

**“I CANNOT PLACE THIS”: GRIEF AS DESTABILIZED ORDER IN
INTERACTIVE METAFICTION**

by

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Abstract

Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* and BS Johnson's *The Unfortunates* depict the effects of loss on self-perception in a way that is informed by these books' unconventional physical structures. Both are interactive texts that identify the fragmentation of the self as a key feature of grief and their aleatory, randomizable structures perform the involuntary and disruptive nature that Susan Brison identifies as characteristic of traumatic memory. These experimental books thus call attention to the physicality of reading and to the reader's role as an active participant who is responsible for the construction of meaning that arises from physically ordering each text. The fragmentary nature of the grieving subject is embodied by chapter divisions, which in both texts act as the primary sites of randomization. In this respect, the chapters of these books can be productively understood using the framework of Derridean citationality, as their ability to be re-ordered in different contexts enables a multiplicity of potential meanings. The metafictional themes of both books further destabilize clear divisions between author and reader, with the texts ultimately suggesting that grief involves a disruption of the individual's ability to position themselves within organizational frameworks such as causality that would enable straightforward comprehension of the self in relation to the world.

Preface

This thesis is the original and unpublished work of the author, J. Sharpe.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

BS Johnson's book *The Unfortunates* and Julio Cortázar's novel *Hopscotch* are aleatory texts that emphasize the physicality of reading as a way of expressing the effects of grief on self-perception. These books suggest that grief creates a disruption in one's ability to position oneself coherently in relation to the world and to causal systems. The presence of metafiction in these books suggests that conventional textual and linguistic forms are limited in their ability to fully express the subjective fracturing of grief and that much of the confusion in the self-reflection of the protagonists, who are both writers, centers on this inability to use language to clearly articulate experiences of loss. *Hopscotch* and *The Unfortunates* show that conceptual frameworks that allow the subject to project order and comprehensibility on the world are undone by loss, but that foregrounding the embodied nature of reading and memory is one way of expressing grief that mitigates the limitations of language.

Aleatory texts are those involving formal randomization, which invites the reader to participate in the process of arranging the structure of the book. As aleatory novels, both *The Unfortunates* and *Hopscotch* can be understood as part of a larger tradition of experimental literature that came of age during the 1960s and that reacts to and destabilizes traditional novel forms and assumptions about the roles of author and reader.¹ Their concern with the

¹ In many ways, aleatory texts also anticipate the emergence of digital hypertexts in the late 1980s, which depend on the reader clicking — and often choosing a particular item to click — in order to navigate through the text. The introduction of aleatory physical texts involved many of the central qualities, such as multiple possible orders, reader engagement and the unfinished nature of the text after a single reading, that have become characteristic of hypertexts. Michael Joyce's digital text "Afternoon, A Story" was written in 1987 and is considered the first major digital hypertext.

experimental possibilities of form combined with their foregrounding of metafiction also reveals the ways that these texts are informed by a background of theoretical deconstruction, such as the works of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, which underlie their concerns about structure.

In both books, the main characters — Johnson and Horacio Oliveira — lose a close friend who is central to their self-perception, since the protagonists understand themselves in relation to these characters. When this other is no longer present, Horacio and Johnson's ability to situate themselves relationally in the world is thrown into uncertainty. Although they attempt to use language to reposition themselves in the absence of an individual who has become a "beloved object," in Cortázar's terms, and in both cases even attempt to define themselves against the fact of the ensuing absence, neither Johnson nor Horacio feel capable of expressing this loss in an honest way using narrative alone. Both protagonists are writer figures who struggle throughout their respective texts with the problems of capturing the effects of loss using narrative. Although this complicated relationship to linguistic expression takes different forms for Johnson and Horacio, both characters express concerns about the solipsistic nature of language and the difficulties inherent in conveying an accurate representation of internal cognition during grief.

To this end, both texts suggest that expression that foregrounding the physicality of written language is one possible way of acknowledging and mitigating the limits of language. Both Cortázar and Johnson include discussions about the form of the novel and the way that its features both facilitate and inhibit true expression in various ways, but their books also perform these concerns through their experimentation. *The Unfortunates* takes the form of a "book in a box," with unbound chapters. *Hopscotch* is a traditionally-bound book, but one that can be read in a non-linear order. Although each author adopts a different approach toward formal experimentation, the unconventional division and arrangement of chapters — and the possibility

for randomization that results — is a feature that both books share and is one of the primary sites of reader engagement that reflects the considerations of subjective fragmentation experienced by the protagonists.

By encouraging the reader to subject themselves to the causal dislocation and invasive memory that are central to the grieving subject position, *Hopscotch* and *The Unfortunates* foreground the reader's role in actively determining textual meaning through the choices that they make about moving through the text. Unlike traditional books that require the turning of pages in the order that they have been published, the unconventional physical structures of these novels force the reader to acknowledge both their own complicity as well as the arbitrary nature of associations that they construct in ordering the text. Cortázar's distinction between the male-reader and female-reader in particular stresses the difference between reading as a passive exercise, in which the reader is frustrated by a text that does not have a clear, pre-existing order, and reading as an active exercise that involves the reader uncovering the associative links of the author's logic.

Aleatory texts such as Johnson's and Cortázar's thus encourage active reading by using physical formats that stress the reader's participation as conscious actor. In this respect, the chapters of these books can be read according to Derrida's theory of citationality. The meaning of the randomly ordered chapter sections, like Derrida's example of the meaning of language units, is dependent on experiencing them in a variety of possible contexts. This citationality creates the necessary preconditions for *destinerrance*, which Derrida identifies as the imperfect nature of communication — its ability to “err” in transit from transmitter to receiver — and argues is central to the dyadic possibilities of language (Derrida 16-8), acknowledging the individual subjectivity of the receiver in their ability to change the meaning of the text based on

their individual viewpoint. Similarly, these novels suggest that the possibility for the reader to interpret things in ways other than they were originally intended is crucial for the creation of a meaningful novel.

Chapter One of this thesis discusses *The Unfortunates* and its use of unbound chapters in evoking a sense of involuntary memories that arise in conjunction with physical places. It draws on Julia Jordan's definitions of aleatory literature and Susan Brison's theoretical work concerning the relationship between trauma and narrative to discuss how the text presents grief as a process that is not oriented toward an ultimate healing or recuperation.

Chapter Two discusses *Hopscotch* and its dependence on the reader's choice to determine its form. Using Scott Simpkins' work on the form of the hopscotch, I argue that the reader choices that determine the form of the novel stress the relationship of the physical gaps between the chapters and the associative gaps between different sections of the text that the reader is prompted to fill by constructing theoretical associations to link the chapters.

The aleatory features of both novels suggest that they can never be completed and that the instability and contingency of language that is foregrounded by their physical structures mirrors the instability and contingency of memory, especially its temporal disruption, which the protagonists experience as grieving subjects. By demanding non-traditional physical engagement, Cortázar and Johnson prompt the reader to enact and thereby affirm the citational potential of the chapters and in doing so vicariously experience the patterns of thinking that are central to grieving subjectivity and to understanding the fluid natures of memory and language, which prove to be inseparable from one another.

Although these texts are both highly experimental with respect to form, their theoretical implications apply to traditionally-structured codices as well. The aleatory chapter arrangements

of *Hopscotch* and *The Unfortunates* make the role of the reader apparent, but the act of constructing associative links within a text is equally present in the traditional novel and is equally central to the emergence of textual meaning. The way that these aleatory novels foreground their own physical forms calls attention to the physical engagement involved in all reading and its inextricability from textual meaning. Although traditional novel forms have been normalized, these aleatory texts reveal the artificial nature of even traditional forms.

Chapter 2: Textual Fragmentation as Memory in BS Johnson's *The Unfortunates*

BS Johnson's 1969 text *The Unfortunates* is an aleatory text whose physical structure destabilizes teleological conceptions of grief that present it as having clear stages and resulting in a final healing that recuperates the grieving subject into the world. The book's structure compromises the reader's ability to identify a clear ending to the book and, by extension, to the process of grief itself. With its chapters recounting specific memories of Johnson's, the book's form puts the reader in the place of the grieving subject who is experiencing flashbacks. This effect occurs on multiple levels of *The Unfortunates*, with the layout of each page involving experimental formal features, such as stream-of-consciousness sentences and white space in the middle of sentences, which prompt the reader to experience Johnson's thought process as he writes. Its chapters take the form of twenty-seven unbound pamphlets published in a box and a note on the inner cover of the box explains that there are two sections labeled "First" and "Last" that are to be read as such, but that the remaining twenty-five sections are intended to be shuffled by the reader and then read in any resulting order. The book's ability to embody a grieving subject position is thus dependent on its aleatory physical form and the physical engagement from the reader that such a form requires.

The Unfortunates describes the reflections of a sports journalist, Johnson's narrative persona, upon returning to Nottingham to report on a soccer game between City and United. Arriving at the train station, Johnson is confronted with the memories of a close friend and fellow academic, Tony Tillinghast. While walking through Nottingham, Johnson sporadically

recalls a series of interactions with Tony, with different memories being triggered by particular places in the city. These memories are centered around Tony's cancer diagnosis, his subsequent attempts at treatment, and his eventual death.

The use of experimental formal elements is present across Johnson's oeuvre, one of the most prominent being Johnson's consistent use of different forms of empty space. *The Unfortunates* has many examples of such gaps, which take on central importance to the discussion of grief that the book engages in. The most central example of gaps is the text's use of unbound chapters. These unbound chapters contribute in multiple ways to the provisional and tenuous nature of the reading experience that Johnson emphasizes. They highlight the reader's active role in the making of narrative meaning in a way that the codex, a traditionally bound book, leaves implicit, by making unconventional physical actions a precondition of engagement with the book. Their ability to be placed in any order generates the possibility of a multiplicity of narratives. They also exaggerate the gaps between the chapters, highlighting the artificial and reader-originating nature of any links or associations drawn between any of these chapters after being shuffled. Johnson's refusal to limit the text to a single, author-imposed order acts as a simultaneous refusal of attempts to devise single, universalizing frameworks for grief that are predicated on linear progression or identifiable categories, such as the (highly-contested) Kübler-Ross model. In her article on aleatory hermeneutics in *The Unfortunates*, Julia Jordan argues that the ability to reorder the chapters encourages the reader to see the text as unfinished after a single reading and to thus engage in a process of rereading that has no clearly-defined endpoint. I argue that the physical engagement required from the reader due to its non-traditional formal structures — holding the book, shuffling the sections, picking up each individual section — is indispensable

to a text's designation as aleatory and to creating the "odd sense of ongoingness" that Jordan defines as a central characteristic of aleatory literature (755).

Johnson's memories kindle a troubled self-reflection as he recalls his behaviour toward his dying friend. In this respect, *The Unfortunates* investigates the effects on subjectivity and self-perception when the self loses an other against which it understands itself, thereby questioning how the subject positions itself (or attempts to position itself) in relation to the subsequent absence. The book considers these attempts specifically in parallel with the act of writing as a strategy for locating the subject within the external world of experience in a comprehensible way. This is partially because Johnson's obligation to report on the football match acts as the catalyst for his project of recording his memories: a project promised to Tony before his death, but suppressed until Johnson's return to the city ("So he came to his parents" 5).

These thematic concerns, which examine the problems involved in using causal systems and linearity to situate the self within the world, bear a direct relation to Johnson's use of experimental elements. The physical book departs from the form of the codex, as it is an interactive text, or a text that requires non-traditional methods — those other than turning consecutive pages — of engagement from the reader. With the exception of the "First" and "Last" sections, its chapters are instead unbound sections intended to be reordered by the reader. As Jordan suggests, this directive allows the text to also be read as an example of aleatory literature: literature that involves formal randomization based on user choices. The book's capacity for randomization is facilitated by the fact that each chapter pamphlet is labeled with an individual symbol rather than any designation that can be positioned within established ordering systems (such as alphanumeric labels).

In spite of their unbound nature, the chapters (and thus the orders in which they can be read) are governed by certain parameters. The pages that comprise each chapter are glued in numerical order and the “First” and “Last” sections work as a framing device for the rearrangeable middle sections by establishing Johnson’s arrival at Nottingham and his final thoughts on Tony’s death, respectively. As Jonathan Coe mentions in the introduction to the 1999 New Directions edition of the text, this was a point of contention between Johnson and his publishers at Panther: Johnson had initially wanted all of the chapters to be unmarked and thus subject to aleatory rearrangement (x). Johnson’s box approximates the codex, but has inner mutability, being a single textual body that holds a number of non-uniform and dynamic subsections.

Other prominent formal features include the fact that the text is written in present tense and is in first-person from Johnson’s point of view. There are blank spaces present in the middle of sentences, generally suggesting a pause in Johnson’s composition where he (it is implied) struggles to articulate particular sensations. There is also a stream-of-consciousness quality to Johnson’s prose that arises from his elaborate run-on sentences, which often involve the aforementioned white space along with the repetition of particular qualifying words and phrases that denote uncertainty, including “Was that it” and “Was it.” These qualities all work in conjunction to visually represent the process of Johnson not only narrating his memories and experiences but reflecting on the experience of this narration in a metareferential way while doing so. He reflects on his word choices, use of metaphor, and sentence structure as he describes his experience of Nottingham and his memories, such that the reader is given both the written material itself and his observations about it simultaneously. The material and these observations are inextricable from one another.

In *Signature, Event, Context*, Derrida employs the concept of citationality to propose that the meaning of a linguistic unit is derived from its ability to be rearticulated in different contexts. He writes that this rearticulation “can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts” (12). This claim suggests that linguistic units are not imbued with meaning based on their use within a single, static text, but instead from a dynamic and unbounded process in which they accumulate meaning through re-experience. Aleatory texts, especially those like Johnson’s that involve fragmented physical parts, can be understood as operating under similar principles. As J. Hillis Miller writes in “Derrida’s Desterrance,” “iterability means that the same sign, set of signs, mark, trace, or traces can function in radically different contexts. This means . . . the context of a given utterance cannot be certainly identified or exhaustively delimited. . . . This limitless multifunctionality means, to put it simply, that any utterance or writing I make may escape my intentions both as to what it should mean (for others), and as to the destination it is supposed to reach. It may be destined to err and to wander” (Miller 896-7). The text’s instruction that the pamphlets are “intended to be read in a random order” allows each chapter, and thus, each of Johnson’s memories, to be reinterpreted in a limited (since there are a finite number of chapters) but nonetheless extensive variety of possible contexts. This frees each chapter, and thus the memory that each depicts, from any single, decisive position in a causal chain of events and enables each one to take on different meanings as the text is reread in alternate orders.

The book’s rejection of linear order as an end is most apparent in these randomizable chapters. The fact that they can be read in any order problematizes any attempts on the reader’s part to trace relationships of causality across the different incidents that Johnson recalls. There are a number of instances in the book that make explicit Johnson’s struggle with attempts to

project order or comprehensibility onto experiences such as illness and death through storytelling. In one chapter, Johnson describes Tony's attitude toward his worsening condition, recounting Tony's belief that his stress from an incident wherein his pregnant wife was admitted to the hospital due to a complication with their unborn child combined with the day's harsh winter weather to "set in motion" the cancerous cells in his body. Johnson comments that "for [Tony], it was too much to believe that there was not a reason . . . perhaps he had to believe that there was a cause, intellectually, he had to satisfy himself by ratiocination, not believe that it was just random, arbitrary, gratuitous or he could not have gone on" ("Just as it seemed" 3). This characterization of Tony is reinforced further when Johnson recalls him gardening in an "attempt to impose order on . . . overgrowth" ("Then he was doing research" 1), an attitude that he also adopts to the "overgrowth" of cancer, which Johnson himself understands as having the same inherent lack of order as its botanical counterpart.

Johnson elaborates later on his own attitude toward trauma, and its contrast to that of his friend's, in response to Tony's attempts to identify a clear starting point of his illness. Unlike Tony's need to apply order as a form of affective relief from the nihilistic possibilities of his condition, Johnson says that for himself, "it is all chaos, I accept that as the state of the world, of things, of the human condition, yes, meaningless it is, pointless" ("Just as it seemed" 3). He comments when thinking about the nature of his grief for Tony that "perhaps there is nothing to be understood, perhaps understanding is simply not to be found, is not applicable" ("For recuperation" 5). As this remark suggests, Johnson's portrayal of the grieving process is inseparable from the structure of the chapters, which refuse any single chain of causality linking the memories. The disordered nature of the chapters parallels the disordered nature of the memories that resurface for Johnson, such that the reader inhabits Johnson's position as grieving

subject. Moreover, the remark calls attention to the fact that Johnson understands himself through a negation that is directed toward Tony: he has rejected not only the academic life that Tony pursued, but he also rejects the reasons and the comprehensibility that Tony attempts to apply to his sickness. Johnson struggles, after Tony's death, to understand himself in relation to the absence that is left behind.

The text's use of non-traditional forms is one of the primary ways through which it attempts to navigate this tension between the act of meaning-making and the notion that meaning is an impossible metric to apply to experiences like loss. In spite of his self-professed inclination toward meaninglessness and the impossibility of linguistic categorization for these experiences, Johnson nonetheless undertakes the project of transcribing his memories of Tony, fulfilling the promise that he made to his friend during one of their final visits to "get it all down." After Tony remarks that "it will be very little," Johnson replies that "that's all anyone has ever done, very little," justifying in an indirect way his investment in depicting the sporadic memories that involve mundane interactions and unexciting visits, but which trigger difficult questions about the nature of self-absorption and loss ("So he came to his parents" 5).

The continual return, re-organization, and re-interpretation that is involved in reading the book is the same one that Johnson suggests is enacted by the grieving subject in relation to memory. A fundamentally precarious form, memory is a mental experience that is continually subject to recontextualization and thus revised understanding. In this respect, the content of each pamphlet works in conjunction with Johnson's other formal choices to underscore the fact that each chapter functions as a discrete fragment, leaving each one open to possible associative links with any other. Wandering to different places in Nottingham and observing particular features of the city triggers memories in the style of Proust, based in sensory perception, of the times with

Tony that Johnson associates with each of those triggers. This dynamic is established at the beginning of the text, with Johnson's exclamation in the first sentence of the "First" pamphlet. A brief description of the train station gives rise to a series of realizations for Johnson:

I know this city! How did I not realize when he said, Go and do City this week, that it was this city? Tony. His cheeks swallowed and collapsed round the insinuated bones, the gums shriveled, was it, or shrunken, his teeth now standing free of each other in unnatural half-yawn of his mouth, yes, the mouth that had been so full-fleshed, the whole face, too, now collapsed, derelict . . . the mouth held open as in a controlled scream, but no sound . . . the white dried and sticky saliva, the last secretions of those harassed glands, cauterized into deficiency, his mouth closing only when he took water from a glass by his bed, that double bed, in his parents' house, bungalow, water or lemon he had to take frequently because of what the treatment had done to his saliva glands . . . H i m. (1)

This extended fourth sentence is a perfect example of a number of the formal choices that are central to Johnson's treatment of the temporally-disruptive nature of grief, as these sentences parallel the unbounded nature of the chapters. This string of associations, leading from the appearance of Tony's teeth to the appearance of his face to his salivary glands to his need to drink water and to his parents' house in one run-on sentence, is all precipitated by the appearance of the train station. Johnson's intricate stream-of-consciousness sentences, many of them resembling this one in their length and diversity of content, indicate the immediate and inundating quality of the memories that Johnson is confronted with because of a single trigger. They instantly occupy the narrator's consciousness to the exclusion of whatever his attention was on prior to their activation. The fact that the text is written in present-tense emphasizes the rapid-

fire nature of these associations, one immediately following another, with none of them divided by a full-stop that would indicate time spent having to consider how one leads to the next.

The flood-like nature of these memories is made more pronounced by the stark contrast of the caesuras on each side of Tony's name which force the reader to pause. The physical engagement demanded by the long sentences and the use of spacing is one that is primarily visual. Although also used to signify instances in which Johnson is at a loss for words or is struggling with composition, the white space here draws the reader's eye to Tony's name before it is pulled into a rushed scanning of the lines that follow by their punctuation, situating the recollection of the name itself as the cause for the particular set of memories attached to it to resurface.

Notably, this first and most central string of involuntary memories and their associations is specifically related to the physical deterioration of his friend, with the looseness of physical form on the levels of sentence and chapter mirroring the coming-apart of Tony's physical body. Although Johnson's memories include those that took place prior to Tony's diagnosis, many of them catalog the periods of remission and deterioration that punctuate Tony's illness, with the physical mixing of the pamphlets that describe them reflecting the uncertainty of Johnson's attitude toward Tony's sickness. This initial memory pays particular attention to the contrast between Tony's physical appearance before and after the late stages of his cancer, which becomes of central importance when Johnson begins reflecting on the nuances of his own behaviour in response to Tony's illness. Johnson only accepts the truth of Tony's deterioration when confronted with the physical immobility that it involves. This memory in "For recuperation" involves Johnson driving Tony to a beach on the Downs. They walk into the valley, and during their return Tony tires to the point where he can no longer continue and asks

Johnson to bring the car down to him. The prospect of losing Tony as an other whom Johnson can understand himself in relation to, in spite of the varied and conflicting nature of the feelings that such a comparison gives rise to, deeply unsettles Johnson. He says, “I could not understand his tiredness, accepted that he was tired, but he looked the same, for the first time I realized it was serious, it was inside him, unseen, he looked the same, outwardly” (6).

This memory is a traumatic one for Johnson: the physical demonstration of Tony’s illness is abrupt and undeniable evidence of the fact of his sickness that forces Johnson to recognize Tony’s coming death. In another chapter, Johnson notes that it must have been early in Tony’s illness that he “looked perfectly all right, as well as ever” (“That short occasion” 1), such that Johnson attempts to introduce some order to the memories by using Tony’s physical deterioration as a guide. Johnson’s experience of truth is one that is therefore undivorceable from sensory perception: his knowledge of Tony’s illness must be experienced as a physical comparison between their bodies in order for Johnson to acknowledge the truth of the impending absence. The suggestion that the physical acts as a site of incontestable knowledge has implications for the overall structure of the book, suggesting that the non-traditional physical engagement it requires enacts the disorder and unboundedness of grief, making these qualities of grief self-evident to the reader in the same way that Tony’s physical body makes his coming death evident to Johnson.

Johnson’s use of lengthy stream-of-consciousness sentences introduces a central concern of the text: the act of writing itself and the complications inherent in attempting to use it as a way to work through grief and achieve closure. Susan Brison, in her article “Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self,” argues that among the effects of traumatic memory is the experience of temporal disruption. She suggests that the linear progression of an individual’s life becomes

destabilized by trauma, such that the traumatic event acts as an intrusive memory to which the individual's consciousness consistently and involuntarily returns. The trauma becomes a defining point against which future experiences are understood in comparison. For Brison, the subject's recurring recollection of the trauma (often in the form of flashbacks or unwanted thoughts) compromises their ability to process future experiences in a healthy way and move forward. She suggests that one strategy for resolving this temporal disruption, which she understands as indicative of traumatized subjectivity, is the practice of storytelling. By narrating the traumatic incident in a non-judgmental space, survivors have the opportunity to determine their own order of the events surrounding the trauma and, accordingly, the levels of significance of each. This practice reaffirms the agency of the survivor and their ability to actively make decisions about representing their experiences, while also re-situating the traumatic event within a linear timeline in a way that counters the temporal disruption that it has caused (45-6). Central to Brison's theory is the notion that this narrativization must be a repeated process: the survivor must tell the story in the way that they decide repeatedly in order for them to internalize the validity of their own ordering of events. Notable as well is Brison's suggestion that "the study of trauma . . . provides support for a view of the self as fundamentally relational" and that conceptions of the traumatized self are inextricable from our perception of how we inhabit the world in relation to other people (40).

The suggestion that Tony's death represents a trauma for Johnson is evidenced by the fact that he describes himself as experiencing a temporal disruption that is similar to that discussed by Brison. Johnson remarks that "the mind has telescoped time" in Nottingham with the memories that it reveals ("Again the house" 5). The formal elements that Johnson uses to represent these memories makes apparent that they are primarily involuntary and intrusive,

signalling a temporal disruption arising from an experience of trauma that he has put off addressing until his trip causes it to resurface. In one section, he says in relation to his painful memories of his relationship of the time with Wendy, a former girlfriend, “I do not have to think of it anymore, it is past, why does Tony’s death and this city throw them up at me again?” (“His dog” 5) These memories are not actively sought out, but are reflexive. They also draw Johnson’s attention to the passage of time since Tony’s death in a way that manifests as his increasing self-consciousness surrounding his physical body. In the chapter “Yates’s is friendly,” Johnson catches sight of himself in a full-length pub mirror and is embarrassed by his appearance; he is relieved that none of the other bar patrons are paying attention to him. Witnessing his weight gain and wrinkles, Johnson feels himself embodying the time that has passed since Tony’s death and the loss of previous understandings of himself. Johnson’s account of his physical body in this scene provides a counterpoint to his descriptions of the various parts of Tony’s sick body, with Johnson noting the different features of his appearance as individual pieces that coalesce into an unsettling whole (3). In Johnson’s case, this is a whole that is fat and aging, embodying the disjunction between a previous self, when he was young and knew Tony, and his current self. Johnson thus feels Tony’s loss in a physical way that is directly connected to self-conscious reflection.

Although Brison’s work is valuable in revealing the breaks with linear causality that indicate the presence of a traumatized subjectivity, her theory of narrative as a process that can allow the cognitive processes of survivors to heal is one that is intrinsically teleological, as it presupposes that the value of storytelling arises from its ability to help the subject become unstuck from their traumatic past and move forward into a life that is not defined by grief. However, the structure of Johnson’s text resists not only ideas of closure, as Jordan suggests, but

also the notion that the act of narrativizing can be relied on as a clear and unambiguous method of re-establishing causal order. Brison's theory also assumes that the story told will be one that has clear parameters, with an identifiable beginning and end, and its constituent sections arranged in a single order that involves a clear causal and temporal progression from one section to the next: this is central to Brison's theory, as having the authority to determine this order is where she sees the potential for reaffirming the survivor's agency. Jordan notes that there is a misconception around mourning narratives that presumes that they are undertaken with the intention of being productive (747) — recuperating the survivor back into society so that their grieving (and the attachment to the past that it involves) is no longer a defining quality of their subjectivity. For Johnson, though, the desire to faithfully set down his nebulous memories seems to bring up more problems than it resolves.

Being stuck in time due to traumatic memory takes a very literal form for Johnson, as his wandering around Nottingham and becoming absorbed in the strings of memory that it produces cause him to lose track of his schedule. One section begins as an interruption that pulls the reader back into Johnson's present — "Time! It's after two! I must get to the ground then, how my mind has been taken off" — before leading into another long sentence about him reflecting on how to get to the stadium (with associations running from the noticeable lack of taxis to finding the Council House square to a reflection on his own method of jumping to conclusions) (1). In its entirety, this sentence takes up half of the page. This passage indicates that it is not just memories that produce the irrepressible strings of associations that Johnson represents with these sentences, but that they depict stream-of-consciousness observations in the present as well, evoking the mechanics of Johnson's thought processes.

These long sentences are an unexpected assertion of causal relationships on a microtextual level. They suggest a compulsion to explicitly spell out the cognitive steps involved in getting from each observation to the next and revealing how they relate to one another. Their contrast in this regard with the disorderly nature of the book's unbound chapters, which throw such links into contingency, reflects an ambivalence on Johnson's part toward committing himself to a single mode of representation. Johnson's use of multiple, and at times conflicting, experimental features is one way through which he indirectly establishes his distrust of the project of writing. Johnson remains suspicious of writing's ability to reflect truths that are often themselves multiplicitous and capable of being at odds with one another. Such is the case with Johnson's attitude toward memories of his own behaviour. In spite of their close friendship, he recalls being judgmental of Tony because "yet again everything to do with him he believed to be the biggest, the most important, unique" ("Then they had moved" 3) and because of an incident where he was angry at Tony for missing the publication party for one of Johnson's books (only to later find out that it was due to the tumour having returned and begun to metastasize). The statement printed on one of the inner edges of the box, that "there is something noble in publishing truth, though it condemns oneself," indicates the potential motivation behind attempting to depict the truth of experiences, in spite of the non-flattering truths about the self that the introspection necessary for writing in such an honest way may uncover.

Part of the contradictory nature of Johnson's different formal choices may arise from the fact that these choices seem to capture the truth of Tony's illness in another way: they mirror the way that Tony himself is described as acting and speaking as a direct result of his illness. In one section, Johnson recalls that Tony's illness changed the way that he engaged in conversation, noting that "his breathing . . . was affected, there were now great pauses in his conversation as he

sighed to the limit of his lungs, unnatural pauses, unsyntactical, which gave his words curious emphases and dramatizations” (“Then they had moved” 3). This description recalls Johnson’s use of white space in representing his own blocked thoughts and its function of isolating particular words. It also evokes the defamiliarization that results from the text’s departure from conventional printed forms. In an earlier part of that same memory, Johnson writes that Tony’s speech was almost citational in a way that is Derridean, paralleling that of Johnson’s chapters: “words and sounds mean whatever he wants them to mean at any particular time, differing meanings from moment to moment” (2). The layout of the pages with the “infinity of possible contexts” that they can form thus mimics Tony’s illness and its physical effects on his ability to communicate, acting as a possible way for Johnson to eulogize Tony and bear testament to the truth of his illness despite the limitations imposed by printed text.

Johnson’s use of typographical experimentation bears a direct relation to *The Unfortunates*’ concerns about navigating the relationship between truth and forms of fictional representation, and its specific interest in the question of whether truth can exist in representation in a way that is not provisional and solipsistic. In *Drift*, postmodern author Brian Castro’s fictionalized avatar of Johnson says that he has “always celebrated the intermittent, appended indiscretion and forgetfulness. That’s how stories are formed . . . I guess we’ll never know the truth, which lies in contradictory fragments. Put them together one way, like a jigsaw, make a story. Put them together differently, make another” (6). *The Unfortunates* acts both as an illustration of such different narrative meanings that can be generated through the rearrangement of a story’s constituent parts and an investigation of the crucial role played by forgetting and uncertainty in enabling such rearrangement: qualities that are also characteristic of memory, which is unreliable and nebulous. Johnson’s suspicion toward written forms can also be partially

attributed to his concerns about the impulse to generalize that he sees as underlying much fiction. He suggests that this impulse, which is inherent in writing, is solipsistic in that it inhibits the writer's ability to communicate sincerely and thus create any true intersubjective connection with the reader through the sharing of affective and intellectual experience. Johnson clarifies his understanding of the relationship between truth and fiction in *See the Old Lady Decently*, in which he remarks, "Telling stories is really telling lies . . . I am not interested in telling lies in my own novels. A useful distinction between literature and other writing for me is that the former teaches one something true about life: and how can you convey truth in a vehicle of fiction? The two terms, truth and fiction, are opposites" (9).

For Johnson, this urge to generalize is therefore inimical to the project of faithful representation, which leads him to question whether representation must necessarily be solipsistic in order to avoid being a distortion of true experience. In the "Last" chapter, he mentions while reflecting on the question of attributing labels of meaning to loss, that "the difficulty is to understand without generalization, to see each piece of received truth as true only if it is true for me, solipsism again . . . In general, generalization is to lie, to tell lies" (6). This anxiety about doing justice to the truth of experience – and thereby revealing himself to the reader – underlies many of Johnson's formal decisions. Jordan proposes that his depiction of "a type of mourning that refuses movement through time [and] a disease that refuses to certify its own development . . . are embedded in the grammar and syntax of Johnson's prose" (745). She points to the non-uniform white space within the sentences as one particular example, suggesting that it "embodies the discontinuity between the individual memories" (749). Jordan claims that this discontinuity operates on multiple levels of Johnson's writing: the memories are present as atomized experiences, each one housed in its own pamphlet, and the extensive nature of many of

Johnson's sentences intensifies the full stops when they are used. Remarking that "there is a continual refusal to stop," in a way that consistently recalls anew the original instant of loss, that is "matched only by the terrible literalness of the stops when they come," Jordan concludes that the text's formal structure successfully creates a paradoxical continuous discontinuity, with the fragmentary and staccato depictions of memory being situated within a text whose shuffleable chapters encourage rereading so that the reading of the text itself becomes an act without clear boundaries. The memories act as a series of vignettes with no set order or ultimate ending. This continuous discontinuity offers evidence that Johnson is representing the linear disruption that continually returns the survivor's psyche to the moment of loss that is described by Brison as being indicative of trauma.

But what Jordan's work does not make explicit is that this continuous discontinuity is dependent on and determined by the type of non-traditional physical engagement of the reader that the text requires, because the mechanism for randomizing a printed text is necessarily physical. The multiplicity of forms that results from processes of randomization are identifiable by the different haptic actions that they necessitate. Indeed, for printed texts (or any texts that are not e-texts), the process of randomization itself requires physical engagement in a way that departs from turning consecutive pages.

The formal structure of the text underscores the fraught nature of Johnson's attempts to reconcile the responsibility that he feels to record these memories and his reservations about the ability of writing to provide a clear and honest representation of his experiences. Part of this suspicion is grounded in the unreliable nature of memory itself: one of the more subtle formal choices that Johnson incorporates is the repetition throughout the book of phrases that are used to express uncertainty. Among these are "Was that it," "Was it," "I think," and "probably," often

worked in as phrases within the run-on sentences when he experiences flashbacks. The consistent use of these expressions gestures toward the tenuous nature of Johnson's memories and the doubt that he feels toward them even as they occupy his attention. This uncertainty surrounding memory is reinforced by the text's suggestion that Tony's death has, as in Brison's characterization of trauma, become a measure against which other experiences of Johnson are understood. One example is the way that Johnson's recollections of his failed relationship with a woman named Wendy takes on new value in their ability to trigger further memories of Tony, with Johnson noting that "memories are not now of her so much but only of her in relation to him" ("Up there, yes" 1). Many of Johnson's memories of Tony take on meaning when he recalls them in the context of being aware of Tony's death. Johnson reveals that he is consciously aware of this problem when, recalling one memory that he is doubtful of, he asks "or yet again, do I impose this in the knowledge of what happened later?" (2) This revisability is one of the characteristics of memory in general that both makes it citational and an imperfect, fallible source of knowledge. At one point, Johnson writes that "all memories are curious . . . the mind as a think of an image" with a longer space before simply trailing off into another memory. With sentences like this one, Johnson links the problem of memory at least in part to the difficulty involved in articulating it, with many of his pauses in the text related to deliberating about the most apt words to describe an experience, even if only to himself given his suspicion about the possibility that written communication is solipsistic due to the fact that interpretations of writing are inextricable from the particular subjective framework of the individual reader.

Despite the repetition indicating Johnson's lack of trust toward his own memories, he confirms it by mentioning explicitly that he sees it as a problem that is central to the task of writing about the past. In the "For recuperation" chapter, he notes that "it is so easy to invent by

mistake, not remember what is there, what is truly remembered” (5). At one point, Johnson encounters a pub, Yates’s, which he associates strongly with Tony despite being unable to recall any memories of being there with him (“Yates’s is friendly” 5). The potential for false associations and forgotten memories, which leave only impressions without retaining the incidents that created them, poses a problem for Johnson when it comes to setting these experiences down in words. This is also reflected in the memory that details the circumstances of their first meeting, with Johnson recalling that “Tony we first met because it must have been connected with staying the night or nights at the university union” (“That was the first time” 1). Johnson’s use of caesura to depict a pause in his thinking, in conjunction with the phrase “it must have been,” indicates his uncertainty surrounding this memory, and the need for him to arrive at a decision about the context in which it happened. The problems of linguistic representation come to a head in the “Last” pamphlet. Johnson asks: “Can any death be meaningful? Or meaningless? Are these terms that one can use about death? I don’t know, I just feel the pain, the pain” (5). Along with its reassertion of the difficulty implicit in using words to project comprehensible structures of understanding onto death, this comment situates affective and physical responses as metrics of experience that are potentially more reliable than attributions of meaning in faithfully conveying loss.

Although Johnson’s experimental formal choices work to reflect the thematic content of book, as with the use of run-on sentences and white space, they are also responsible for the “odd sense of ongoingness” — the lack of a clear ending that opens up the possibility for rereading — that Jordan identifies as a central to aleatory literature. Jordan writes that “implicit in the idea of the aleatory text is that we will do this again — one of the most central aspects of shuffleable narrative is its odd sense of ongoingness. The very unrepeatability of moments is radically

challenged” (755). The potential to reread the text thus calls into question Johnson's naming of the “Last” chapter: just as Tony's memory survives in the places that are associated with him so that there is no clear ending to either his death or Johnson's grieving process, any attempts to identify an ultimate ending to the book are thrown into contingency.

The implications of this form may not be immediately obvious, however. Different texts can have different mechanics for randomization, requiring differing forms of physical engagement; these different forms thus have unique effects. The randomizing mechanism of *The Unfortunates* is one that requires the reader to acknowledge the separation between the different sections of the text, and to foreground their own role in determining the positions in which each section is placed. Reading this book involves a few separate physical operations from the reader: the pamphlets must be extracted from the box and the sleeve that holds them together, forcing the reader to not only be aware of the disparate and separable nature of the different chapters, but to actively separate them from one another and (if the reader chooses) mix them up from their already randomized state. The fact that each memory also has its own pamphlet also means that the reader generally must pick up one pamphlet at a time to read it, further reinforcing the effect of each chapter being discrete and atomized, although their lack of binding also allows the reader to hold multiple texts at once for comparison with one another. The ability to hold multiple chapters at once and consider the events that they depict in relation to one another, in spite of the possibility that significant time passed between these events, solidifies the parallel to recalling memory.

The reader must also remove each chapter from the others and presumably replace them upon finishing (if the coherence of the book as a larger object is to be retained, although this not necessarily required), going through a process of continual attention to a single memory before

mixing back in with the others. This activity parallels the cognitive action of retrieving a single memory and consciously deliberating on it, without necessarily remembering the circumstances leading up to it or the reasons for its original meaning. In this way, *The Unfortunates* draws clear parallels between the nature of memory, especially traumatic memory, and Derridean citationality. It represents memories as individual events tied to particular locations that, despite taking on original meaning from a particular set of circumstances, can be reinterpreted and take on new meaning upon being revisited. This is especially the case when, as for Johnson, the original circumstances under which the memory was created have become hazy or forgotten.

In this respect, the text suggests that different memories, like different texts, necessitate unique forms of engagement, with the differing lengths of the individual chapters involving different kinds of interaction. The longer chapters (the two longest, “The pitch worn” and “Up there,” are 12 pages each) involve an engagement reminiscent of reading more traditional codex chapters, requiring sustained attention across a number of consecutive, pre-ordered pages. This sustained attention is broken up and punctuated, especially during the shorter chapters, by the physical act of putting down each pamphlet and picking up the next. This is another way in which Johnson returns the reader to the corporeal element of memory, calling attention to the role of the physical that is involved in recalling particular memories (especially given that the triggers themselves are often based on different kinds of sensory perception).

The shortest chapter is, notably, the chapter in which Johnson receives the news of Tony having died in his sleep. At only a single (albeit extensive) sentence, it fills less than half a page in its entirety. Unlike some of the other memories, it arises in relation to no trigger in Nottingham, thus reaffirming Johnson’s method of foregrounding the reader’s role by displacing the responsibility for constructing links between the different sections onto them. The lack of a

trigger leaves open the possibility for whichever memory happened to precede it within any particular order of having been the one that caused Johnson to return to the actual moment of learning about Tony's death. The fact that this section is so brief further exaggerates the potential that it has to arise in response to (and act as a possible catalyst for) any of the memories that happen to frame it upon any particular shuffling: the section is stripped of any surrounding context.

The unbound chapters also make it possible for the reader to compare Johnson's experience of narrating the City and United match with the final, finished version of the article, which appears on the back inner cover of the box. Including both of these versions allows the reader to see the discrepancies between the two, with the finished one excising all formal indications of Johnson's pauses, his uncertainty and his deliberation over word choices and descriptions. By situating the finished version outside of the main body of the book, Johnson separates it from the version we see composed, suggesting that the finished, polished version of a piece of writing fails to capture the full extent of Johnson's experiences in the way the other chapters do and thus fails to act as a true representation of his experience.

Further differences include the fact that the chapter about the game also involves the minutiae of Johnson positioning himself in the stadium, providing commentary on the surroundings, and finding the phone so that he can dictate his article to the paper. The inclusion of these details grounds the depiction of the match in the firsthand experiences of Johnson himself and his habitual ways of thinking, revealing the extent to which his individual subjectivity is involved in shaping his depiction of events. To this end, this chapter functions in a way that is similar to the run-on sentences, in that it details exactly the process required to arrive from one set of experiences and narrative version to another, and ultimately to the finished

version. *The Unfortunates* centralizes the subjective perspective involved in writing in general, disrupting any conception of authorship that projects a figure who exists outside of the text, one who can be cleanly separated from the final textual product. This destabilization of reader-author roles is compounded by the fact that Johnson's article was not printed exactly as he dictated it: it was further edited by the "subs" before publication in a way that removed the poetic embellishment and figurative language: these include phrases such as "Skill was as uncommon as grass on the bone hyphen bare bone hyphen bare pitch" and a description of one of the players as "tall and bulky as Frankenstein," for example ("The pitch worn" 9-10). This dissonance recalls Johnson's concerns about the need for generalization being at odds with the representation of truth, as well as his suggestion that any writing that is true must be fundamentally solipsistic. The way that Johnson covers the match is even affected by these worries, with him asking himself while watching the game, "Does this bloody reporting affect, destroy even, my own interest in language, sometimes I feel I have mislaid perhaps, not lost, something through this reporting, using under the pressure of deadlines the words which first come into my head, which is no good, relying on the change of real words which may come in only the two hours of a match and the writing about it" ("The pitch worn" 7).

Johnson's book suggests that loss has the ability to act as an ultimate defining referent: one which cannot itself be located, but against which all other aspects of the grieving subject's life are considered. Thus, the loss itself cannot take on meaning; other aspects of life can only take on meaning in relation to it. Grief not only resists being located in relations of causality itself, but also by extension negates any order in other aspects of selfhood, since there are no clear boundaries distinguishing loss from other spheres of life. Johnson insists in the "Last" pamphlet that he does not know whether he can apply designations of meaning to Tony's death

because the only sure knowledge is located in the pain that he feels (4), a feeling that he reasserts at the chapter's end by saying that "not how he died, not what he died of, even less why he died, are of concern to me, only the fact that he did die, he is dead, is important: the loss to me, to us" (6).

As Jordan points out, Johnson's refusal to include a final full stop after this last sentence can be understood as a refusal to definitively end the text, implicitly encouraging the reader to understand their experience of reading the book as inherently unfinished and lacking a clear end point in a way that is comparable to the experience of grieving. This final section, however, further suggests that when the self loses an other against which to define itself, it instead defines itself against the absence of that other. The problem that Johnson confronts is how to represent this absence in language, and he attempts to do so by demonstrating the ability of empty space to take on a range of meanings that are dependent on a constantly-changing context and by using defamiliarizing formal structures that evoke the strange displacement from the self experienced during grief.

The result is that the structure of *The Unfortunates* calls attention to the physicality involved in grief that often goes unacknowledged in fictional texts. It insists that grief is embodied, with memories arising from sensory experience and the repetition of patterns of physical motion, such as Johnson's to particular places across Nottingham. The book suggests that the inability to delineate clear boundaries, and especially endings, for the process of grieving is partially attributable to these physical responses involved, as the associations that they will trigger are dynamic and unpredictable. *The Unfortunates* suggests that the idea of closure that involves connotations of recuperation into an external reality that can be cleanly distinguished from the process of grieving is fundamentally flawed, as this reality is inextricable from

grief. The suspicion that permeates Johnson's observations is not one that is limited to language; for he questions any attempts to move definitively beyond grief. He suggests that the only truth in representations of grief resides in an unmitigated assertion of the negating potential of absence.

Chapter 3: Displacement of the Grieving Self in Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*

The physical structure of Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (orig. *Rayuela*) also suggests that causal disruption is a defining characteristic of grief. However, the aleatory features of this novel — and the fact that its randomness is dependent on the reader's choice — highlight the reader's complicity in its limited and fragmentary nature. Running through the novel is the question of whether linguistic communication is inevitably solipsistic: Horacio maintains that solipsism contributes to the untrustworthiness of language, compromising any attempts to communicate about the nature of reality. Being grounded in individual perspectives is a limitation of writing that Cortázar suggests must be overcome in order to express the true, multiplicitous nature of a reality that is formed of myriad subjective perspectives that act on one another and thus cannot be easily distinguished. The novel's physical form enacts this limitation of expression by demonstrating that the reader's choice is responsible for the unfinished nature of the text. Cortázar's presentation of aleatory structure thus puts the reader in the position of simultaneously being both the one who inflicts and the one who receives the disruptive effects of loss that are embodied by the novel.

In other words, Cortázar's positioning of the reader not only challenges any clear role for that reader, but also gestures toward a prominent theme in the novel, which is the suggestion that grief has the potential to act as a site of intersubjective, shared experience. The text's treatment of the intersubjective potential of grief is directly tied to its concern with the problem of representing grief through narrative: the aleatory structure of Cortázar's text demonstrates that while the tenuous, fragile nature of textual and linguistic communication introduces ambiguity into communication, it is exactly this ambiguity that enables the production of textual meaning,

as it allows the reader to build connections in the text such that they are active participants in creating its meaning.

The novel's core narrative is the story of Horacio Oliveira, an Argentinian writer living in Paris who is a member of the Serpent Club, a group of eclectic intellectuals who idolize a writer named Morelli. After the sudden death of her infant son, Rocamadour, Horacio's lover La Maga disappears; in doing so she catalyzes his eventual deportation from France. The novel is split into three sections: "From the Other Side," which outlines the core narrative of Horacio's time living in Paris and the immediate aftermath of La Maga's disappearance; "From This Side," which describes his return to Buenos Aires and his involvement with Traveler and Talita, the circus-owning couple who appear to parallel Horacio and La Maga in a way that unsettles Horacio; and lastly, "From Diverse Sides: Expendable Chapters," which includes additional content about the Serpent Club as well as metafictional "Morelliana": fragments of Morelli's writing, his reflections about the process of writing, and textual excerpts and ephemera, such as quotations from other novels and newspapers, that relate to questions of representation, fictional forms, and the dyadic nature of the author-reader relationship. Although many of these fragments of writing appear unrelated to the general trajectory of the plot, the Morelliana suggests that there are indirect links that the reader can find between these fragments and Horacio's experiences, albeit only by paying close attention to the details of the text.

The novel follows Horacio's progressive loss of lucidity in the aftermath of La Maga's disappearance, as his longstanding attempts to conceptualize his relationship as an individual subject to external reality, and to articulate it using language, become increasingly tenuous and frantic, with his perception of reality becoming distorted by invasive memories of La Maga's disappearance. Without having La Maga present to act as an object against which he can define

himself, the boundary that he perceives between himself and the world becomes increasingly unclear, along with the boundaries dividing people he knows from those he remembers. The climactic ending scene of the novel involves him kissing Talita, whom he has begun to confuse with La Maga, and then barring himself into a hospital room by building a barricade of string and dishes of water. Horacio does so in fear that Traveler, whom he refers to as his *doppelgänger*, is coming to attack him because both Horacio and Traveler cannot continue to exist as the same person. These scenes represent a literal attempt on Horacio's part to guard himself against the confusion of his own identity with the external world, with this paranoia embodied by the presence of Traveler.

Although the phenomenon of doubling in the novel finds its primary form in the parallel relationships of Horacio, La Maga, Traveler, and Talita, it also involves Horacio's status as a writer and his attempts to express the limitations of metaphorical representations of subjectivity. Horacio's attempts to narrativize his experiences mirror not only Morelli's attitude toward writing, but also the formal structure of *Hopscotch* itself and its particular ways of engaging the reader. Horacio attempts to navigate the unclear boundaries and the fragmentation of self that he experiences by establishing a metaphorical framework that would faithfully represent the truth of reality, one able to express the location of the self in relation to others in a way that accounts for solipsism. How to understand this truth and whether it is possible is a question that Horacio returns to over the course of the novel.

Horacio becomes increasingly preoccupied with finding conceptual frameworks for locating the individual subject relationally within the world throughout the text; he becomes obsessive about this task after La Maga's disappearance, when his ability to situate her in opposition to himself is ruptured by his recognition of his dependence on her. Although he does

not grieve the death of Rocamadour directly, Horacio experiences an intense disruption in all aspects of his life, after a series of traumatic losses that occur as reactions to La Maga's grief at her son's death. These losses include La Maga herself, his friends in the Serpent Group, his access to Morelli, and Paris. La Maga's grief becomes the source of loss for Horacio, as her subsequent departure causes Horacio to move onto the street, where he is arrested and deported. Cortázar's novel thus depicts loss as a network of negation, in which the disruptions of grief become themselves the catalysts for further loss.

As in Johnson, Horacio's grief involves the disruption of a unified, distinct notion of self. The loss of La Maga reveals the extent to which Horacio's understanding of himself as a writer and intellectual is dependent on her presence. Specifically, the simplicity and literalness that Horacio understands as characteristic of La Maga's thinking allow him to identify himself (a messy thinker) in opposition to her. By characterizing La Maga as incapable of apprehending abstract thought, Horacio is able to use her as a marker that he can define himself against, with his affinities for and rejections of the interpretations of Morelli's work by different members of the Serpent Club performing a similar function. The loss of these others who can be relied on as stable points of reference for Horacio leads to the disintegration of his tentative self-positioning. La Maga's absence therefore takes on significant symbolic meaning for Horacio, as he equates it with the loss of a bounded and comprehensible self. Prior to Rocamadour's death, Horacio's attitude toward La Maga is one of distanced amusement and condescension: he sees her apparent lack of interest in theoretical questions as indicative of an uncomplicated, unsophisticated psyche, describing her consistent inability to understand the Serpent Group's conversations without his help. This is a task that Horacio both resents and depends on, given that it affirms his intellectual ability and La Maga's incompetence. He is used to pitying La Maga and not to being

pitied, such that it causes him significant distress when he realizes that these roles have been reversed (320).

This dynamic is blown apart by the losses triggered by Rocamadour's death, because the qualities that Horacio uses to distinguish himself from La Maga are thrown into contingency. The fact that both Horacio and La Maga are literally displaced from Paris compounds the blurring of their previous roles, a blurring that Horacio acknowledges when he describes his dependence on her as a beloved object. Horacio's inability to locate himself accurately in the world in the wake of loss becomes apparent when, on his trip to El Cerro, he thinks he glimpses La Maga at the port. The beginning of this section gestures toward his coming inability to use language as a way of clearly locating himself in the world: he observes that "you never really do get next to El Cerro, you arrive all at once and never know actually whether you're already there or not, near El Cerro would be better" (288). This moment marks a turning point in the text, where Horacio recognizes both that he was dependent on La Maga in understanding himself and that his memories of her are involuntarily disrupting any control that he might have thought he had over his relationship with her.

Horacio's first experience of misrecognizing La Maga emphasizes the automatic and unconscious nature of his reaction. When he sees the guest he mistakes for La Maga, he notes that "La Maga came from behind a ventilator funnel . . . Oliveira made no attempt to follow her; he knew only too well that he was looking at something that would not let itself be followed . . . She did look a lot like La Maga, that was certain, but he had supplied the main part of the resemblance" (288). This is an unwelcome realization for Horacio, as he continues to reflect that "some uncontrollable desire had brought her up out of the depths of that place defined as the subconscious . . . Until that moment, he had believed that he could allow himself the luxury of

the melancholy memory of certain things, evoke determined stories in a proper time and atmosphere, then put an end to them . . .” (288-9). Horacio’s mention of the subconscious here reaffirms the involuntary nature of his memories — they are not under his conscious control. Instead, the memories reveal his lack of control by invasively altering his perception of the present. Horacio’s acknowledgement of the involuntary nature of his memories is directly tied to his recognition that the loss of La Maga has fundamentally upset the way that he positioned himself in the world. His understanding of himself as competent and self-sufficient is upset by his realization that this self-perception is impossible to maintain in La Maga’s absence.

Horacio’s experience at El Cerro leads him to identify La Maga as his beloved object and to see that one can truly know reality only through the loss of the beloved object. This is so because that loss reveals the elasticity of reality and calls into question easy distinctions between people in the world. He thinks that “to know that he was in love with La Maga was neither a defeat nor any sort of fixation in any outdated order of things; a love that could do without its object, that could find its nourishment in nothingness . . .” This observation seems to suggest that the nothingness that ensues from the loss of the beloved object is a viable tool for positioning the self, but that it leads to a self-understanding that is tenuous and easily undoable. Horacio points to this tenuousness directly when he thinks that “Maybe love was the highest enrichment, a giver of being; but only by bungling it could one avoid its boomerang effect, let it run off into nothingness, and sustain one’s self alone again on this new step of open and porous reality. Killing the beloved object, that ancient fear of man, was the price paid” (290). In another section, he notes that “in that way, La Maga would cease being a lost object and become the image of a possible reunion — no longer with her but on this side of her or on the other side of her; by her but not her — . . . everything could have meaning just as long as it was extrapolated” (292).

Evoking the section titles (“From the Other Side”, “From This Side”, “From Diverse Sides”), Horacio’s reflection about using La Maga’s absence to create the possibility for new modes of locating himself (“by her but not her”) involves envisioning a future in which they can distinguish themselves without existing in opposition to one another.

The fact that La Maga’s absence is necessary in order to trigger his recognition of their shared experiences suggests that grief operates not only as a network of negation, capable of reproducing itself, but can also be understood as the basis for intersubjective experience. By embodying the fragmentary and physical qualities of grief, the aleatory structure of the novel reinforces this intersubjective potential by confusing any clear distinctions between the roles of reader and author, positioning the reader as both responsible for the causal disorder of the text and also subject to its effects. These states mirror Cortázar’s depiction of mourned losses that produce further loss in turn. The ability of grief to destabilize distinct conceptions of the self in ordering systems is one that seems to dissolve any centrality of the subject that would lead to solipsistic representations of reality. However, Cortázar’s text problematizes this reading by a) depicting this intersubjectivity as only possible in the absence of the other, and b) suggesting that these delineations between the self and the world are to some extent necessary, such that their dissolution leads to madness for Horacio. His recognition and acknowledgment of his and La Maga’s similarities is only possible when La Maga is gone. However, this absence does not prevent Horacio from attempting to continue using her as a point of comparison for his understanding of his own subjectivity. He begins instead to define himself against her absence, and specifically against his tenuous and imperfect memories of her, which proliferate because of that absence.

Hopscotch's treatment of narrativization, especially in its metafictional elements, is closely related to the problem of loss confusing clear boundaries for the subject, given that the characters, especially Horacio, investigate the possibility of using writing as a way to reaffirm such distinctions or navigate them when they are destabilized. But the novel also explores the limitations of such an approach, suggesting that there are moments at which written representation fails, or where certain textual forms become inadequate for fully representing reality. The Morelliana, the metafictional elements of the text that describe Morelli's reflections on the writing process and the novel form, offer a framework for understanding Horacio's attempts to theorize his own identity as a writer; but they can also be read as self-referential commentary on the novel itself and the way that it situates the reader. Their designation as "Expendable Chapters" positions the Morelliana and textual fragments as supplementary, not necessary for baseline comprehension of Horacio's narrative arc. Many features of the novel, though, including its possibility for an aleatory physical structure, formal elements, and thematic concerns, contribute to an implicit criticism of any reading that fails to engage with the hopscotch metaphor that is embodied by the B-text.² In particular, the text suggests that the limitations of metaphor in expressing the subjective fracturing of grief mean that this disjunction cannot be apprehended in its full significance if the reader adheres to traditional practices, that is, reading consecutive pages "in the normal fashion" (v).

² Reading the chapters in the order in which they are printed is referred to hereafter as the A-text, and reading the chapters by hopping through the numbers is hereafter referred to as the B-text.

In features that echo moves by Johnson, the implicit criticism of a passive reader, whom Morelli designates the female-reader,³ suggests that the full complexity of lived experiences and the affective responses involved cannot be captured by traditionally-structured texts. Cortázar, however, adopts an approach to this problem that implicates the reader's decisions even more extensively than in Johnson. The reader of *The Unfortunates* cannot avoid reading the book in a randomized order: it is presented as such by the publisher, so that even if the reader chooses to read the pamphlets in the order in which they are received, the reader is nonetheless given a necessarily-disordered book. However, randomization itself becomes a choice that Cortázar demands the reader make by preserving the possibility of a traditional reading. The novel's aleatory quality thus depends on the reader's choice to hop through the chapters by reading them according to the out-of-order numbers at the end of each one. The "Table of Instructions" that prefaces the book notes that the "first" approach involves reading the text "in the normal fashion, [which] ends with Chapter 56 . . . Consequently, the reader may ignore what follows with a clear conscience" (v). However, the text sets up a false choice between these two approaches, since they fail to account for all possible ways of reading the text. But the B-text also suggests that "ignoring" the metafictional and textual fragments of the "Expendable Chapters" situates the reader as passive and disengaged, as well as partially culpable for the limitations of the text's expression of grief.

The questions of grief in the novel are inextricably bound up with its depiction of how different causal and relational frameworks position the self in the world, and Cortázar uses the

³ The translation of the text from Spanish to English by Gregory Rabassa yields the construction "male-reader" and "female-reader," a binary that Michael Hardin notes is not present in the original Spanish (the original terms being *el lector-hembra* and *el lector cómplice*).

physical structure of the text to demand the reader's involvement in this dynamic. With respect to the two primary ways of reading the text outlined by the "Table of Instructions" (i.e., the A-text and the B-text), the reader is encouraged to engage with the aleatory potential of the book and find themselves within the hopscotch, responsible for its disorder and non-linear structure. Refusing this engagement would mean the reader ignores a third of the published material, leaving their reading utterly incomplete. However, the very possibility of multiple reading orders means that any single approach to the text will, like in *The Unfortunates*, always be an incomplete reading of the many that are possible, meaning that any binary separation of the two types of reading – passive and active – is misleading. This is especially true since these are not the only possible ways to read the text: as Scott Simpkins argues, one can refuse the parameters of the game laid out by the Instructions, and adopt a reading of the book's different sections that adheres to neither of the prescribed formats. Simpkins points out that "[i]n an interview [Cortázar] noted: 'In recent years . . . reading the studies [on my works] has ended up by depressing me, since, in the last analysis, they establish the total negation of the author's invention and freedom.' Accordingly, the player who cooperates with Cortázar in his game of control is essentially handing him a trophy" (Simpkins 70). Simpkins suggests that the true male-reader, the reader who acts as an individual agent with free choice, would be the one who shirks both the A-text *and* the B-text and approaches the novel in an innovative way. By making the aleatory nature of the novel a choice on the part of the reader, Cortázar involves them directly in the network of guilt, grief, and metaphor that governs Horacio's experiences. In the B-text, the novel moves non-chronologically from events in Buenos Aires back to memories of the Serpent Club and Paris prior to Rocamadour's death. The non-linearity of the B-text's structure thus

invokes the invasive quality of Horacio's memories and forces the reader to emulate the splitting of Horacio's consciousness as it is pulled between the past and present.

It is significant that choosing to engage with the metafictional hopscotch represented by the B-text, with the physical interaction this demands, exposes the reader to the fragmentary aspects of the novel, which are largely lost in the A-text. The chapters of the A-text are located in chronological and causal order. A note by Morelli describes his desire to create a "narrative that will not be the pretext for the transmission of a 'message' . . . a coagulant of experiences . . . for which reason it will have to be written as an antinovel, because every closed order will systematically leave outside those announcements that can make messengers out of us, bring us to our own limits from which we are so far removed" (396-7). Cortázar's use of an untraditional formal structure in the B-text can be understood as this kind of "antinovel," with its own open order explicitly using the gaps (both physical and associative) between the chapters to accommodate the reader's individual subjective perspective as they create affinities between different sections of the text.

Morelli's distinction between the male-reader and the female-reader bears further scrutiny (396). He writes that the female-reader is unable or unwilling to participate actively (or recognize their active participation) in textual meaning and is thwarted by texts where systems of order are not immediately clear. In contrast, the male-reader is open to immersion when approaching the text, reading in a way that "obliges him to be an accomplice . . . a traveling companion. Simultaneize him, provided that the reading will abolish reader's time and substitute author's time. Thus the reader would be able to become a coparticipant and cosufferer of the experience through which the novelist is passing *at the same moment and in the same form* . . . [T]he only thing worth anything is the material in gestation, the experimental immediacy"

(397). The strange logic of an author's world is framed explicitly in terms of linear and temporal systems, and Morelli suggests that it is in these systems that the male-reader must be open to immersing themselves. One chapter of the *Morelliana* notes that this is a project that the Serpent Club themselves must engage in while reading Morelli's work, as many of the fragments of his writing contradict one another, forcing the reader to make choices (478). Adaptation is an inevitable feature of reading the B-text: the reader must engage not only in the hopscotch but also in the sense of disjointedness, confusion, and fragmentation that it evokes. These are qualities that also characterize Horacio's grief as he becomes progressively less lucid and begins seeing hallucinations of La Maga. This back-and-forth movement from the past to the present, with the past becoming mapped over and thereby distorting Horacio's perception of the present, is underscored by the act of the reader flipping between the sections of the B-text, with the physical interaction representing the immersion that is central to the active reader and consolidating the links between the reader and the grieving subject.

By foregrounding the active role of the reader in the construction of the text and positioning the author in this passage as a spectator for whom meaning unfolds, Morelli inverts traditional dyadic roles that place the writer as God-like arbiter of meaning and the reader as passive observer who bears witness to this meaning. In a section that elaborates on his conception of the ideal reader, the male-reader, Morelli states a hope that in the act of reading his book, "the accumulation of fragments would quickly crystallize into a total reality. Without having to invent bridges, or sew up different pieces of the tapestry, behold suddenly a city or a tapestry . . . and Morelli, the author, would be the first spectator to marvel at that world that was taking on coherence" (469). The freedom from having to invent these connections allows the author to displace responsibility for his creation onto the reader, since the lack of established

order in Morelli's writing creates an open space of potential creative agency for the reader to inhabit. In Morelli's formulation, the presence of any clear order in a text inhibits the male-reader's ability to impose their own subjectively-grounded meaning and threads of association and relation onto the text. The text explicitly identifies among such ordering frameworks those of linear and causal progression by mentioning temporal simultaneity. Morelli expands on this relationship when he writes that "coherence meant basically assimilation in space and time, an ordering to the taste of the female-reader . . . [R]ather . . . Morelli would have sought a crystallization which, without altering the disorder in which the bodies of his little planetary system circulated, would permit a ubiquitous and total comprehension of all its reasons for being . . . a crystallization in which nothing would remain subsumed, but where a lucid eye might peep into the kaleidoscope and understand the great polychromatic rose" (469). This type of reading, Morelli suggests, would involve the ability to perceive the whole while recognizing and retaining the multiple possibilities for arranging the internal elements. At one point, an unidentified member of the Serpent Club notes that in his writing, "[Morelli] gets less and less worried about joining the parts together, that business of one word's leading to another . . . I have the impression he's looking for a less mechanical interaction, one less caused by the elements that he works with" (443). The fragmentation present in the text is thus not only a marker of Horacio's grief, but prompts the reader to acknowledge their role as creator of any coherence among these parts.

The overall structure of *Hopscotch* and the choices that it requires of the reader operate in a similar fashion, resisting the endorsement of any single order that would flatten the disordered and multiplicitous potential of the text — especially in the final chapters of the B-text, whose interminability suggests that the reading experience can never be considered fully complete.

Hopscotch's formal structure suggests that the reader cannot separate their own awareness of themselves-as-readers and active agents in the making of meaning from their approach to a book. This interpretation is reinforced by Morelli's speculation in Chapter 97 that textual meaning depends largely on invoking the reader's ability to project ordering frameworks onto a narrative that would make it comprehensible. He claims that any sense of order arising from the reading experience is dependent on the reader's immersion in the text, and that this willingness to immerse themselves in the world of the text is central to the operation of the reader-author contract and a text's production of meaning. Morelli characterizes writing as dropping the reader into a "personal world" that reflects the mind of the author, which will necessarily force the reader to adapt to its "strange logic" by generating associations between the different aspects of the world (437). Morelli writes:

To plunge oneself into a reality . . . and to feel how that which at first sight seemed to be the wildest absurdity comes to have some value . . . until the divergent weave (in relation to the stereotypical sketch of everyday life) appears and is defined in a coherent sketch . . . to place a reader — a certain reader, that is true — in contact with a *personal* world, with a personal existence and meditation . . . That reader will be without any bridge, any causal articulation . . . but who is prepared to displace himself, remove himself, decenter himself, uncover himself? . . . I wonder whether someday I will ever succeed in making it felt that the true character and the only one who interests me is the reader. (437)

The formulation of the reader as character further underscores the necessity of their involvement with the text: Cortázar suggests that it is this willingness to abandon oneself to the "strange

logic” of a novel that acts as the precondition for the reader’s ability to become an active agent through constructing networks of meaning between disparate parts of the text. Morelli attempts to navigate the danger of solipsism by encouraging the reader to exercise their own subjective construction of meaning in the context of making the logic of another’s mind comprehensible, employing the limited perspective of individual subjectivity in the service of creating an intersubjective reader-author relationship.

Horacio’s anxiety about locating himself in relation to the world using language takes the specific form of his ambivalent relationship to metaphor. The metaphors used in the text to explore the situation of the self are many and varied, and reflect the broader philosophical questions taken up by Horacio. Among them are the kibbutz of desire, the kaleidoscope, the center-periphery, and the hopscotch itself. While the text prompts the reader to consider whether metaphor is capable of offering a more genuine representation of subjective experience than literal, non-metaphorical descriptions, Horacio also gestures at the limits of metaphor, or at least any singular metaphor, in fully capturing the truth of subjective experience. Rather, Cortázar suggests that using narrative as a vehicle for locating the subject in the world must employ a dynamic range of metaphors, which both the characters and the reader can conceptually hop between in their apprehension of meaning, thus paralleling the physical hopping through the B-text. However, this necessarily means that none of these metaphors individually are sufficient to represent the self; one must be willing to adopt and abandon metaphors without attachment. Horacio arrives at this realization just before his suicide attempt, when he notes regarding his barricade of string and water that “the more fragile and perishable the structure, the greater the freedom to make and unmake it” (327). One of the attitudes that will become a defining feature

of Horacio's insanity at the end of the text is this affirmation of the fluidity and limited nature of linguistic (and especially metaphorical) systems.

While in the Serpent Club, Horacio becomes attached to the idea of the center of meaning, which he figures as the truth of reality, and the possibility of conceptualizing the self in such a way that one is able to apprehend or inhabit this center. Cortázar establishes the necessity of a range of metaphors for understanding the self in relation to others through Horacio's ultimate acceptance of the impossibility of attaining this center after returning to Buenos Aires, a rejection that, notably, occurs after the disappearance of La Maga and his banishment from Paris. While balancing on a plank between his apartment and Traveler's, Horacio considers that he is "get[ing] the idea that you are the center . . . But it's incalculably stupid. A center as illusory as it would be to try to find ubiquity. There is no center, there's a kind of continuous confluence, an undulation of matter" (241). Recalling the Derridean rejection of a center of meaning, Horacio explicitly dismisses conceptions of the self that regard it as clearly distinguishable from the world and instead begins to register the nebulous nature of any such distinctions.

Horacio consistently returns to the image of the kibbutz of desire as another possible metaphor for expressing this centre of meaning. He defines it as "colony, settlement, taking root, the chosen place in which to raise the final tent, where you can . . . join up with the world . . . lay yourself bare to the crystallization of desire, of the meeting" (203). Horacio's imagining of the kibbutz involves the ideal configuration of the dynamic understandings of the self that would bring them into harmonious unity with others, a state of transcendent understanding of the self in relation to the world. He reflects on it when barricading himself into the hospital room and looking down from the window onto the literal hopscotch drawn on the ground of the hospital courtyard, noting that "it was always going to pain Oliveira that he could not even get a notion of

that unity that at other times he called the center, and which for lack of more precise dimensions was reduced to images like . . . kibbutz of desire” (331). Horacio’s consciousness of himself, and especially his ability to apprehend and analyze himself in relation the world, is limited by the slipperiness of metaphor that it is dependent on.

One of the clearest examples of the text’s emphasis on the necessity of using multiple metaphorical frameworks to express the relational dimensions of the self is Horacio’s consistent use of the hopscotch and kibbutz metaphors in conjunction with one another. Horacio understands the hopscotch as the vehicle or process through which the unity represented by the kibbutz can be attained. It is a specifically horizontal and non-linear conceptualization of progress, as Horacio stresses numerous times. One of the most central instances is just prior to his deportation in the passage that ends the first section, “From the Other Side”: “through the snot and semen and stink . . . you would come onto the road leading to the kibbutz of desire, no longer rising up to Heaven . . . but walk along with the pace of a man through a land of men toward the kibbutz far off there but on the same level, just as Heaven was on the same level as Earth on the dirty sidewalk where you played the game, and one day perhaps you would enter that world . . . and one day someone would see the true outline of the world, patterns pretty as can be, and perhaps, pushing the stone along, you would end up entering the kibbutz” (215). This use of the hopscotch as a non-hierarchical figuration of unified understanding and of the subject — a figuration in which perfect unity, Heaven, is on the same level as the sidewalk — figures “true reality . . . [as] not something that is going to happen, a goal, the last step, the end of an evolution,” as Etienne mentions while interpreting Morelli. “No, it’s something that’s already here” (445). By the climactic hospital scene, the hopscotch has become a metaphor for Horacio that links the active agency of the male-reader — especially as embodied by the B-text — with

attempts to break from the myopia of solipsism. Horacio says to Traveler, “nobody asks you to deny what you’re seeing, but if only you were capable of pushing a little, understand, with the tip of your toe,” invoking the image, which Horacio comments on a number of times in the novel, of pushing the hopscotch stone forward with one’s toe.

Throughout the text, Horacio is preoccupied with questions of solipsism and the problem of nonetheless attempting to discuss reality in a way that is able to account for its irreducibly multifaceted nature, in that it is formed by an aggregation of individual subjective perspectives. Although these are problems that concern Horacio even prior to deportation, while he is still part of the Serpent Club, they take a more theoretical form in which he is able to retain some psychological distance from their implications. During one meeting of the Club, Horacio argues that “[w]ithout any words I feel, I know, that I am here,” Ronald insisted . . . ‘Perfect,’ said Oliveira. ‘Except that this reality is no guarantee for you or for anybody else unless you transform it into a concept, and then into a convention, a useful scheme’ (160). Horacio thus suggests that physical awareness on its own, without language, is not a viable mode of expressing the self any more than language alone is, unless this physicality is considered in conjunction with language or rendered in a comparable communicative framework. He goes on to frame this rejection of singular modes of representation as arising directly from the pluralistic subjective perspectives present in reality, saying: “The simple fact that you are on my left and I am on your right makes at least two realities out of this one reality, and realize that I don’t want to get obtuse and point out that you and I are two entities that are absolutely out of touch with one another except by means of feelings and words, things that one must mistrust” (160). In saying this, Horacio investigates language is another possible mode of communicating the true

multidimensional nature of reality, but ends by flatly asserting the inherently limited nature of linguistic expression.

Horacio further reaffirms his awareness of the possible solipsism introduced by language and its potential to be alienating rather than intersubjective during the scene where La Maga discovers Rocamadour's body. Horacio thinks that he should go console her, but decides against it, thinking that "I would be doing it for myself . . . She's beyond anything. I'm the one who would sleep better afterward, even if it's just an expression. Me, me, me" (170-1). Rather than rely on language as a way of relating to La Maga from the position that he inhabits at the time of Rocamadour's death, the novel suggests that Horacio must lose her in turn and inhabit the subjective position of grief himself — the same position that the reader is encouraged to with the B-text — in order to truly apprehend the effects of loss and thus understand La Maga's reaction to her child's death in a way that is not limited by the solipsism of language. After La Maga's disappearance, however, Horacio's situation as a grieving subject throws his metaphorical attempts to articulate his relationship to the world into greater contingency, as Horacio's understanding of his identity and La Maga's identity (such as understanding himself as pitier and her as pitied) become inverted.

The destabilized boundaries between himself and the external world come to a head at the end of the novel, with Horacio's breakdown looking out the hospital window, which results in his attempt to kill himself. The moment parallels La Maga's breakdown upon finding Rocamadour dead, which resulted in her disappearance. Although never confirmed, Horacio and Gregorovius, another member of the Serpent Club, raise the possibility that La Maga's disappearance could be attributed to her own suicide (175). As E.D. Carter notes in "The Double as Defense in Cortázar's *Hopscotch*," there are also sections of the text that imply La Maga may

have drowned herself, in which case the parallel between Horacio throwing himself from the window and La Maga throwing herself into the river becomes still more pronounced (92). Carter refers to the section of the text where Gregorovius says to Horacio that “[La Maga] is better off at the bottom of the river than in bed with you” (183). In another example, after talking to Horacio, Talita mentions that “I felt as if Horacio were somewhere else, talking to someone else, to a drowned woman, for example. It comes back to me now, but he’d never said that La Maga had been drowned in the river” (520). Carter claims that La Maga’s death is likely (91), but much of the text depends on the ambiguity of her disappearance and Horacio’s uncertainty about whether she is alive contributes largely to the fear that results from his visions of her. Horacio’s inability to determine whether La Maga would have killed herself in response to her son’s death emphasizes how limited his knowledge of her is, and the fact that he viewed La Maga as a vehicle for his own self-perception rather than as another subject. The other qualities that Horacio takes for granted as applying to himself — his capacity for abstract thinking, his independence, his apathy — are also thus called into question in a way that destabilizes any clear image that he has of himself.

Horacio further notes the problems inherent in expressing any kind of true representation of reality when he emphasizes to Ronald the network of factors that are involved in a single person’s perception of the real and that he would “understand that your cheap egocentrism would not afford [him] any valid reality” if he were able to perceive reality from the subjective position of others (161). Horacio thus asserts the inadequacy of attempts to articulate through the focalization of a single subjective position. Instead, his stance stresses the importance of recognizing how individual frameworks of cognition — memories, biases, associations — alter one’s perception of the space that they inhabit in relation to others, an observation that becomes

resonant in the second half of the novel, as it is Horacio's memories of and preoccupation with the absence of La Maga that cause his increasing paranoia and inability to use language accurately. He implies that a more faithful expression is one that, like the image of the hopscotch, embodies the inherently multifaceted and disjointed nature of potential perspectives from which these questions can be approached. Like Johnson, Cortázar suggests that the inherent solipsism of language prevents it from fully expressing the truth of reality, with the incorporation of physical movement becoming one possible site from which to confront this solipsism.

In addition to the novel as a whole, one particular chapter, 34, further gestures at the potential of experimental forms for capturing a multiple, divided consciousness. This chapter describes Horacio annotating a book as he reads it and is comprised of pairs of lines, with the odd lines acting as the text in the book he is reading and the even lines acting as his commentary. In practice, this reads as such: "[A] few months after the demise of my/And the things she reads, a clumsy novel, in a cheap edition/father, I decided to give up my business activities, transferring/besides, but you wonder how she can get interested..." (191). The reader must read to the end of one set of lines and hop backward in the chapter to read the next set, or attempt to keep track of the streams of both narrative and thought at once. This chapter illustrates Horacio's aforementioned contempt of La Maga, as the book that he is reading is hers and much of his commentary involves the inane nature of the book. The chapter also explores his use of La Maga's interests as vehicles for establishing his own critical abilities.

More importantly, however, Cortázar's formal experimentation in this section illustrates through the physical closeness of the lines on the page that the text cannot be understood distinct from the subjective position of the reader, as well as the motives and circumstances that inform their reading. This conception also emphasizes how each experience of reading is located in

time, such that the conditions in which a reader approaches a book alter their construction of its meaning. This chapter thus contributes to the sense that *Hopscotch*, as Jordan suggests with that *The Unfortunates*, is an unfinishable text; however, this is true not only because the reader can reread the texts in a variety of different orders. *Hopscotch* suggests that even rereading the novel in the *same* order will fail to yield the same text, as the circumstances surrounding each subsequent reading will be different and the subjective position of the reader will thus have changed.

The novel's focus on intersubjectivity is reinforced by another of Cortázar's formal choices, which is the switching of narrative perspectives in different chapters. Although most of the chapters take the form of selective third-person grounded in Horacio's point-of-view, Chapter 35 is Gregorovius's reflections on Horacio and his position in the Serpent Club, Chapter 32 is a letter written from La Maga to Rocamadour, much of the Morelliana is Morelli's own writing, and a number of chapters in the last two sections of the text are from Traveler and Talita's point-of-view. Although Horacio's point-of-view as observer is implicit in some of these sections (it is suggested that he is the one who is reading La Maga's letter and Morelli's writing, solidifying the notion that the reader is encouraged to occupy the position of both writer and observer), Cortázar's inclusion of textual fragments from a variety of subjective points-of-view creates a formal parallel between the multiplicity of perspectives that constitutes reality and the disjointed, fragmentary memories that result from trauma.

The novel's climax illustrates how Horacio's attempts to use metaphor to situate himself in the world and the failure of language recall the fallibility of traumatic memories and the misrecognition that they cause, often in the form of doubling where the distinctions between characters become confused. The physical hopscotch layout outside the hospital becomes

instrumental in the events leading up to the novel's climax, when Horacio sees Talita hopping through it and mistakes her for La Maga, a recurring, involuntary error on his part. He says that "[w]hen Traveler introduced him to Talita on the dock . . . he again felt certain remote likenesses condensing quickly into a total false resemblance, as if from out of his apparently so well compartmentalized memory a piece of ectoplasm had suddenly emerged, capable of inhabiting and complementing another body and another face, of looking at him from outside in a way that he had thought forever restricted to memories" (289). However, this doubling becomes most prominent in the 56th chapter. Just before the suicide attempt that involves him trying to jump into the hopscotch without moving through it, thus jumping directly to Heaven, the Yonder, or Unity, Horacio thinks to himself that:

At that hour and in that darkness, it could have just as easily been La Maga as Talita . . . it was rather strange that Traveler should keep on scratching at the door . . . (it could be La Maga or Talita, they looked so much alike and much more so at night and from the third story) . . . to make him lose his mind, pull him off his position on the square (at least from one to eight, because he hadn't been able to get beyond eight, he would never reach Heaven, he would never enter his kibbutz.) . . . 'Come over here, Maga . . . You look so much alike from here that your name can be changed.' (337)

Doubling thus becomes explicitly linked to the limitations of language in this passage, since it shows how malleable language has become to Horacio. Later in this chapter, during his confrontation with Traveler, Horacio refers to Talita again as La Maga. Traveler responds, "You know perfectly well it's not La Maga," and Horacio says, "It's not La Maga. I know perfectly well it's not La Maga" (343). Although he may know this, Horacio seems to be unable to refrain

from applying La Maga's name to other people, with the naming itself taking the form of an involuntary compulsion that distorts the present. After this exchange and immediately prior to jumping, Horacio uses the names Talita and La Maga interchangeably to refer to Talita again (348). Naming, an act that ostensibly distinguishes objects and people in the world, has become a fluid site of confusion for Horacio. Like Johnson, Horacio also experiences an inability to divorce himself from the moment of traumatic loss, but in this case, this inability is one that is specifically grounded in Horacio's misrecognition of La Maga and his inability to accurately place her in the world by naming her.

As it acknowledges the limitations of language, the novel also suggests, like *The Unfortunates*, that one approach to mitigating such limitations is to experience the linguistic in direct conjunction with the physical. Horacio's automatic, invasive memory of La Maga, in the form of his inability to accurately name things in the world, finds parallels in the automatic reading that Morelli notes is characteristic of the female-reader. There are passages throughout the text that propose that one way of experiencing the immersion necessary to active, male-reader engagement, and disrupting the mechanical, unthinking reading of the female-reader, is through the physical. *Hopscotch* implies that consciously registering one's physical reactions can allow the self to navigate forms of fragmentary consciousness, such as those of traumatic memories or of the experience of reading that drops the reader into a world whose components have a "strange logic" to them (437). Horacio gestures to this point when he talks about possible metaphors for conceptualizing Paris: "Paris is a center . . . a mandala through which one must pass without dialectics, a labyrinth where pragmatic formulas are of no use except to get lost in. Then a cogito which may be a kind of breathing Paris in, getting into it by letting it get into you, pneuma and not logos" (427). These metaphors suggest not being immersed in the city but

breathing it in (a “pneuma”); they suggest that the possibility of unity that Horacio covets might be most accessible through a marriage of the physical and the metaphorical, rather than considering *logos* in isolation from the physicality of knowledge.

This emphasis on physicality is further reinforced near the close of the novel, when Horacio is waiting in the hospital room for Traveler’s arrival. He reflects on “nothing at all that could be thought about, but . . . it could be felt in terms of stomach contraction, territory, deep and spasmodic breathing, sweat on the palms of his hands . . . pulling in his guts, thirst” (331). This passage not only underscores the depiction of the traumatized subjectivity as one that is comprised of multiple, fragmented losses that lead to fears about the unbounded self, but also suggests that the cumulative effects of grief resist articulation in such a way that they can only be perceived through the sum of physical reactions that they cause. Much like Johnson's memories, which stress the physical pain intrinsic to loss, Horacio is unable to “[think] about” the uncertainty surrounding his selfhood in a meaningful way without accounting for its physical resonance.

In the Morelliana, Cortázar emphasizes the potential for using bodily engagement to situate the self in the world by discussing it in the context of the physical form of the novel. In one example, the Morelliana mentions a specific mock-up page, comprised of a single sentence, which Morelli has written for an unfinished novel: “Underneath it all he knew that one cannot go beyond because there isn’t any. The sentence is repeated over and over for the whole length of the page, giving the impression of a wall, an impediment. There are no periods or commas or margins. A wall, in fact, of words that illustrate the meaning of the sentence, the collision with a wall behind which there is nothing. But toward the bottom and on the right, in one of the sentences, the word *any* is missing. A sensitive eye can discover a hole among the bricks, the

light that shows through” (370). This note weaves together not only the literal and metaphorical with its wall of text, but explicitly ties the limitations of textual structure to the physical engagement of the reader, especially to the requirement for the close, careful attention of the male-reader, and considered in conjunction with the overall structure of *Hopscotch* itself, suggests that physical fragmentation can be a way of stimulating that mental filling-in-the-blanks by the reader that is central to the meaning of a text.

The end of the novel consolidates the connection between the book's aleatory possibilities and their relationship to the destabilized centrality of the self's perspective that is triggered by grief. Traveler confronts Horacio, resulting in Horacio's attempt to kill himself by leaping out the window and landing on the hopscotch on the courtyard below. He says to Traveler, “if I jump, I'm going to land right on Heaven” (343), suggesting that this is an attempt to enter directly into the unity signified by the final square, rather than attempting to reach it by passing through the shifting perspectives of the rest of the hopscotch, which have become increasingly difficult for him to distinguish from one another. He thinks that:

That's the way it was, the harmony lasted incredibly long, there were no words that could answer the goodness of those two down there below, looking at him and talking to him from the hopscotch, because Talita had stopped in square three without realizing it, and Traveler had one foot in six, so that the only thing left to do was to . . . stay there looking at La Maga, at Manu, telling himself that there was some meaning after all, even though it might only last just for that terribly sweet instant in which the best thing without any doubt at all would be to lean over just a little bit farther out and let himself go. (349)

This section marks the end of the A-text, but the B-text continues with a number of chapters in the “From Diverse Sides” section, describing the aftermath of Horacio’s suicide attempt and the fact that he has been subsequently hospitalized himself and is being drugged by his friends in Buenos Aires (Talita, Traveler, Ovejero, and Gekrepten) in order to sleep. This continues up to chapters 58 and 131, whose end numbers lead to one another interminably in a vicious circle. The structure of the B-text therefore culminates in urging the reader to leave the book, to actively depart from the prescribed path of the numbers. Notably, it does not lead to a “Heaven” or to a final, unifying chapter that resolves any ambiguities raised in the novel, indirectly affirming Horacio’s suspicion that the unity represented by the final hopscotch square, or yielding from attempts to jump into it, can never be attained. As with Jordan’s suggestion about the impossibility of a complete reading of *The Unfortunates*, the multiple possible orders for reading *Hopscotch* encourage the reader to approach it as a text that can never be entirely finished. The unending nature of these two final chapters according to the B-text’s internal logic also suggests that the novel finds its only clear ending in the possibility of the reader making the active decision to close the book.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The physical structures of both *Hopscotch* and *The Unfortunates* are inextricable from their depictions of grief and the subjective fragmentation that it causes, which often takes the form of disjointed and involuntary memories. Although the texts' approaches to the possibility of using language to navigate this fragmentation differ, both approaches are dependent on the physical interaction of the reader; the different forms that this interaction can take facilitate the variations in how individual readers will make meaning from the text. Both books prompt the reader to be acutely aware of their physical comportment while reading, undermining the automatic engagement of Morelli's female-reader and demanding that the reader become consciously aware of the choices that they are making, both physical and mental, that contribute to the construction of the text. In doing so, these books depict the conscious registering of the physical effects of grief as a way of navigating its disruptive effects. The reader of these novels mimics the person suffering from grief: both reading and grief deny positioning within a causal or orderly framework, and as such, grief and the experience of reading these texts are not subject to all the limitations of the linguistic. Cortázar and Johnson stress that the textual cannot be divorced from the physical, and their use of experimental formal elements makes this apparent. However, this approach also indirectly calls attention to the physicality involved in reading books that use traditional forms, as well as the "strange logic" equally present — though in subtle, less overt ways — in such traditional novels. Such physical engagement always acts, to a reader educated by Johnson and Cortázar, as an open space to inhabit.

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