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Julio Cortázar's 62 / *Modelo para armar*: a literature outside of the margins

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Julio Cortázar's practice as a photographer helped him develop the acclaimed short story *Las babas del diablo* [Blow up] and explore the photo-literature genre stemming from the Surrealist movement, particularly in the works *Último round* [Last Round] (1969) and *Prosa del observatorio* [From the Observatory] (1972). Despite its significance, the role of Cortázar's photographs in his works and creative process has not been sufficiently examined. This paper will focus on Cortázar's article and photo series *La muñeca rota* [The Broken doll] (1969), and the novel *62 / Modelo para armar* [62: A Model Kit] (1968). Through the analysis of the additional material found in Cortázar's photographic archive at the Centro Gallego de las Artes de la Imagen in A Coruña (CGAI), and through applying Vilém Flusser's concept of the photographic gesture (1984; 1993), I propose that *62 / Modelo para armar* is an intermedial novel that should be read together with the pictures of *La muñeca rota*. Although this photographic series could be simply interpreted as a paratextual element in the creative process of the novel, its aesthetic scope, composition and technical qualities, in dialog with the surrealist photography of Man Ray, Hans Bellmer, and Jacques-André Boiffard, as well as Cortázar's collaboration with the artist Julio Silva, make it an autonomous work that, combined with the novel, approaches what Nachtergaele identifies as neo-literature (2017; 2020), a literature pushing outside the margins of the book. This case study proposes an intermedial reinterpretation of one of Cortázar's major works, now mostly forgotten, as it puts forward the idea of Cortázar, not only as an influential Latin-American writer, but also as a Latin-American photographer and artist in tension with both American and European photographic and literary traditions.

Keywords: Julio Cortázar, photo-literature, photographic gesture, neo-literature, surrealism

When Julio Cortázar (1914-1984) published his second novel *Rayuela* [Hopsotch] in 1963, he was a well-respected Argentinian writer living in Paris, but not yet the literary star he would become years later. The success of this work took both him and his Argentinian editor Paco Porrúa by surprise. *Rayuela* was an extremely experimental novel with a jig-saw structure, set in the foreign city of Paris, with a great many literary and artistic references. Nevertheless, it became a success among the South American youth who saw their generation portrayed in the love story of Oliveira and La Maga, paving the way for the later success of García Márquez's *Cien años de Soledad* [One Hundred Years of Solitude] (1968) and the final consolidation of the Latin-American boom of the 60s and 70s as a critical and commercial phenomenon (Ayén, chap.13). With an excellent turnover and a contract for the film adaptation of one of his short stories ("Las babas del diablo" turned into Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1967)), Cortázar sought inspiration for a new project in *Rayuela*'s chapter 62, envisioning a postmodern novel in which characters are not determined by sociological or psychological factors, but by the quantic indetermination of their brains acting in the rhizomatic structure of neurons connected in a synaptic network (Cortázar, *Rayuela* 524). The result was *62/Modelo para armar* [62: A Model Kit] (1968).¹ The novel, which opens with a captatio benevolentiae warning the readers about its complexity, was received poorly by public and critics alike. Ángela Dellepiane's extensive and influential review in 1972 suggests its poor reception was due to the novel's complex structure and plot, sometimes impossible to discern, which brought a harsh and unsatisfactory experience to the readers (Dellepiane 180).

Aiming to overcome 62's poor reception, Cortázar explains his self-imposed constraints when writing the novel in an article in *Último round* [Last Round] (1969) titled "La muñeca rota" ["The Broken Doll"]. In addition to illustrating how the novel is the product of the literary theory developed in *Rayuela*'s chapter 62, Cortázar clarified how different his creative process was in comparison to his previous and more critically-acclaimed works. If *Rayuela* was a novel full of quotations and references, his new work included a significantly lower number, yet still remained intertextual (Cortázar, *Último Round* 104). This intertextuality is however not actually related to the novel's obscure plot, but to readings which stimulated his mind and delineated the poetics of 62 engaging in a poetical vision focused on writing about, as said by Felisberto Hernández, "lo otro", the other (Cortázar, *Último Round* 108). From this perspective, 62 seems to be a metafictional novel whose main value lies in being the illustration of the literary theory set forth in *Rayuela*, with no other meaning than the one each individual reader creates, as initially intended in the novel's foreword: "La opción del lector, su montaje personal de los elementos del relato, serán en cada caso el libro que ha elegido leer." (Cortázar, 62, *Modelo Para Armar* 8) ["The reader's option, his personal montage of the elements in the tale, will in each case be the book he has chosen to read." (Cortázar, 62: A Model Kit).

The article, nonetheless, is as cryptic as the novel, leaving space for different interpretations. There is no mention of the broken doll to which the title refers, though it gives a final and not commented upon quotation from Aragon's *Le Roman inachevé* : "Laisse-les ouvrir le ventre à leur jouets saccager les roses / Je me souviens je me souviens de comment tout ça s'est passé" (Cortázar, *Último Round* 111) ["Allow them to open their toys' guts wreck roses / I remember I remember how all that happened" (My own

translation)). The first verse is a direct reference to the article's title, the broken doll, but more importantly, can also be seen to allude to the dolls that some of the characters of 62 collect. Additionally, the article is illustrated by a series of photographs placed towards the lower margins of the book (actually divided physically in two, as the pages are cut), in the form of contact sheets, showing the process of a doll being destroyed (fig. 1). Some critics, such as Marisol Luna Chávez, have argued there is no connection between the photo series and the text in "La muñeca rota" and far less with 62 (Luna Chávez 202–03).²

This interpretation perpetuates the iconoclastic bias of most scholarship around Cortázar. The importance of photography, both as a literary subject and as a medium of expression, should be reconsidered more emphatically in the works of the Argentinian writer. I propose, accordingly, to study 62 and the photographic series of "La muñeca rota" together, aiming to look at those pictures³ from an iconotrope perspective. Such a perspective, characterized by the cognitive hunger that "express[es] the permanent human turning toward images, our need for, and ability to use, visual information" in literary and iconoclastic contexts (Spolsky 187), could cast a different light on both the novel and the photographic series. I suggest that both should be read together as an intermedial work, closer to the genre of photo-literature and to the more ample concept of neo-literature. The first understood as the interaction of photography and the literary text by the hybridization of both mediums in what Philippe Ortel calls "dispositifs photo-littéraires", photo-literate devices such as André Breton's *Nadja* or W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (Ortel); and the second as a literature that goes outside the traditional margins of the book by adopting different media, photography, but also performance and other types of art forms (Nachtergaele).



Fig. 1. "La muñeca rota", *Último Round*. Rights courtesy of the Estate of Aurora Bernárdez.

A novel and a doll

Although the Cartesian or rational need to untangle 62's plot, on which most of the scholarship has focused since the publication of the novel, is possibly out of place considering its internal poetics (Price), an attentive reader would gather most of it. 62 is a comedy of intrigue which turns around a group of friends dispersed across three cities (London, Paris and Vienna), alongside a couple of virtual/fantastical places (*La zona* and *La ciudad*), and follows the post break-up period of one of the couples—Juan, an international interpreter, and Hélène, a medical doctor—up until their final reunion in Paris. The details of the story, as well as the more allegorical or metaphorical parts, are left to the reader's interpretation with the help of a large number of symbolic elements, such as vampirism, mirrors, reflections, pointed objects, etc. Malva E. Filer and Izara Batres Cuevas have suggested that *La ciudad* is one of the most important symbolic elements in the text, as it works as a metaphor for both the novel's structure as a labyrinth and, according to Cuevas, also of Hélène's impossible love (Batres Cuevas, "62/Modelo para armar: La búsqueda del acceso París"; Filer). Nonetheless, following "La muñeca rota" and our iconotrophic perspective, it seems convenient to focus on the doll's meaning, and what intermedial sense it could gather when considered together with the article's pictures.

The doll initially appears in 62 as a joke. After learning from a newspaper that a girl found a silver object inside one of the dolls of the toy maker Monsieur Ochs, and that he was systematically hiding certain objects inside some of his creations, Juan and his friends develop an obsession with them. Primarily anecdotic, Monsieur Ochs's dolls grow in importance when Juan gives one to Tell, his lover, when he is working abroad as an interpreter in Vienna. In the context of their relationship, based on certain voyeuristic and perverse practices, the doll, and the potential action of destroying it, becomes a symbol

of the sadomasochistic behavior they imagine, and would like to witness, a *madame* of their hotel doing to a younger woman. The gift does not fulfill its initial erotic purpose and is used instead as a revenge tool for Tell who, after fighting with Juan, sends it to Hélène (at this point Juan's ex-partner), in Paris. There, Hélène, in the midst of emotional turmoil following the death of one of her patients, seduces and rapes the youngest member of the group, Celia, a teenager recently run-away from home; ultimately mirroring in reality what Juan and Tell fantasized about back in the Vienna hotel. In her escape, Celia accidentally breaks the doll which has just arrived in the mail, showing the knife which Austin, Celia's lover, possibly used to kill Hélène at the end of the novel.

From a purely narrative perspective, the doll could be interpreted as what in cinematography is referred to as a 'MacGuffin,' an object that helps in the development of the plot but does not have much meaning or relevance. It could also be read, as Izara Batres suggests, as a symbol of otherness and a door to the fantastic (Batres Cuevas, *Cortázar y París: Hacia una poética explícita de su narrativa: Último Round* 217). However, when considered not only as a textual/literary element, but also as a visual device in *La muñeca rota*, the doll, as we will see next, becomes a decisive element in the definition of the main characters, particularly Hélène who could be interpreted as the doll's executioner, while also taking on a metafictional meaning telling us how the novel could be read.

A novel and a photo series

Relying on Cortázar's correspondence, it is possible to trace the different writing stages of 62 and determine what place *La muñeca rota* has in them. The writing of the novel took around four years and the text underwent three different versions. The last draft was written in 1967, between Paris, Saignon (a small Provençal town where Cortázar and his wife were living part of the year), and different European cities where the writer worked as an interpreter for UNESCO. During this time, Cortázar was also working on *Vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* [*Around the Day in Eighty Worlds*] (1967), a book of text and photo collages he made in collaboration with Julio Silva, an Argentinian artist based in Paris who designed Cortázar's book covers from *Las armas secretas* (1959) on. When Cortázar finished the final draft of 62, he asked Silva to create, for the book's jacket, a map of *La ciudad* with the intersection of actual maps of Paris, London, Vienna and one of the imaginary virtual city conceived in his novel. Simultaneously, Cortázar and Silva started working on what would become *Último Round* (1969), repeating the same collage format of their previous collaboration, this time inspired by the political and cultural upheaval of May 1968 in Paris. Most of the book's pictures were appropriated photographs; however, when original they were taken by Cortázar and Silva, often working for the composition at a distance, as Cortázar was in the south of France part of that year. Considering this, it is possible to date *La muñeca rota* to late 1968, when 62 was already published, emphasizing the idea of both as independent works. In reference to the photo series, Cortázar writes in a letter from the 3rd of September of 1968 to Silva:

Nos salió bien, ¿eh? De las dos soluciones que proponés, me interesa mucho más la de *la secuencia de la mayor cantidad posible de fotos pequeñas*. Te marqué unas cuantas que no me gustan, y son casi siempre aquellas donde se ve tu brazo; creo que la intervención

"humana" no agrega nada, al contrario, y te pido que las elimines. En cuanto al *orden de la secuencia*, lo haremos juntos aquí, pues pienso que se le puede dar un ritmo muy bueno, pero no quiero recortar ahora las fotos y desorganizarte el trabajo. Vos traé *todo* y esa parte la haremos juntos. (Cortázar, *Cartas 1965-1968* 614)

[It turned out well, didn't it? Of the two solutions you propose, I'm much more inclined for the sequence with the larger number of small photos. I marked some that I don't like, they are mostly the ones where your arm is visible; I think that the human intervention does not add much, on the contrary, I ask you to eliminate them. Regarding the sequence's order, we could do it together here, I think we could give it a good rhythm, but I don't want to cut the photos and mess with your work now. Bring everything and we can do that part together. (My own translation)]

The result, as published in *Último round*, is 24 photographs in the form of contact sheets, strip lines of three photos per page (six when the book is open). The size of the pictures, on top of being reproductions of reproductions (the initial enlargement plus its transposition to the book), make the images highly contrasted and lacking of definition. The strips of photos are not direct prints of the negative, as the numbers in the top of the frames are not sequential, implying a collage and a selection process executed by Cortázar and Silva as is understood in the letter quoted above. In the narrative gesture which constitutes the collage-making, —that is the return of time for the photographic medium, and therefore of narration—, the photo series shows the progressive stripping and destruction of a doll. The first 11 pictures show the doll dressed or in a state of semi-nudity. From the 12th to the 16th, the doll is shown naked and from the 17th to 24th the doll is shown in pieces. As Cortázar suggested, there is no human interaction. The doll appears always alone in the bed and the action is always assumed, as if the unanimated puppet had agency in the undressing and self-destruction or is acted upon between the frames.

Both thematically and formally, the photo series complies with the conventions of surrealist photography. The destruction alludes to the symbolism of the mannequin as surrogate for the fulfillment of subconscious phantasies. Building on Freud's 1907 analysis of Wilhelm Jensen's short novel *Gradiva* (1903) and the psychoanalytical concept of delusion (Freud et al.), the surrealist artists used the inanimate female image as a vehicle to sublimate repressed erotic phantasies after traumatic events of rejection (Chadwick). This is exemplified in the paintings of mannequins by De Chirico, André Masson's *Gradiva* (1939), Eugène Atget's photos of mannequins displayed in the shop windows of Paris, and in Man Ray's various photo series, including: Man Ray's fashion pictures of *Pavillon de l'Élégance* (1925), the sexual content of *Mr. and Mrs. Woodman* (1947) and *Resurrection des Mannequins* (1966), a series of pictures of the 1938 Exposition International du Surréalisme, where several surrealist artists intervened a number of retail mannequins, and edited in 1966. But the resemblance of *La muñeca rota* to Hans Bellmer's *Poupée, variations sur le montage d'une mineur articulée* is particularly striking (fig. 2).⁴ This photo series, published by André Breton in the 1934/1935 winter issue of *Minotaure*, shows a papier-mâché doll made by the artist destroyed or in process of *montage*, assuming sexual or seductive positions or simply showing the puppet pieces in different aesthetical arrangements. Horst Bredekamp sees in Bellmer's use of puppets

an example of his theory of image act and I propose we could argue something similar for Cortázar's and Silva's photo series:

Bellmer's dolls embody the desires of a Pygmalion [*Grädiva*'s main character] who was not a sculptor, but a technician and an engineer of life; and these desires thus assumed a Surrealist form of negation. And this in turn equates to an assault upon the visually schematic union of beauty and power. (Bredekamp 124).

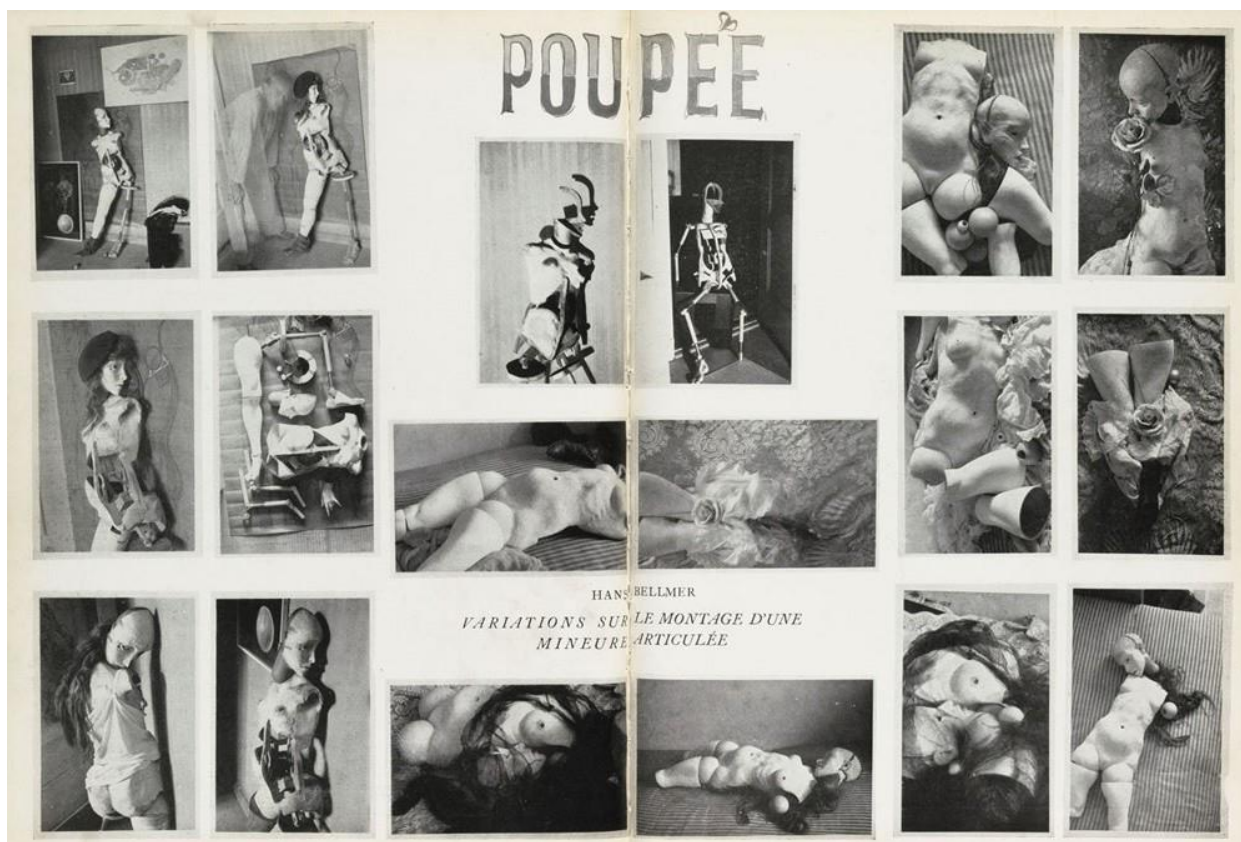


Fig. 2. Hans Bellmer's *Poupée, variations sur le montage d'une mineure articulée* (1934/1935). *Minotaure*, N° 6. Rights courtesy of the Bibliothèque National de France.

Furthermore, from a formal point of view, the construction of a narrative thought framing of the camera, collaging and the doubling of the image in *La muñeca rota*, fulfills Rosalind Krauss's theory of surrealist photography, in which "the photographic medium is exploited to produce a paradox: the paradox of reality constituted as sign—or presence transformed into absence, into representation, into spacing, into writing" (Krauss 28). This explains the narrative independence of the photo series, which escapes any representational or illustrative use, standing on its own within the article, yet establishing a dialogue with other parts of *Último round* which pledge for a proper development of erotic literature in the Latin American field (e.g., the articles *"/que sepa abrir la puerta para ir a jugar"* and *"Tu más profunda piel"*, and that relate with Cortázar's persistent interest with surrealism and surrealist themes since his Argentinian years, notably in the short article *"Un cadáver viviente"* (Cortázar, *"Un cadáver viviente"*)⁵. Luna Chávez,

while still missing the connection with surrealism, sees this photo series as a commentary on the female body as an object of consumption in the likes of Allen Jones's *Table and Chair* (1969), made to avoid "el confort de sus lectores" ["reader's comfort"] (Luna Chávez 209), while leaving space for a feminist reading of the photo series as a misogynic fantasy, that could echo the critical interpretation of the male gaze in surrealist works conducted by Mary Ann Caws in the 1990s (Caws).

While *La muñeca rota* and 62 appear to be two completely independent works, related only by the article where the photos were published, I propose the following to reestablish the link between both: if we adopt Vilém Flusser's idea of the photographic act as a gesture, that is a conscious action that becomes, through the framing inside the camera's viewfinder and the way the photographer accepts or fights against the photographic conventions, a gesture of thinking (Flusser 77), we should analyze the creative gestures behind those pictures tracing a line of thought that can bring about a different interpretation of the photo series in connection with 62. To achieve this, we must analyze the original contact sheets of the shoot before the selection and collage-making of the final piece as published in *Último Round*.

***La muñeca rota*: a photographic gesture**

The total series of *La muñeca rota*, as found in Cortázar's photographic archive at the Centro Gallego de las Artes de la Imagen in A Coruña (CGAI), is composed of 59 photographs. There are thus 35 supplementary images in relation to the final version published in *Último Round* (fig. 3 & 4). Unlike the final series, whose collage-like form creates an ellipsis in benefit of the narrative, the original series allows for an understanding of Cortázar's photographic gesture, placing him behind the camera (as it is Silva who sometimes appears in the scenes), and helps an understanding of how the photo series relates to the novel. The 59 photographs can be classified in eight sections or thematic moments, ordered chronologically, which I name as follows: (1) Dressed, (2) Stripped, (3) Naked, (4) Dismemberment, (5) Jigsaw, (6) Broken core, (7) Dissolution, and (8) Destruction.

The first section (1. Roll 1, photos 1-5) shows the doll laying down in bed, back to the camera and facing the wall. Still dressed, the lower part of the gown allows a viewer to see the doll's underwear. The camera moves from an angle to a frontal shot always focusing on the underwear, reminiscent of the composition and content of Balthus's paintings and, thus, anticipating the sexual content of the whole series. The opening of the second section (2. Roll 1, photos 6-13), "Stripped", shows Silva, whose arms are captured in movement after undressing the doll for the first time. Only dressed in underwear, it lies with its legs opened in suggestive positions, approached by the camera from different angles. The section ends with the underwear progressively being removed. In "Naked", the third section (3. Roll 1, 14-25), the photographs go back to a dressed/undressed duality, the first images showing the doll already naked and subsequently showing it covered by bed sheets. In the middle, Silva is back in the frame. The long exposure captures the violent gesture of taking the doll by its head, undoing the braids and brushing the hair to repeat the initial suggestive poses. Once the doll is completely naked, its destruction begins. In "Dismemberment", the fourth section (4. Roll 1, photos 26-31), we see Silva, his head hidden, cutting the limbs at their joints with surgical

precision. First the arms, then the legs. Two photos of the doll without arms, but with legs still attached to its body, accentuate the progression of the action. "Jigsaw", the fifth section (5. Roll 1, photos 32-36 and Roll 2, photos 00-2), explores the deconstruction of the body, playing with the disjointed parts, placing them in different positions, like the surrealistic deconstruction of Bellmer's *Poupée*. In keeping the underwear, the stockings and sometimes the shoes by its side (something Bellmer also does), Cortázar and Silva highlight the fetish and the sexual component of the combinatory puzzle, and its violence as it emphasizes the control over the doll's body. In "Broken core", the sixth section (6. Roll 2, photos 3-11), the action of cutting the limbs is not photographed, but it is reasonable to assume that Silva used the hammer visible in other pictures to break the doll's torso. Where the doll's internal sound system was located, there is now a big hole from where a crack extends. In the photographs, the jigsaw of body and limbs is repeated, now with the fractured chest. This exploration proceeds into the oneiric "Dissolution" (7. Roll 2, photos 12-17). At some point the head was detached from the body, and it lies next to the blankets, giving the impression that the body is still under it, while the detached arms form a sleeping position around the head. This is the only group of photos in which the light changes. The uniform light of the other pictures, deprived from shadows or shining, gives way to a strong light, accentuating the head. The change of intensity in the lighting through the pictures, points to a sporadic hint of sunlight used by Cortázar and Silva, and not to a predetermined use of artificial light. This dreamlike vision given by the light and composition, is replaced by the final obliteration of the doll. Finally, in "Destruction", the eighth section (8. Roll 2, photos 18-21), we see the doll's final and complete annihilation, its hair peeled off, and skull opened as though lobotomized. The body parts form a pile of debris at the top of the bed, next to the pillow.

The collage made by Cortázar and Silva for *Último Round* covers all eight of the sections, although as mentioned above, it has undergone a process of selection and reorganization for narrative purposes. Besides eliminating the pictures where Silva is present, thus making the series less violent as the explicit action is omitted, the ending is constructed around pictures of "Dissolution" (7) and "Jigsaw" (5), instead of the chronological "Destruction" (8), where the composition of the doll's head and dislocated arms next to the blanket, lit by sunlight, gives a more oneiric connotation. This more poetic ending involves, however, another type of symbolic violence: the erasure of the body. In this way, the whole series strengthens the initial interpretation of *La muñeca rota* as a surrealist fantasy which sublimates the erotic repressed phantasies of rape and violence, and ultimately of control over the female body. As already indicated, this resonates with Hans Bellmer's *Poupée* and certain fetishistic photography of Man Ray and others, in which the surrealist woman is, as Mary Ann Caws has suggested, "problematic and imprisoned, for the other eyes" (Caws 11). However, if we carefully study the photographic gesture implied in the original contact sheets, we can understand what it entails in terms of the creation process and its relationship to the novel, and how it allows, even if still incurring in a pervasive surrealist male gaze, a more complex understanding of both text and image.



Fig. 3. *La muñeca rota*'s Contact Sheet Roll 1, Cortázar's photographic archive at the Centro Gallego de las Artes de la Imagen in A Coruña (CGAI). Rights courtesy of the Estate of Aurora Bernárdez and the CGAI.



Fig. 4. *La muñeca rota'* s Contact Sheet Roll 2, Cortázar's photographic archive at the Centro Gallego de las Artes de la Imagen in A Coruña (CGAI). Rights courtesy of the Estate of Aurora Bernárdez and the CGAI.

Cortázar's photographic and written gestures

The Latin-Americanist Dan Russek argues that newspaper iconography influenced Cortázar's choice of images in *Último Round* and its politization in the context of the protests of May 1968 (Russek). It is also possible to argue that Cortázar was influenced by the photo-novel, a genre popular in France, Belgium, and Italy in the 50s and 60s (Baetens), commonly sold in newspaper stands and of which Cortázar was a consumer.⁶ *La muñeca rota* goes in both directions following the popular/sociological understanding of how those photographs (news and photo-novel images) were taken and how the photographer acts in both. In each moment, Cortázar takes several shots, generally approaching the subject and changing angles to better suit his idea. His lack of technical skills, as several of the pictures are out of focus or not perfectly exposed, shows how he relies on the relative automatization of the camera and is reminiscent of the hasty photographic gesture of a reporter or street photographer, trying to capture Henri Cartier-Bresson's *l'instant décisif*, even if the subject, as in the doll's case, is immobile. The gesture of

manipulating the doll, of changing position and sometimes going back to compositions and ideas previously explored,⁷ is on the other hand the act of a fashion photographer and recalls the iconic photographic gesture in *Blow up*'s studio scene: "the fashion photographer hovering convulsively over Veruschka's body with his camera clicking" (Sontag 13–14) with the intent of dominating through the lens, much like the staged scenery of the *photo-roman* (Berger and Mohr 286).

Although still parting from a surrealist male gaze, it is here that distinctions between Cortázar and Silva's photo series and Bellmer's work arise. First, Bellmer's puppet is a life-size doll based on an actual person (his niece), portraying an actual fantasy of submission and control towards a particular individual, whereas Cortázar and Silva worked with a commercial doll, focusing on the stripping and destruction process and, as such, working abstractly as in the fictionalization of a *photo-roman*. Secondly, one of Bellmer's photos shows, in what seems to be a double exposure, a portrait of himself next to the doll, highlighting the autobiographical aspect of his work, in contradiction to Cortázar and Silva who, like a photo-reporter, initially capture human actions which are later deleted in an effort to depersonalize the series. From these differences, we can conclude that Cortázar and Silva's series brakes purposely with Bellmer's work through a deliberate, explorative, and reflective photographic gesture.

For Flusser, the photographic gesture is not the movement of the finger pressing the shutter, but the reflective movement the photographer engages in before taking the image, which includes "[...] search[ing] for a place, a position from which to observe the situation [...]; manipulating of the situation, adapting it to the chosen position [...]; [and taking a] critical distance that makes it possible to see the success or failure of this adaptation" (Flusser 77). In this way, the photographic gesture is a "philosophical gesture" (Flusser 76), similar to the gesture of writing, that consist ultimately in fighting against the automatism of words, as the photographer contests the conventions and constraints of the photographic apparatus, creating an own voice and becoming "a way of thinking" (Flusser 24).

In a previous work I reflected on the photographic gesture of the writer-photographer, in the case of Hervé Guibert, as constituting a key element in the writing process (Franco Harnache). The writer-photographer's act of taking a photograph feeds their writing process, shaping both their point of view and epistemological approach to reality, which in turn changes their poetics and perspective on how literature can represent it.

In the case of *La muñeca rota*, the procedure is inverted. The text precedes the photographs, as Cortázar finished the final draft of 62 around December 1967 and the photo series was made around September 1968. Thus, it is the writing gesture which feeds the photographic gesture. Therefore, the pictures cannot be understood without the novel, and the novel, based on the latter's link through the article, can only be fully understood with the pictures.

In 62, the doll is presented initially as a sign of perversion, as it firstly fulfills the surrealistic views of the group of friends, and secondly, the fetish developed between Juan and Tell (Cortázar, 62, *Modelo para armar* 112), but it finally develops into a symbol of the grievances in Juan and Hélène's relationship, as well as Hélène's guilt and

punishment. In the last part, when Juan arrives in Paris and meets Hélène at her home, he sees the broken doll, in a scene which resembles that of Helene's patient's death bed. Juan makes the association. For him, breaking the doll and keeping it in the closet, as a kind of altar, is an act of retribution. "Soy yo el que está ahí dentro para tu venganza" (Cortázar, 62, *Modelo para armar* 275) ["I'm the one who's inside there for your vengeance" (Cortázar, 62: *A Model Kit*)]. Hélène refutes him, Juan insists. He is Actaeon, the Greek character who saw Diana naked and is transformed into a deer to be killed by his own hunting dogs. But Hélène knows the doll is also Celia, and more precisely, a symbol of what she did to her. The conflict culminates in a sexual encounter between Hélène and Juan, after which she asks him to throw the doll away (Cortázar, 62, *Modelo para armar* 306). Juan's love initially seems to redeem Hélène's guilt, but it proves to be in vain as soon as she tells him what happened with Celia. "Ya ves, ni siquiera vale la pena de que tires la muñeca [...]. No serviría de nada, de alguna manera seguirá siempre aquí." (Cortázar, 62, *Modelo para armar* 308) ["You see, it isn't even worth the trouble of your throwing the doll away [...] It wouldn't do any good. In some way it will always be here" (Cortázar, 62: *A Model Kit*)]. Hélène seems detached emotionally:

De alguna manera te quiero, pero también tenías que saber que lo mismo me da Celia que tú o lo que pueda venir mañana, porque yo no estoy enteramente aquí, algo sigue en otra parte y eso también lo sabes. (Cortázar, 62, *Modelo para armar* 309).

[I love you in some way, but you also had to know that Celia meant the same as you or whatever tomorrow brings, because I'm not entirely here. Something is still somewhere else, and you know that, too. (Cortázar, 62: *A Model Kit*)]

Juan understands that the idea he constructed of Hélène, the woman he was constantly looking for in the virtual space of *La ciudad*, does not exist. Hélène becomes the real *madame* who actually abuses a young girl. Outside the fantasy and the performativity of a sadomasochistic practice (developed with Tell), being in front of an actual sadist scares him.

The doll represents Hélène's victims: Juan, her patient, and Celia. When broken, it is a source of punishment to Hélène's perversions, first in the form of guilt (the axe of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*), and finally as carrying the object of her own killing. The destruction of the doll comes from a sadistic male fantasy (as the men of the group are obsessed with Monsieur Ochs's dolls), but it is the women in the novel, in particular Hélène, who accomplish it. In Sade's literary universe, Hélène is Juliette and not Justine, or the executioner, not the victim. By making the women the sadistic characters, the novel engages in another type of male fantasy as discussed in Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of sadomasochism, the one of the *femme fatale* who is not empowered but dammed. The sadist is not a complete person, as they seek their own self in others (the victim) whereas the masochist reaffirms the self by imposing a fetishistic role on their partner (Deleuze 105–14). Juan imposes that role on Hélène, but when he sees he is not faced with a performance but with an actual sadist, he leaves. Hélène's desolation is one of a sadist who cannot find solace and insists, as self-punishment, in keeping the doll a symbol of her own damnation.

Seeing the photo series from this perspective, the interpretation moves from a male fantasy of rape and misogyny to a poetic representation of the sadist's despair. This is supported by the choice to eliminate all human presence, in contrast to Bellmer's puppet. If Cortázar and Silva depart from the surrealist male fantasy, the collage process mutates into something different, a reinterpretation in which the novel, as a gesture of thinking in Flusser's terms, nourishes the reflection done in the photographic series. The pile of debris of the destroyed doll is not just of a possible victim, but of Hélène herself.

Considering the photo series was taken after the novel's completion, it could also allow us to read the novel differently. On a meta-fictional level, the doll symbolizes the literary theory laid out in *Rayuela* and its development in 62 : just like the doll must be destroyed in order to understand what is inside, the novel must be disassembled in order to fill the gaps in the narrative and grasp its meaning. In this interpretation, the reader is a sadist whose fetish resembles the playfulness of a child destroying their toys, as in Aragon's poem, an idea shared in Barthes' *Le plaisir du texte* and in more recent cognitive narrative studies which underline the reader's enjoyment as a key component in the resolution of narrative tension through their active engagement in filling gaps left by the text (Bernaerts et al.; Bermejo-Berros et al.; Barthes). In the case of 62, the reader's sadist playfulness is not metaphorical. In fact, to put forward any interpretation of the novel, it is necessary to engage in the physical gesture of noting and rereading the book until wearing the spine down and losing the pages, that is, destroying it in order to find any meaning. The photographic series, both in its content and its collage making, is therefore also a metaphor of the reading process: the disjuncture, the rearrangement of pieces, and the obliteration until the meaning appears like Aragon's rose inside of a dead object. Consequently, *La muñeca rota* is a photographic *mode d'emploi* of how to read 62, an invitation to act like a child willing to destroy their toys or saccager the flowers of the family garden for their amusement. However, it comes with a cautionary tale. It is a game that, if taken too seriously, could be devastating. Hélène's desolation could also be that of the insatiable reader who can only find solace in the next, and next book.

This interpretation leads one to question the independent status of 62 and of *La muñeca rota* as separate, but related works. Even if not entirely the author's initial intention, both should be considered together (and include Silva's authorship as well, as Luna Chávez fairly advocates for (Luna Chávez)). In practical terms, a joint publication might be envisioned which incorporates both works together as one piece, along with the original book's cover, not included in any of the recent editions, and which invites an independent intermedial study, yet to be undertaken. After all, following the argument that we have constructed here, 62 is rather a photo-literature work, or better, a transmedial novel closer to what Magali Nachtergaele has defined neo-literature, as it comprehends different mediums such as performance (the doll's destruction could be seen as one), photography, collage and drawing. The fact that it was cast initially as a traditional and "unsatisfactory" novel, and not as a transmedia work, may explain the negative reception following its publication in 1968.

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