In other words, Michel projected himself onto the boy and saw in a moment of pure distraction what every young child wishes to see: himself about to make love to his mother.

Michel, then, relives the Oedipal scene, which, as Freud has explained, is a temporary variation, strongly desired by the child, of the “primal scene”: the coupling of the parents. The male clownlike figure suddenly emerges from the borders of the photo at the end to become hallucinated as anything but a clown:

but the man was directly center, his mouth half open, you could see a shaking black tongue, and he lifted his hands slowly, bringing them into the foreground, an instant still in perfect focus, and then all of him a lump that blotted out the island, the tree. . . (p. 115)

⁵Jean-Louis Baudry, “The Apparatus,” *Camera Obscura*, 1 (Fall 1976), pp. 115, 126. In the latter, Baudry cites Jacques Lacan.

If Michel initially fantasizes himself on the point of delicious seduction by the mother, here he fantasizes—indeed, hallucinates—the revenge of the father. In fact the motif of revenge is begun by Michel, under the power of both male and female figures, who “were taking their revenge on me, demonstrating clearly what was going to happen” (p. 114). What at first appeared, then, as the sexual voraciousness of the man for the boy turns out to be the man’s jealous fury directed at the boy thus phantasmically projected. And of course, in analytic terms, the two are not unrelated.

Now those subsidiary effects of photography mentioned above should be clear. The camera becomes, in short, an extension of the human apparatus. Michel transfers the disquieting sensations he is experiencing onto the physical apparatus of the camera and derives an infantile pleasure at eluding the parent figures, who are left to perform “the classical and absurd gesture of someone pursued looking for a way out” (p. 110). But what has been boxed up has only been temporarily eluded—for just as long as the negative withholds its positive print potential. The photographic process has merely *displaced* the sacredness—and taboo—of the original, in the same manner that the true human apparatus, that of the subject, Michel, displaces his eye-witness of a fantasized primal scene.

The weakly understood significance of the scission of the writing subject now also becomes clearer. The text has three distinct parts, as suggested above: the moment of writing, the morning that Michel sees the couple and takes the photo (“the seeing”), and the moment of Michel’s hallucination and collapse upon staring at the photo (“the seen”). To each of these parts corresponds one aspect of the living subject—somewhat in the manner of Fuentes’s Artemio Cruz. Roberto Michel is the third-person observer who takes the photo: the subject in action. There is then one “I,” the speculative subject, who, like the questioning Oedipus, persists in interrogating the photo, and the other “I,” the reflective subject, recovered, who sits down to write about it. This scission would in itself be of little interest, were it not for the fact that these three parts also mirror the tripartite division of the subject in the dream state. As we know, the dream itself is an uncanny instance of the unsteadiness of shifters, since we look upon ourselves as third persons, while at the same time we experience the dream events as self-conscious subjects. Hence within the framework of the dream there is this paradoxical union of a “he” and an “I” in the figure of the subject who moves about in the dream. This would correspond in the text to the random vacillations between Michel as a first-person

and third-person subject. The third subjectivity is then the dreamer himself, who wakes and can recount, albeit hazily, the content of the dream, corresponding in the text to the figure of the scriptor.

It may seem as though I have used the photographic and cinematic resonances of “Blow-Up” as pretexts to suggest a psychoanalytic reading of this text. The two, I would argue, are today scarcely separable. From the moment we admit the fundamental similarity between the filmic apparatus and the human apparatus of the mind, the unconscious forces itself to the forefront and introduces us to what Freud declared as the “other scene.”

But one further scene has so far eluded my interpretation: that of the text’s closing, where Michel sits in beatitude before a photo of almost nothing — just clouds and birds. The photograph, it would seem, has been emptied of its contents. Though still a rectangle tacked up on Michel’s wall, the photo is now devoid of human figuration. It has become a double, or metaphoric depository, for all those clouds and birds that went irrelevantly by as interruptions to the main story.

Here we have the total identification between the cinematic apparatus and the apparatus of writing. Cortázar’s short text is replete with references to blankness and nothingness. The entire drama is, in one sense, a play on presence and absence. The scene itself is at an early point parenthetically equated with “almost nothing” (p. 107), and once the photo is developed “this nothing” takes on a paradoxical role as “the true solidifier of the scene” (p. 111), i.e., as some pre-determined emptiness — which will only be realized at the end — or as the chemical bath, the fixer, that makes possible the final appearance of the image. This appearing/disappearing power of “nothingness” is important, since it seems to mark a no-man’s-land in between perception and representation, between fantasy and corporeality. As he describes the images of boy and woman initially, Michel says “I remember the image before his actual body” (pp. 104–5). And again, their bodies seem somehow safely tucked away into nothingness once they are “ignominiously recorded on a small chemical image” (p. 109).

Cortázar thus plays with the ambiguous capacity of photography to hide, to take prisoner, the very thing it seeks to record, then to delude the spectator into believing he or she can experience reality by means of the photographed image. The hallucinated emptying of Michel’s photo at the end of the story could be taken as a metaphor for the “writerly” text as a text that can take away or proffer with

equal facility. Robbe-Grillet describes something like such a text when he refers to the cinematographic style of the “new novel”:

It no longer seeks to conceal its necessarily deceptive character by offering itself as a “real-life story.” So that we rediscover here, in the cinematographic style, a function related to that assumed by description in literature: the image thus treated . . . keeps us from believing at the same time what it affirms, just as description kept us from seeing what it was showing. . . .⁶

Baudry refers to Lewin’s “dream screen,” which is defined as “a surface on which a dream seems to be projected. It is the ‘blank background’ (empty basic surface) which is present in dream although it is not necessarily seen, the manifest content of dream ordinarily perceived takes place over it, or in front of it.”⁷ What better way to explain the transformation of the heavily invested dream content of Michel’s photograph into a “very clean, clear rectangle tacked up with pins on the wall of my room” (p. 115). This rectangle becomes the concrete representation of the objectified dream apparatus. Once the trauma has been relived it is emptied of its image. By extension, once the scene has been described in writing, nothing is left but the apparatus of writing—here associated from the start with clouds and birds.

One of the most celebrated of contemporary experimenters with the apparatus of the cinema, Michael Snow, seems to meditate on very similar problems in *Wavelength* (1965). The 45-minute film is composed of a single shot: a very slow zoom from a long shot of a room to a close-up of a photograph pinned up on the far wall in between two windows. During the zoom, there is some intermittent action, a telephone call, and loud, at first rather abrasive, electronic sounds. The simplicity of the format and technique recall Cortázar in certain basic ways. But it is the end of the film that seems to approximate to an astonishing degree the “dream screen” with which Cortázar’s text closes. The photo on the wall is a plain aerial shot of the sea. It has the effect, just as has the ending of “Blow-Up,” of erasing all that has come before, of making us get lost in the emptiness of the monotonous waves as the photo approaches and finally engulfs the borders of the screen.

Cortázar’s uniqueness lies in this affinity of texts like “Blow-Up” with the self-reflexive apparatus of the cinema. Snow’s film is a radical example of this cinematic model, one in which the text recounts its

⁶Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove, 1965), p. 151.

⁷Baudry, p. 116.

own generation by foregrounding the slow zoom forward which gradually obliterates everything the film had set out to inscribe. The cinema manifests itself as a model for self-reflexive forms and autogeneration in more conventional films as well. The opening and closing of Bergman's *Persona*, for example, include the same shots of light sources, camera lenses, shutters, and dilating diaphragms. One has the impression of watching the process by which the film has been made at the same time as watching the film. Godard's film practice includes voice-over reflections on "how I made this film," references to an image "forty frames back" (*2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*), and Brechtian scenes where characters grumble about being in such a nonsensical film (*Weekend*).

By virtue of its highly mechanized apparatus, as I've suggested, the cinema calls attention to its apparatus with much greater ease than does writing. This is not only because writing lacks the mechanical hardware of cinema, but also because literary narratives have traditionally presented themselves as told by a single, uniform narrator whose attitude is either trusted or else held to be unreliable in ways that actually enliven the story. Cortázar's task in "Blow-Up" was not only to allow the photographic medium to overflow uncannily the borders of the story, but also to abjure consistent human involvement—to deny the text a clear origin.

Cortázar's closing, then, accomplishes what the narrator merely fantasized at the opening: a textual space devoid of human manipulation. The human subject is left as a raw apparatus of perception ("That was what I saw when I opened my eyes and dried them with my fingers"). Gone is the typewriter. We are here within the realm of something for now only momentarily possible, that of the apparently auto-generating text, seated with the mesmerized narrator before the cinema-like screen of the unconscious.

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