

**Ontological and Political Search for 'El Hombre Nuevo': Julio Cortázar's
Rayuela and *Libro de Manuel***

by

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ABSTRACT

ONTOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL SEARCH FOR 'EL HOMBRE NUEVO':

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Despite the wide range of publications about Julio Cortázar, there is no study that specifically addresses the question: what does Cortázar mean by 'el hombre nuevo'? Based on a careful reading of two of his novels, *Rayuela / Hopscotch* and *Libro de Manuel / A Manual for Manuel*, my thesis defines 'el hombre nuevo' as Cortázar's attempt to establish a dialogue with the reader in order to invent together a new understanding of the human being. 'El hombre nuevo' involves an extended ontological search which is continued outside of the text, and the relationship author-reader goes beyond a dyadic model into the construction of a new community of new men and new women.

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INTRODUCTION – In Search of 'El Hombre Nuevo'

I remember the first short story of Julio Cortázar that I read. It was a warm afternoon in my home country, Nicaragua, and I found one of those interesting books on my father's bookshelf. It was the collection of short stories *Todos los Fuegos el Fuego / All Fires the Fires* out of which I read “La Isla al Mediodía” / “The Island at Noon.” I found the story hard to understand, and that created a feeling of wanting to know more about the author. Ten years later I am still exploring Cortázar's fiction, this time by writing a Master's thesis about the concept of 'el hombre nuevo' in the writing of the Argentine writer and intellectual. I am searching for a definition of the 'hombre nuevo' by accompanying Cortázar on a journey of self-examination and connection to others.

I pursue two objectives. Academically, I intend to fill in a gap in the study of Cortázar. Despite the wide range of publications about Cortázar, there is no study that specifically addresses the question: what does Cortázar mean by 'el hombre nuevo'? More personally, I have had the privilege to see a new person – the other name I will use for the 'hombre nuevo' in less gender-divided language – growing in front of my eyes. I want to offer to my child the best understanding I have of what it means to be a human being in a changing and complex reality in which it can be very easy to forget the beauty of simple things such as a smile or a laughter.

With this in mind, I engage in a careful reading of two of Cortázar's novels, *Rayuela / Hopscotch*, published in 1963, and *Libro de Manuel / A Manual for Manuel*, the last novel of his career which went to press in 1973. I aim to analyze both of these novels with an emphasis on the means and consequences of the ontological searches of their protagonists – Horacio Oliveira and Andrés Fava, respectively. I seek to demonstrate that through their searches they become completed 'hombres nuevos'. The main protagonist of both novels, however, is not within the

text, but is rather the reader. The author and the reader collaborate in the creation of the 'hombre nuevo'.

My thesis centres on the claim that 'el hombre nuevo' is Cortázar's attempt to establish a bridge, or dialogue, with the reader in order to invent together a new understanding of the human being and create a reality in which the individual and the collective are recognized and enhanced. Although both the searches and the relationship between the author and the reader are important aspects of my analysis, I will argue that an 'hombre nuevo' involves an extended search which is continued outside of the text, and the relationship author-reader goes beyond a dyadic model into the construction of a new community of new men and new women.

The term 'hombre nuevo' was first used prior to Cortázar to delineate a pan-Latin American identity, to place it in its historical and political context. It was used in this sense by Cuban poet and intellectual José Martí in his essay “Nuestra América” / “Our America” in 1891. Later, during the Cuban revolution of 1959, Argentine guerrilla fighter Ernesto 'Che' Guevara referred to an 'hombre nuevo' that would bring about a socialist revolution in Latin America.

It was in Cuba where Cortázar experienced what he called a 'political awakening' to the reality of Latin America and his own consciousness as a committed writer. The 'hombre nuevo' acquires a political sense in *Libro de Manuel* and his non-fiction essays, which I will use to explain Cortázar's own evolution after *Rayuela*. In one of the last points of the thesis, I will argue that the political aspect of the process of becoming places Cortázar in a line of thought that attempts to create a Latin American identity that reasserts its cultural and political independence.

One of the first books I read during my research period was Graciela Maturó's *Julio Cortázar y el Hombre Nuevo*, published in 1968 and updated in 2004. The title of the book was

at the same time exciting and intimidating. While it could have been a great support for my thesis proposal, it could have also meant that my thesis had already been covered! And it certainly gave me many ideas to develop. From Maturo I learnt that to become a new person implies a revolution internally and externally. She concludes by arguing that 'el hombre nuevo' “deberá adaptar sus modos de vida y de relación en todos los órdenes a las profundas transformaciones creadas por la revolución tecnológica y científica ... Pero ello sólo podrá cumplirse cuando se haya cumplido también la revolución interior, el despertar del 'hombre nuevo' en la conciencia de cada hombre” / “will have to adapt his way of life and relationship in all regards to the profound transformations created by the technological and scientific revolution ... For that, it can only come through when the individual also attains an internal revolution, the awakening of the 'new man' in the consciousness of every man”¹ (163/*mt*). Maturo deems it necessary for the new person to adapt to technological and scientific innovation, thus suggesting that the technology and science are ahead of the individual's nature. The individual revolution takes place through the 'awakening' of the individual's consciousness to the constant changes in society.

The image of the new person that I will present differs from Maturo's analysis. I agree with Maturo on the importance of an individual transformation, or awakening, before a social revolution for the creation of the 'hombre nuevo'. However, it is also important to investigate how that awakening takes place, and what are the implications, in terms of the political, of a force that makes the individual rebel and emerge anew. As Maturo suggests, the process of becoming is constant, but I disagree that the persistence of the search is in order to adapt to the advances of technology and science. Rather, I argue that what the searcher is aiming to rediscover and to re-adapt to is the simplest of reality, which is at the same time complex to

1 From here on, quotes followed by a *mt* indicates that they are of my own translation.

understand when using a reasoning that separates itself from the imagination and the instinctual.

I will argue that the new person is in search of what Cortázar refers to in *Libro de Manuel* as “lo más solar, lo más vital del hombre” / “the most solar, the most vital part of man” (*LdM9/MfM4-5*):² playfulness, eroticism, and social responsibility. By ontological, this thesis seeks to define the nature of the 'hombre nuevo', and the relationship of these vital forces as foundational guidelines for a being in constant becoming. Thus, I argue that Cortázar's new person does not remain in those vital forces, but rather uses them to reconstruct her own self and to connect with others. The political implications relate to what the consequences of such transformation entail for the construction of a new community through the victory of a revolution that reconciles the individual and the collective.

My thesis consists of three chapters. In this introduction, I will give a brief explanation of each chapter and the methodology I have followed in each of them. I will also review some of the critical literature available in regards to the themes treated in the chapters. Most of the literature is examined in more detail within the respective chapter.

In Chapter One, I seek to demonstrate that the searches that take place in the novels provide a foundation on which to build a relationship between the author and the reader. I take a step back from the narrative in order to place those ontological questionings in the reader's mind. As Cortázar expresses in *Rayuela*, he wants the reader to be a “cómplice, un camarada de camino” / “an accomplice ... a travelling companion” (*R401/H397*).³ Through a playful and inventive writing style, Cortázar's fiction stimulates and requests an active act of reading. Through his or her participation, the reader engages in the creation of 'el hombre nuevo'.

² *Libro de Manuel* is referenced within the text with *LdM* for the Spanish version, and *MfM* for the English.

³ *Rayuela* is referenced within the text with an *R* for the Spanish version, and an *H* for the English.

Cortázar's critics have published extensively regarding the searches in *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel* and the relationship between the author and the reader. In the introduction to *The Final Island* – a collection of essays about Cortázar's work widely used in this thesis – Jaime Alazraki argues that Oliveira in *Rayuela* searches for “a second reality which has been covered by habit and culture in our present version of reality” (“Introduction” 12). This 'second reality' refers to the authentic nature of the human being, which for Cortázar is founded on the desires for playfulness and eroticism. In *Libro de Manuel*, Andrés extends the search by connecting the Western habitual culture to its political dimension of capitalism and imperialism. Alazraki stresses that political emancipation in Cortázar does not impinge “individual rights and endeavours,” but rather “becomes an act of assertion of his freedom and of his personal realization” (“Introduction” 17). The dominating political system, thus, is supported by the erasure of the vital forces from the reality of the human being. The search seeks to recuperate that 'second reality' for the very own sake of the searcher, in both a personal and a political sense.

In regards to the relationship between the author and the reader, Santiago Juan-Navarro and Anthony Percival analyze *Rayuela* following the phenomenological approach to the act of reading developed by the German literary scholar Wolfgang Iser. As we will expand on Iser's theory, the text becomes the bridge between the author and the reader. Through this virtual encounter, Percival argues, Cortázar “challenges the reader to expand his awareness of what life is and can and should be” (253). In his fiction Cortázar demonstrates that there is more than one way of looking at life and reality. It modifies our own sense of understanding and it invites us to initiate a process of self-transformation. For his part, Juan-Navarro identifies a self-reflexive effect in the act of reading which, he argues, “revela una intención compartida entre emisor y

receptor: la búsqueda de la identidad en el texto” / “reveals a shared intention between transmitter and receiver: the search for identity within the text” (“Un tal Morelli” 246/*mt*). Thus, Cortázar is not attempting to transform the reader out of a desire for control, but rather to share his intention of becoming a new person with the reader.

Chapter Two focuses on the ontological search of Oliveira in *Rayuela*. It continues the discussion from the previous chapter by arguing that the living bridge between the author and the reader takes form by searching with the character. Neither author nor reader knows where the search will take Oliveira. I portray Oliveira as a possible model from whom to learn with as he advances in his quest to rediscover his playfulness and eroticism. I argue that we realize how to awaken those vital forces by participating in an examination and transformation of our own selves, which becomes a collective effort for emancipation.

In a recent work on the author, *Cortázar: El Mago*, Carmen Ortiz argues that Cortázar's objective in his fiction was “la renovación constante, la apertura, el movimiento, los *viajes*, el *juego*” / “the constant renovation, the openness, the movement, the *journey*, the *game*” (40/*mt*). In *Rayuela*, Oliveira renovates his understanding of himself and the reality that he inhabits by opening up his stance of highly-educated intellectual to the simplicity that he admires in La Maga, his lover in Paris. Once she disappears, Oliveira moves around the city looking for her but is then expelled from the cultural centre of the West. He continues his journey in Buenos Aires, where he engages in games with Traveler and Talita, a couple with whom Oliveira is able to attain by the end of the novel an “armonía que duraba increíblemente” / “harmony [that] lasted incredibly long” (*R354/H348*). Oliveira has liberated himself from the culture of habits that had obfuscated a deeper understanding of himself and the reality that he shares with others.

Playfulness and eroticism stand as two of the main inner forces through which Oliveira is able to transform and achieve harmony with others. Critic Saúl Yurkievich conceives of Cortázar's subject as the 'Eros Ludens'; that is, a convergence of the erotic and ludic aspects that I relate to the 'hombre nuevo'. The 'new person' implies a playful approach to life that “fractures the order of pragmatic realism” (Yurkievich, “*Eros Ludens*” 99). In regards to eroticism, Yurkievich argues that sexual liberation is “parte de la liberación integral del hombre” / “part of man's integral liberation” and love as “el máximo agente movilizador” / “the highest mobilizing agent” (“Al Calor” 20/*mt*). Likewise, Margaret Safir points out that scenes of erotic transgression in *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel* drive its protagonists to “a liberation from habitual perspectives and norms” (93-4). To be erotic and playful enriches fixed conceptions of reality by showing other possibility to interact with oneself, others, and the world.

'El hombre nuevo' implies a process of reconciliation or convergence between reasoning and imagination, knowledge and intuition. However, for the bridge to take place, the searcher connects with others, as in the case of Oliveira, Traveler and Talita. In other words, the bridge also stands as a connection between individuals, and not only as a balance of perspectives. As Gordana Yovanovich states in her study of Cortázar's longer fiction, the figure of the bridge in *Rayuela* “is not an artificial link, but an image that illustrates a complete union between people” (*Character Mosaic* 94). As a metaphor for union and solidarity between people, the chapter finishes by discussing issues of gender and politics, which are not developed within the novel.

Chapter Three argues that *Libro de Manuel* extends the ontological search into the social and political dimensions. For the 'hombre nuevo' this extension translates into one more vital force to be awakened: social responsibility. I begin the chapter by explaining Cortázar's own

political awakening after his first visit to Cuba. In the novel, we learn with Andrés Fava how to join a political struggle for social liberation without renouncing his artistic and intellectual background. I also analyze the political strategies of 'La Joda', a small guerrilla cell in Paris, which is led by Marcos, one of Andrés's closest friends. Despite their differences, I argue that Andrés and Marcos act with a shared intention to create a community of new men and new women. I conclude by constructing this new community as a new Latin America by relating Cortázar's 'hombre nuevo' to Martí's project of 'Our America'.

Critics have coined the term 'Revolución cortazariana' to refer to the political implications of the author's philosophy. Peter Standish argues that the revolution that Cortázar envisions “abarca todo y es constante” / “is all-encompassing and constant” (“Compromisos” 469/*mt*). Cortázar's revolution also involves literature. As Standish explains, Cortázar's fiction questions authority including “la del autor mismo en cuanto autor” / “the author's own as an author” (“Compromisos” 470/*mt*). The reader engages in this revolution by actively participating in the literary project. María Fernández observes that Cortázar recognizes that “el escritor debe luchar por el triunfo de la Revolución en América Latina, pero con los medios que le son propios: los de la creación” / “the writer must fight towards the victory of the Revolution in Latin America, but through his own media: those of creation” (225/*mt*). To write is the practical activity of Cortázar in the revolutionary movement.

In *Libro de Manuel* the act of reading becomes a political activity. Diana Sorensen argues that Cortázar's “later works reveal his efforts at producing literature which elicited a politics of reading” (358). Sorensen, however, criticizes the playful strategies of 'La Joda', which she argues “would seem to exemplify the possibilities of creation of 'the new man' in his political, spiritual

and erotic dimensions, but it often takes on the appearance of frivolity” (373). 'La Joda' is missing an aspect of self-examination that would avoid imposing expectations and becoming dogmatic. Andrés, as the intellectual in search, reforms the guerrilla cell. As Sorensen points out, “the challenge to be met by intellectuals is precisely epitomized by the emblem of the bridge, for truly revolutionary culture would establish the dialogue between self-conscious, critically informed writing and radically democratic values without relinquishing the force of one or the other” (381). The reader takes part in the bridge that Andrés is attempting to construct between people, and in the process creating an image of a playful new person that integrates the political skills of Marcos with the intellectual awareness of Andrés.

'El hombre nuevo' is part of Cortázar's revolution because it is through this ideal subject that a political model that respects the individual while forming a collective can be achieved. Andrés and Marcos have the same person in mind when acting: Manuel. A child for whom Andrés puts together an album/book/manual with details about the strategies and political struggle of 'La Joda'. As Standish argues in *Understanding Julio Cortázar*, “Manuel (and here, surely his name is significant: he is Emmanuel, the Messiah) is the symbol of a new generation (Cortázar's rather personal adaptation of Guevara's 'new man'), and he will carry his manual with him into the future” (*Understanding* 126). The emergence of the 'hombre nuevo' in Manuel requires the role of Andrés as the revolutionary intellectual who documents the reality of the time and the struggle of people for personal and social transformation.

For further studies, I am curious to know whether new technologies of reading through computers or other mobile devices affect the act of reading. Is the reader equally encouraged to search with the author by reading an 'ebook' as when reading a book? How do new technologies

affect the meaning of 'el hombre nuevo'? Rob Rix recently published an essay in the collection *Latin American Cyberculture and Cyberliterature* in which he uses *Rayuela* as a model to evaluate the quality of 'ebooks' signed by Latin American writers. Rix argues that *Rayuela* is a good model because it is a “hypertext, an embryonic cybernovel which both anticipates and lays down challenges for today's manifestations of cyberliterature” (195). Cortázar, Rix suggests, was ahead of his time by writing a novel in a structure that invites the reader to jump from one chapter to the other. However, the 'translation' into an electronic form may reduce the time that it takes for the reader to jump and thus it also makes it shorter for a self-reflection in the transition between chapters. Can the reader still be considered an accomplice with the help of a mouse?

This academic project has only been possible thanks to greatly appreciated advice and support. Prof. Gordana Yovanovich, my thesis advisor, has generously provided me with plenty of comments, feedback, suggestions, and, in special, patience. Prof. Karen Houle, second reader, has helpfully reviewed drafts of this thesis and encouraged me to revise my arguments. I appreciate the camaraderie of other faculty members, graduate student peers, and supporting staff from my department, the School of Languages and Literatures. Prof. Clive Thomson, Chair of the department, has been supportive by finding time to talk and funding to attend conferences. I extend my greatest appreciation to my wife, Elsa Plourde, and our son, Alejandro. They have shown me what it means to be a new person through games, conversations, and love.

If writing this thesis has taught me anything I would say that is to recognize the invaluable support for each other in which we engage in our lives. We search together for a better world. We converse, challenge, question, and in the process, with great effort, become new

men and new women. I present myself as one more pursuer in search of the 'hombre nuevo' by performing an analysis of *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel* from a philosophical and a political perspective.

CHAPTER I – The Birth of 'El Hombre Nuevo' in the Living Bridge between the Author and the Reader in *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel*

In order to explore the significance of the 'hombre nuevo' in *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel*, this chapter will concentrate on the theme of the bridge as a symbol for the process of becoming. Through complex and fragmented texts, the author and the reader engage in an ontological search that seeks to recuperate basic aspects of the human nature. The process of becoming a new person is led by Oliveira, in *Rayuela*, and Andrés, in *Libro de Manuel*. In addition to these two characters who function as guides for the reader, both novels also have characters that serve as an extension of Cortázar – Morelli in *Rayuela*, and 'El que te dije' / 'The one that I told you' in *Libro de Manuel* – who theorize and reflect upon the role of literature as a bridge between the author and the reader. This chapter will focus on the theoretical discussions regarding the relationship between the author and the reader, while the performance in the process of becoming by the protagonists of the novels will be analyzed in the following chapters. The reciprocal and collaborative construction of the bridge, I attempt to demonstrate, has as a purpose the emergence of the 'hombre nuevo' within the ideal accomplice reader.

Julio Cortázar's main literary work, *Rayuela* begins with an inquiry that challenges the reader: “Sí, pero quién nos curará del fuego sordo, del fuego sin color que corre al anochecer por la rue de la Huchette ...” / “Yes, but who will cure us of the dull fire, the colourless fire that at nightfall runs along the Rue de la Huchette ...” (R388/H383). Cortázar opens the novel by presenting Horacio Oliveira, a man in search of himself, and involves the reader immediately by asking a question directly to him or her. It remains the reader's decision whether or not to engage with Oliveira in his search as he or she continues reading the novel.

Cortázar distinguishes between two types of readers: active and passive. In *Rayuela*, he describes the active reader as “un cómplice, un camarada de camino” / “an accomplice ... a travelling companion” (R401/H397). For the accomplice reader, Cortázar develops a complex and active model of reading that requires the reader to read in a more participatory fashion. This model starts with chapter seventy-three, and from then on jumps back and forth, following the playful structure of hopscotch. In the first section of *Rayuela*, 'Del Lado de Allá' / 'From the Other Side', Oliveira begins his existential *búsqueda* in Paris, away from his hometown, Buenos Aires. *Rayuela* also includes the chapters 'De Otros Lados (Capítulos Prescindibles)' / 'From Diverse Sides (Expendable Chapters)', which expand on Oliveira's *búsqueda* and include a character that is only mentioned briefly in the other two sections, Morelli, an experimental writer. Oliveira and other characters are members of the 'Club de la Serpiente' / 'Serpent Club', a group of intellectuals and artists that meet in Paris to study and discuss Morelli's literature in detail, thus giving the active reader indirect directions on how to read the novel.

The *Morellianas*, short chapters in which Morelli reflects upon his literary project and philosophy, serve to communicate Cortázar's own perspectives on these themes. Through Morelli, the reader learns that Cortázar views literature as “un puente vivo de hombre a hombre ... una narrativa que actúe como coagulante de vivencias” / “a living bridge from man to man ... a narrative that will act as a coagulant of experiences” (R400-1/H396-7). Morelli envisions literature as a living bridge to communicate and form a relationship between the author and the reader. He specifies that the living bridge must first take an effect upon the author. Writing becomes a process in which to express “esos anuncios que pueden volvernó mensajeros” / “those announcements that can make messengers out of us” and thus “acercarnos a nuestros

proprios límites de los que tan lejos estamos cara a cara” / “bring us to our own limits from which we so far removed, while being face to face with them” (R401/H397). The author becomes a living bridge himself in the process of discovering his own nature, from which he has been disconnected or is almost not able to recognize.

Morelli and Oliveira engage in their respective ontological searches – the author explores and attempts to discover himself through his literature, and Oliveira learns about himself in his relationship with other characters. Oliveira meets La Maga, his lover and source of inspiration for self-transformation in Paris, on a bridge; also, he engages in a temporary relationship with a vagabond under a bridge; and finally, Oliveira plays a game with his friends Traveler and Talita in which Talita becomes a bridge.⁴ Through these crucial stages, Oliveira surpasses the limits that have hitherto impeded him from grasping reality. At the end of the novel, Oliveira is able to experience a sense of harmony and a bond with Traveler and Talita: “la armonía duraba increíblemente, no había palabras para contestar a la bondad de esos dos [Talita y Traveler] ahí abajo, mirándolo y hablándole desde la rayuela” / “the harmony lasted incredibly long, there were no words that could answer the goodness of those two [Talita and Traveler] down there below, looking at him and talking to him from the hopscotch” (R354/H348). Oliveira, an active reader of Morelli, builds in the company of Talita and Traveler a living bridge in which they coagulate into a union of equals. After a long process of self-questioning, Oliveira becomes an 'hombre nuevo'.

4 In her analysis of the relationship between characters in Cortázar's novels, Gordana Yovanovich argues that “The three women [La Maga, the vagabond, and Talita] that Oliveira meets *on*, *under*, and *in* the bridge explain Oliveira's gradual liberation from the social 'yo' to the creation of a poetic 'I'” (*Character Mosaic* 104). A new Oliveira emerges as result of the process of self-discovery that he performs in company of other characters, in especially the three women that appear in relation to the bridge theme. Cf. Gordana Yovanovich, *Julio Cortázar's Character Mosaic: Reading the Longer Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). For a detailed analysis of the bridge theme in *Rayuela*, see pages 94-104.

In *Rayuela* Cortázar does not explicitly mention his concept of 'el hombre nuevo'. However, the project to create a different, new person begins in *Rayuela* with the ontological searches of Morelli and Oliveira. Morelli and Oliveira come to recognize aspects of reality such as playfulness and eroticism, which Cortázar considers basic elements of human nature. These searches provide the philosophical basis on which Cortázar develops and elaborates on the nature of the 'hombre nuevo' in further works. In particular, *Libro de Manuel* takes the ontological search into the political dimension. And, as in *Rayuela*, the reader plays a major role in the construction of the narrative.

We read in the introductory pages of *Libro de Manuel* that “Un puente es un hombre cruzando un puente, che” / “A bridge is a man crossing a bridge, by God” (*LdM30/MfM23*). The bridge is a symbol of the active participation of the new person in the constant and continuous process of becoming carried out by Andrés Fava, the main protagonist of *Libro de Manuel*. The reader also follows the political activities of 'La Joda', a small urban guerrilla cell planning to kidnap a Latin American diplomat in Paris in exchange for the liberation of political prisoners. Andrés refuses to join 'La Joda' until his political awakening, near the end of the novel. His decision to join 'La Joda' takes place after an episode in which he crosses a bridge. Andrés takes Oliveira's search to a new dimension by introducing a component of social commitment. At the same time, Andrés attempts to reconcile ways to connect to a larger community without impacting upon his individuality. He stresses in a conversation with his friend Lonstein near his awakening, “No, no renuncio a nada, viejo” / “No, I won't give up anything, old man” (*LdM384/MfM345*). The reader is challenged to reconcile these two positions within one character: the desire to become a new man who is politically committed and forms part of a

larger community, maintaining at the same time his individual preferences.

As the theme of the bridge is important in the individual quest and in his or her union with the other, *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel* as literary texts are intended as bridges between the reader and the author. The bridge serves as the emblem of the connection that Cortázar's new person builds between him or herself and other individuals in order to create a new community. In this task, the new man or woman is guided by playfulness, eroticism, and social commitment. The bridge of the 'hombre nuevo' challenges the social norms of the West and the conventions of Western reasoning by reconnecting individuals into a collective on the basis of their human qualities. The role of literature, according to Cortázar, is “inventar ... abrir la puerta para ir a jugar” / “to invent ... to open the door to go to play” (*Ochenta Mundos I* 159/mt). *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel* attempt to connect with the reader in the act of reading as a game that involves the author and the reader, and in the process, to engage one another in a quest towards becoming new men and new women. In *Rayuela*, Oliveira is able to encounter himself and connect to a small community of friends. Andrés's search in *Libro de Manuel* culminates in his commitment for the social and political liberation of a larger community.

The Act of Reading and the New Person

In *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, Wolfgang Iser argues that it is the “convergence of text and reader” which brings the “literary work into existence” (275). Or, closer to Cortázar's definition of a bridge as a man crossing a bridge, the novel may be defined as a process in which a novel is a reader reading a novel. The ontological quest of Cortázar's characters only takes shape and form in the act of reading. The

new person, consequently, is imagined and conceived in the reader's mind. Hence, it is the reader who brings the 'hombre nuevo' into existence.

In the context of the close relationship that Cortázar envisions for his reader, Morelli affirms that “el verdadero y único personaje que me interesa es el lector” / “the true character and the only one that interests me is the reader” (R439/H437). However, Cortázar does not aim at a peaceful relationship with his reader. Morelli regards the reader as his most important character to the extent “en que algo de lo que escribo debería contribuir a mutarlo, a desplazarlo, a extrañarlo, a enajenarlo” / “in which something of what I write ought to contribute to his mutation, displacement, alienation, transportation” (R439/H437). The literary bridge requires a level of confrontation within the reader and between the author and the reader. The reader may find him or herself in a similar situation to Oliveira and Andrés. They engage in a literature that challenges their own perspectives on life while at the same time attempting to reconcile within themselves the complexities of an ontological quest.

The author may provide the guidelines for the search, but not the final answers. Along these lines, in his article concerning Cortázar's work and Iser's phenomenological approach to reading, Santiago Juan-Navarro argues that the reader engages with the ontological searches of Oliveira and Morelli to the point that the search becomes “en último término, la misma del lector: búsqueda ontológica de una nueva dimensión de la realidad” / “ultimately, the same as the reader's: an ontological search for a new dimension of reality” (“Un tal Morelli” 236/mt). The ontological search is introduced from the very beginning of *Rayuela*. Oliveira opens by questioning the existence of a cure to the 'dull fire', or the emptiness of life, that he experiences in the streets of Paris. Oliveira's ontological search does not take place through abstract

discussions of philosophy, but rather in the environment in which the character interacts. The familiar, thus, becomes the site of doubt and search.

Iser would agree with Cortázar about the challenging aspect of establishing a bridge between the author and the reader. According to Iser, an efficient literary text – that is, a text in which the reader is able to connect, or, a literary bridge between the author and the reader – evokes and then negates the familiar environment in which the reader interacts daily. Iser argues,

“What at first seemed to be an affirmation of our assumptions leads to our own rejection of them, thus tending to prepare us for a re-orientation. And it is only when we have outstripped our preconceptions and left the shelter of the familiar that we are in a position to gather new experiences ... Once the reader is entangled, his own preconceptions are continually overtaken, so that the text becomes his 'present' while his own ideas fade into the 'past'; as soon as this happens he is open to the immediate experience of the text, which was impossible so long as his preconceptions were his 'present'” (290).

While Iser's observation focuses on the role of the reader, it also suggests that the responsibility of establishing a literary bridge places a major challenge upon the author. The author must be able to communicate 'effectively' in order to entangle the reader in the narrative and structure of the literary text. The author, also, must provide an example of his or her own ontological search in order to confront the reader's own philosophy of life. For the reader to gather 'new experiences' and engage in the process of becoming a new person along with the author, it implies that the author must have first established an inner bridge by which he or she has discovered, or at least has started to discover, the nature of his or her own self.

In his phenomenological study of *Rayuela*, Anthony Percival argues that Cortázar's literature “induces in the reader a search for new ways of looking at things, for fresh porous orders – away from iron-clad conventions – for a greater sense of what life can entail” (245). For the reader to leave the 'iron-clad conventions' – or the 'shelter of the familiar', as Iser calls it – the author must be able to narrate a text that presents a familiar environment while at the same time

criticizing it. The fable of a Neapolitan man that spends his life looking at a screw in the ground, which Oliveira retells from one of Morelli's book in the first chapter of *Rayuela*, may serve as a good example because it uses a screw to criticize conventional notions of understanding reality.

In the fable, the long screw-looking sessions generate “risa, tomada de pelo, irritación comunal, junta de vecinos, signo de violación de los deberes cívicos” / “a laugh, a jest, communal irritation, a neighbourhood council, a mark of civic duties unfulfilled” (R389/H384). What cannot be comprehended according to the conventional ways of behaviour and civility becomes a sign of rebellion and madness. However, the Neapolitan man continues living peacefully with his screw until his death, at which point the screw disappears. Morelli suggests that someone keeps the screw in Naples and probably “lo saca en secreto y lo mira, vuelve a guardarlo y se va a la fábrica sintiendo algo que no comprende, una oscura reprobación” / “he takes it out secretly and looks at it, puts it away again and goes off to the factory feeling something that he does not understand, an obscure reproval” (R389/H384). There is a desire to understand what cannot be comprehended. The person feels forced to hide the screw from others because he or she has not yet been able to find an answer to what there may be inside the screw.

Morelli's screw entangles the reader. The reader is in the same situation as the person hiding the screw who cannot understand the desire to understand the nature of such a simple object. It offers a new vision of reality – a screw may not be as simple as the reader may think it is. There may be more to life than the reader is accustomed to seeing. To redefine, or to doubt concepts, becomes the present of the reader, leaving behind a past of assumptions. The language of the fable is simple and uses a familiar object to criticize a conventional understanding of reality which is based on preconceptions, as Iser points out above.

Oliveira's reading of the fable makes him question what we understand by a 'screw': "Quizá el error estuviera en aceptar que ese objeto era un tornillo por el hecho de que tenía la forma de un tornillo" / "Perhaps the error was in accepting the fact that the object was a screw simply because it was shaped like a screw" (R389/H384). Oliveira suggests that the screw is read as a screw based on its form and shape. However, the Neapolitan man 'reads' the screw differently – he invents his own way of reading a form that others are accustomed to interpret as a simple object: "A lo mejor el napolitano era un idiota, pero también pudo ser el inventor de un mundo" / "The Neapolitan was most likely an idiot, but he also might have been the inventor of a world" (R389/H384). Oliveira considers that the Neapolitan man was an 'inventor' of his own way of reading, and consequently of his own world.

In *Rayuela* the act of reading is extended beyond the literary text. Reflecting upon Morelli's literature, Oliveira argues that "Todo es escritura, es decir fábula" / "Everything is writing, that is to say, a fable" (R388/H384). To extend the text beyond the novel also means to enlarge the literary bridge that the author is attempting to establish with the reader. The writer offers a new perspective of life by rearranging relationships between subject and object – e.g, the Neapolitan man and the screw – and challenging conventional ways to understand reality. To read reality and write according to one's own understanding becomes a creative process that invents its own truth. Oliveira says, "Nuestra verdad posible tiene que ser *invención*, es decir escritura, literatura, pintura, escultura, agricultura, piscicultura, todas las turas de este mundo" / "Our possible truth must be an *invention*, that is to say, scripture, literature, picture, sculpture, agriculture, pisciculture, all the tures in this world" (R389/H384). The act of reading establishes a bridge between diverse dimensions of reality upon the understanding of truth as an 'invention'

that resembles the creative writing process.

'El hombre nuevo' as a poet-inventor

Invention and creation are crucial aspects in the process towards becoming an 'hombre nuevo'. Morelli's observations as well as arguments put forward by critics commenting on the close relationship between the author and the reader in Cortázar's *Rayuela* help to explore and expand my current working claim: that the concept of 'el hombre nuevo' can be defined as Morelli's ideal reader that engages in an ontological quest with the author in order to create a living bridge by which to invent a new understanding of him or herself.

Recent work by Santiago Colás, an emerging postcolonial literary theorist in Latin American studies, comments on the theme of invention and creation in *Rayuela*. In his article “Inventing Autonomies Meditations on Julio Cortázar and the Politics of Our Times,” Colás points out that Cortázar compares the activity of inventing connection to the “the creative activity of the poet” (2). The poet is an inventor that performs the process of connecting and thus constituting “new relationships among otherwise 'solitary' elements of the given” (2). I would add that the purpose of reading should not be to repeat old reading habits, but rather to make connections within the text in a more poetic, creative, fashion. Colás defines the concept of invention in Cortázar's work as a “process by which we can make something new – a word, an experience, a world, a self – by rearranging the elements and the relationships that constitute a particular, received situation: the night sky, for example” (2). A similar argument can be made in regards to the human nature which, using a star constellation as an analogy, is constituted into one by connecting multiple dissimilar elements.

Morelli seeks a reader that is active and as such an accomplice to the point that he or she becomes a co-participant in the process of writing, that is, in the invention of the novel. The active reader is a “copartícipe y copadeciente de la experiencia por la que pasa el novelista, *en el mismo momento y en la misma forma*” / “coparticipant and cosufferer of the experience through which the novelist is passing, *at the same moment and in the same form*” (R401/H397). The author and the reader converge in order to recreate the narrative of the text and invent the novel's characters. To converge, I interpret from Morelli's observation, is twofold: for the author to attempt to encounter the reader in the experience of writing, and for the reader to enter into a creative environment outside of his or her habitual time and place. The creative activity of the poet that rearranges and thus invents new ways of understanding, which Colás alludes to above, is not a solitary activity. The poet-inventor does not seclude himself from others, but rather opens up in order to be able to connect and grasp a reality that can be read from an infinite array of perspectives.

The reader that Morelli envisions is also an inventor. To read, Morelli argues, means to generate ideas. In the first Morelliana of *Rayuela*, the author-character writes, “Digamos que el mundo es una figura, hay que leerla. Por leerla entendamos generarla” / “Let us say that the world is a figure, it has to be read. By read let us understand generated” (R384/H379). By engaging in the language and structure of the text, the reader is able to interact with the author in the creation of a fictional world in which the novel takes place.⁵ The reader learns that a similar act of reading can be applied to his or her reality in general. The world, as a literary figure, can be read in more than one way and, in the process, generating a new understanding of the world.

5 The convergence of the author and the reader is reverberated by Iser. Iser locates the author-reader convergence beyond the literary text since it “can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, and it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader” (275).

It is important to note that the act of reading is not conceived as solitary: the reader does not stand alone in his or her own reading. Reading is a process in which an individual connects with the other or others individuals. It is a form of aesthetic but also of social interaction.

Morelli describes the desire to generate a new world based on a nostalgia for a collective paradise: “Todo lo que se escribe en estos tiempos y que vale la pena leer está orientado hacia la nostalgia” / “Everything written these days and worth reading is oriented towards nostalgia” (R382/H377). Morelli ascribes a sense of nostalgia to modern thought, which according to him it is in search to open the door towards another dimension. Morelli says that “todos quieren abrir la puerta para ir a jugar” / “everyone wants to open the door that leads out to the playground” (R382/H377). He discards the probabilities to open the door, that is, to find an answer, through a transcendental search. The emphasis should be put on the immanent. To create the paradisaical world in which men and women are able to execute their playful abilities it is necessary to redefine, to reinvent, conceptions instead of attempting to capture an imaginary dimension.

'El hombre nuevo' is a person that redefines his or her own reading of the world from a non-egoistical perspective. The new person's world, Morelli states, “no existe, hay que crearlo como el fénix” / “does not exist, one has to create it like the phoenix” (R384/H379). Morelli's allusion to the 'dull fire', which Oliveira asks for a cure for, becomes the ashes from which the phoenix emerges. Apart from the external 'dull fire', there is also an inner fire within the poet-reader. As Oliveira says: “inventamos nuestro incendio, ardemos dentro afuera” / “we invent our conflagration, we burn outwardly from within” (R389/H384). This is a 'living' force which for Oliveira is present in every individual. The purpose of the author becomes to spark the inner desire for transformation within the reader.

The literary bridge between the author and the reader is 'living' because it is based on a living force, a desire to become an 'hombre nuevo'. Morelli and Oliveira are in search of their being, attempting to reach something ignored or forgotten within themselves. Morelli extends the definition of the searcher to include all persons: “el hombre no es sino que busca ser, proyecta ser, manoteando entre palabras y conducta y alegría salpicada de sangre y otras retóricas como ésta” / “man only is in that he searches to be, plans to be, thumbing through words and modes of behaviour and joy sprinkled with blood and other rhetorical pieces like this one” (R369/H363). According to Morelli, it is in the individual's nature to be an ontological searcher. The definition of the individual as a searcher for being implies that an individual is the searcher and that which he or she searches.

Feminist literary critic Sara Castro-Klarén argues that Cortázar's search in *Rayuela* is ontological because the author is after “a revelation of man and his proclivity for invention, his tendency to establish a dialectic with the Other” (140). Cortázar considers the desires to invent and create as crucial aspects of the new person's ontology. These desires to invent and create drive the readers to engage with the author in an ontological quest towards encountering themselves. The dialectic with the Other that Castro-Klarén mentions is what Morelli regards as the feeling that guides him towards the search for “la luz, irrupción de mí hacia lo otro o de lo otro en mí” / “the light, an invasion of me in the direction of the other thing or of the other thing towards me” (R365/H359). The ontological search between the author and the reader leads them towards a light that announces 'lo otro' / 'the other thing' within themselves.

As Castro-Klarén points out, the author regards the reader as “his double, his obsessive Other” (149). Morelli defines himself beyond his given circumstances, and instead searches for a

connection with the Other: “Ese cuerpo que soy yo tiene la presciencia de un estado en que al negarse a sí mismo como tal ... su conciencia accedería a un estado fuera del cuerpo y fuera del mundo que sería el verdadero acceso al ser” / “This body that I am has the prescience of a state in which as it denies itself as such ... its own consciousness would accede to a state outside the body and outside the world which would be the true accession to being” (R365/H359). It is the Other, in this case the reader, who gives access to Morelli's being by inventing a character in his or her own reading. Castro-Klarén adds that it is through this relationship of mutual and reciprocal invention and creation that the author “‘sees' himself in the invisible 'other' reader he anticipated; and the reader, unable to coincide with his previous sense of self, has moved to fabulate a new image of himself in his encounter with the text” (149). Through this desire to encounter oneself and connect with the Other, the author engages the reader in a dialogue that will reveal new ways of understanding the world.

The literary bridge, then, is never finished. It is constantly in the making and does not seek to create new habits. To offer a factual, definitive, definition of the 'hombre nuevo' would imply closing the dialogue and impeding the extension of the bridge into new unexplored areas. Oliveira offers a brief description of the new person's ontological quest while at the same time leaving room for further explorations: “un hombre es siempre más que un hombre y siempre menos que un hombre” / “a man is always more than a man and always less than a man” (R83/H70). In the constant search of 'el hombre nuevo' there is always new terrain to explore, and thus he or she advances while recognizing that there will always be more.

In his relationship with La Maga Oliveira begins to understand the complexities of an ontology of becoming an 'hombre nuevo'. He realizes that a connection with the Other is not a

relationship of power of one over the other but a relationship of a dialogue and mutual understanding. As Oliveira meditates, “La verdadera otredad hecha de delicados contactos, de maravillosos ajustes con el mundo, no podía cumplirse desde un solo término, a la mano tendida debía responder otra mano desde el afuera, desde lo otro” / “That true otherness made up of delicate contacts, marvellous adjustments with the world, could not be attained from just one point; the outstretched hand had to find response in another hand stretched out from the beyond, from the other part” (R111/H99). It will be a long process for Oliveira to apply to his own life what he learns from his active reading of Morelli. For instance, it is Oliveira who after bridging his relationships with La Maga, Emmanuèle, and Talita – as Gordana Yovanovich argues in her analysis of the bridge theme in *Rayuela*– liberates himself “from the social 'yo' to the creation of a poetic 'I'” (*Character Mosaic* 104). Oliveira becomes a new man, a poet-inventor, an active reader of his own world and thus encountering himself and responding in a polite manner to the delicate hand of the Other.

Towards the Creation of a New Language

In a discussion with the members of the 'Club de la Serpiente', who are avid readers of Morelli's work, Oliveira poses the following questions in regards to a shared responsibility between the author and the reader: “¿Para qué sirve un escritor sino para destruir la literatura? Y nosotros, que no queremos ser lectores-hembra, ¿para qué servimos sino para ayudar en lo posible a esa destrucción?” / “What good is a writer if he can't destroy literature? And us, we don't want to be female-readers, what good are we if we don't help as much as we can in that destruction?” (R444/H442). Whereas a possible relationship with the Other requires respect, it also calls for a

violent destruction of the literary foundations of the 'old man'. Morelli's literary bridge requires “una repulsa de la literatura” / “a rejection of literature” (R400/H396). Morelli adds that such refusal can only be partial “puesto que se apoya en la palabra, pero que debe velar en cada operación que emprendan autor y lector” / “since it does depend on words, but one which must oversee every operation undertaken by author and reader” (R400/H396). In the attempt to establish the literary bridge between the author and the reader there is the danger to become stranded in the process. Thus, the active reader and the creative writer share the responsibility to direct each other in the search towards becoming a new person.

The 'hombre nuevo' has up to this point been discussed in relation to *Rayuela*. We have seen that a first step in the liberation of the reader and the author takes place in the acts of reading and writing. In *Libro de Manuel* Cortázar extends the ontological quest into a political fight towards the victory of a socialist revolution. For the new person this implies what Cortázar calls a 'political awakening'.⁶ Following Morelli's observation on the refusal of literary language and the need for a political awakening, my working claim is the following: The author and the reader join creative forces to violate linguistic and writing conventions in order to invent a language that truly reflects the living bridge among the collective of new men and new women. As such, the language that Cortázar develops in *Rayuela* and then applies to the political in *Libro de Manuel* is based on the desires for creation and invention and the potential for a dialogue with the Other.

In *Rayuela*, Morelli describes his literary project as a “texto desaliñado, desanudado,

6 Cortázar describes his political awakening as a result of his first visit to Cuba in 1963, the same year of the publication of *Rayuela*. In a letter to Cuban writer and political thinker Roberto Fernández Retamar, Cortázar explains that before his visit he had identified himself with Mallarmé, for whom reality “debía culminar en un libro;” but in Cuba “nació un hombre para quien los libros deberán culminar en la realidad” (“Carta” 207). In other words, this new author writes with a purpose of changing social and political reality.

incongruente, minuciosamente antinovelístico (aunque no antinovelesco)” / “text that is out of line, untied, incongruous, minutely antinovelistic (although not antinovelish)” (R400/H396). He calls his project *roman comique* which stretches the novel genre to its limits. According to Morelli, the novel genre follows the Western model of “orden cerrado” / “closed order” which “malogra la búsqueda al limitar al lector a su ámbito, más definido cuanto mejor sea el novelista” / “misses its mark because it limits the reader to its own ambit; the better defined it is, the better the novelist is thought to be” (R400/H396). In order to establish the literary bridge between the author and the reader, and engage in the ontological search, Morelli rejects the precepts of writing that place the author above the reader. Instead, his *roman comique* seeks a language and structure that invites the reader to participate actively in the ontological quest. Morelli argues,

“Para ese lector, *mon semblable, mon frère*, la novela cómica (¿y qué es *Ulysses*?) deberá trascurrir como esos sueños en los que al margen de un acaecer trivial presentimos una carga más grave que no siempre alcanzamos a desentrañar. En ese sentido la novela cómica debe ser un pudor ejemplar; no engaña al lector, no lo monta a caballo sobre cualquier emoción o cualquier intención, sino que le da algo así como una arcilla significativa, un comienzo de modelado, con huellas de algo que quizá sea colectivo, humano y no individual. Mejor, le da como una fachada, con puertas y ventanas detrás de las cuales se está operando un misterio que el lector cómplice deberá buscar (de ahí la complicidad) y quizá no encontrará (de ahí el copadecimiento). Lo que autor de esa novela haya logrado para sí mismo, se repetirá (agigantándose, quizá, y eso sería maravilloso) en el lector cómplice” (R401-2).

“For that reader, *mon semblable, mon frère*, the comic novel (and what is *Ulysses*?) will have to take place like those dreams where in the margin of some trivial happening we have a presentiment of a more serious anxiety that we do not always manage to decipher. In this sense the comic novel must have an exemplary sense of decorum; not deceive the reader, not mount him astride any emotion or intention at all, but give him rather something like meaningful clay, the beginning of a prototype, with traces of something that may be collective perhaps, human and not individual. Better yet, give him something like a facade, with doors and windows behind which there operates a mystery which the reader-accomplice will have to look for (therefore the complicity) and perhaps will not find (therefore the consuffering). What the author of this novel might have succeeded in for himself, will be repeated (becoming gigantic, perhaps, and that would be marvellous) in the reader-accomplice” (H397-8).

The alterations in the linguistic and writing structures of the novel that Morelli envisions have a profound effect upon the implied reader. Importantly, the language that Morelli plans to utilize is

not 'complex' but rather it follows the apparent trivial content of a dream. Despite the triviality in content, Morelli works upon the reader's prescience of a deeper meaning beneath the dream. Language in this regard does not acquire meaning by its complexity. The language that Morelli is attempting to develop is well connected to the reader's inner desire to understand his or her own nature, as in the case of the search for the meaning of a dream. The search for meaning is performed by the reader themselves in company of the author, but not following specific instructions. As Morelli says, the meaning may not be found, however, the search by itself announces a better understanding of the human nature – the 'hombre nuevo' is a constant searcher. Morelli's language serves the new person in the search as the vehicle, the clay to model, through which to create literary experiments and invent new understandings of reality.⁷

In his attempt to revolutionize the novel genre along with the literary language, Oliveira compares Morelli to a guerrilla fighter. The guerrilla fighter analogy works well because Morelli focuses on his objective by gaining knowledge and analyzing the operations of his 'enemy', that is, the literature and language of the 'old man'. In a discussion with Etienne, a visual artist member of the Club, Oliveira says: “No se trata de sustituir la sintaxis por la escritura automática o cualquier otro truco al uso. Lo que [Morelli] quiere es transgredir el hecho literario total, el libro, si querés. A veces en la palabra, a veces en lo que la palabra transmite. Procede como un guerrillero, hace saltar lo que puede, el resto sigue su camino. No creas que no es un hombre de letras” / “It's not a question of substituting automatic writing or any other current fraud for syntax. What [Morelli] wants to do is transgress the total literary deed, the book, if you will.

7 Morelli compares his literary project of the 'novela cómica' to *Ulysses* by James Joyce. Morelli, thus, acknowledges that the roman comique is not his invention, but rather a literary style that allows for extension and creativity. An extended study of the relationship between the author and the reader should include a comparative literary analysis between Joyce and Cortázar. It would be especially interesting to explore possible allusions to a new man in Joyce's work that are then further elaborated in Cortázar's fiction.

Sometimes the word, sometimes what the word transmits. He works like a guerrilla fighter, he blows up what he can, the rest follows in its path. Don't get the idea that he's a man of letters" (R449/H447). While attempting to violate the conventions of writing, Morelli does not oversimplify the potential structure of a new language. There is certain order in his literature, which for Oliveira resembles the guerrilla strategies that concentrate on a specific focus of action. The new language does not emerge automatically but is rather constructed in a long process, as in the case of the new person's ontological search.

According to Morelli, it is only "en sueños, en la poesía, en el juego" / "in dreams, in poetry, in play" that the author and the reader can start to give new life to language (R461/H459). Oliveira exemplifies the invention of a new language through the games that he plays with his friends Traveler and Talita. Their game, which they call 'el cementerio' / 'the cemetery', consists in offering poetic definitions of words randomly selected from a page in the dictionary (R238/H230). Through their games, Oliveira goes beyond his role as the well-defined intellectual. The friendship between Oliveira, Traveler and Talita, would serve as the living bridge to balance their perspectives on life and to continue the process of becoming a new man in Oliveira and initiate it in Traveler and Talita. By the end of the novel, the three friends are able to encounter themselves in an "armonía que duraba increíblemente" / "harmony [that] lasted incredibly long" (R354/H348). Regardless of their differences, they develop their own way of communicating to each other and defy the imposed authority of the 'old man'. The friendship between Oliveira, Traveler and Talita stands as a small community of 'hombres nuevos' and a 'mujer nueva'.

The living bridge that Oliveira is able to establish with a small community of friends is

extended into a larger community in *Libro de Manuel*. Language again appears as one of the main foundations from which to bring about a collective of new men and new women. As in the case of *Rayuela*, the reader plays a major role in the redefinition of concepts and the invention of new meanings. Cortázar's critique of language translates into a major criticism towards the social and political structures of the Western society. In an interview with Argentine writer and literary analyst Rosalba Campra, Cortázar declares that he considers himself a committed writer with the socialist fight (153). For Cortázar, to compromise oneself with a political cause does not mean to renounce creative writing abilities. It is precisely in those abilities for creation and invention, which the author identifies in the ontological search, that he places the drive for political change.

Latin American essayist Luis Harss argues that “atacar el lenguaje, con esa ametralladora que es la literatura, es atacar el centro mismo del sistema” / “to target language, with the machine gun that is literature, is to attack the heart of the system” (120/*mt*). The reader becomes an important player in Cortázar's political fight because it is through him or her that the attack is executed. In his introduction to *Libro de Manuel*, Cortázar explains that his narrative is based upon “lo más solar, lo más vital del hombre: su sed erótica y lúdica, su liberación de los tabúes, su reclamo de los de una dignidad compartida en una tierra ya libre de ese horizonte diario de colmillos y de dólares” / “the most solar, the most vital part of man: his playful and erotic thirst, his freedom from taboos, his demand for a dignity shared by everybody in a land free at last of that daily horizon of fangs and dollars” (*LdM9/MfM4-5*). In order to express the playfulness, eroticism, and social responsibility, which Cortázar considers basic human qualities, the language of the novel needs to accomplish a liberation within itself from the structures of the system. The reader intervenes in the role of poet-inventor in order to establish a language that

connects to his or her own understanding of reality and sense of human nature.

Libro de Manuel: *The bridge becomes political*

Using the cinematographic techniques of the collage and montage, Santiago Juan-Navarro argues that the active reader of *Libro de Manuel* “becomes here a militant activist, who is called on to participate along with the author, narrators, and characters in the transformation of historical reality” (“Postmodernist” 187). Juan-Navarro uses the collage and montage to describe the narrative and structure of the novel because it presents the reader with more than one narrator and various stories from different characters, along with a selection of newspapers clippings. It is the reader who organizes the novel as in the process of film montage, which, Juan-Navarro adds, “require[s] final assembly by the viewer-reader” (“Postmodernist” 176). *Libro de Manuel* resembles *Rayuela* in this respect, however it goes further because there are neither a 'table of directions' nor indirect instructions from the characters, as in the case of Morelli and the 'Club de la Serpiente'. The reader, in other words, is more on his or her own in following the hints which the author leaves in the text.

As an example of the author's connection with his readers, in *Libro de Manuel* Cortázar no longer uses the term 'lector-hembra' / 'female reader' to refer to a passive reader. Cortázar does not hold onto authority as an author in order to deny changing the language of his writing. Moreover, while using the word 'hombre' in his concept of 'el hombre nuevo', the ontological quest is not reserved for men only. For instance, in *Libro de Manuel* the main character Andrés reflects upon the process of becoming a new man and the living bridge that it entails. Andrés concludes his meditation by imagining a woman crossing a bridge while nursing her baby: “de

esa niña que mama en brazos de su madre echara a andar algún día una mujer que cruzará sola el puente, llevando a lo mejor en brazos a una niña que mama de su pecho” / “out of that baby girl suckling in her mother's arms a woman will come someday who will walk by herself and will cross the bridge, carrying in her arms a baby girl suckling at her breast” (*LdM30/MfM23*). Andrés offers a metaphorical image in which the ontological search and the living bridge are both processes for the new man as well as for the new woman.

In his essay “Literatura en la Revolución y Revolución en la Literatura” (“Literature in the Revolution and Revolution in the Literature”) Cortázar advocates for a model of socialism in which “lo individual y lo colectivo cesen de frustrarse y de enfrentarse” / “the individual and the collective cease frustrating and confronting each other” (“Literatura” 65/*mt*). He argues that a revolutionary novel that seeks to advance the literary bridge in this respect attempts to “revolucionar la novela misma, la forma novela, y para eso utiliza todas las armas de la hipótesis de trabajo, la conjetura, la trama pluridimensional, la fractura del lenguaje” / “to revolutionize the novel itself, the form novel, and for that utilize all the weapons of the work hypothesis, the conjecture, the pluridimensional plot, the fragmentation of language” (“Literatura” 73/*mt*). ‘El hombre nuevo’ begins to be born in fragmentation in language as the author invents a new language that will be able to awaken the new person who then will construct a new community.

In *Libro de Manuel* Cortázar continues his exploration and extension of the limits of the novel genre by the involvement of the reader in a narrative that includes several characters and stories, as Juan-Navarro argues above. Through the pluri-dimensionality of the plot, Cortázar seeks to converge politics and literature, but as he says in the first pages of the novel, “su conciliación no ha tenido nada de fácil” / “their conciliation has not been easy in the least”

(*LdM7/MfM3*). The challenge becomes to reconcile two expressions of the same Western society, politics and literature, but each of them with a very different language and discourse.

Libro de Manuel is presented as the collective writing project of a revolutionary group for a reader in the future, Manuel, the son of Susana and Patricio who are active members of 'La Joda'. The 'libro de Manuel' is an album composed of newspapers articles from diverse content and themes, including political, publicity, and fashion themes, among others. The articles of the album are the same that the reader is shown through the novel. 'El que te dije', a character who resembles Morelli in his position on literature, is one of the main contributors for the album. He admires Susana's plan for an education for Manuel that will incite his “futuros poderes intuitivos e inventivos” / “future intuitive and inventive powers” (*LdM138/MfM120*). 'El que te dije' suggests that Manuel's inventive abilities should be stimulated through the act of reading. Manuel, as the future reader of a pluri-dimensional album, will connect texts and narratives with very different languages and discourses, and in the process, he will inform himself of the reality in which he has grown and from which he can advance into an 'hombre nuevo'.

According to Cortázar, a revolution that does not transform language will carry those “cadáveres podridos de un orden social caduco” / “rotting corpses of an obsolete social order” that characterizes “la lengua de ayer” / “the language of yesterday” (*Viaje 34/mt*). The revolution that Cortázar envisions is similar to the nature of 'el hombre nuevo' because it is defined by its eroticism and playfulness in an environment of solidarity and heterogeneity. The politics of the 'hombre nuevo' and his revolution attempts to construct a collective in which individuals are free to imagine and think in proximity to their erotic and playful nature. In *Libro de Manuel*, the author utilizes the novel and newspapers to communicate with his readers beyond the established

paradigms of the Western society and its old man. The reader combines the newspaper articles, dialogues, and stories in the novel as he or she learns about the political struggles of other people. Hence, the emergence of the new person is not independent from the existing reality.

To recapitulate, I have discussed the importance of the literary bridge between the author and the reader as crucial for the ontological quest that Cortázar initiates in *Rayuela* and then continues and expands in *Libro de Manuel*. The implied reader that Cortázar seeks to entangle in his fiction plays a major role in the construction of the narrative and structure of both novels. Through the engagement of the reader, Cortázar's concept of 'el hombre nuevo' starts to take shape. It is the reader who brings into life the search for the redefinition of the human being and the restructuring of the system that has been established in the Western hemisphere. The 'hombre nuevo' forms a non-egoistical perspective of the world that is open to a continual transformation. As in the case of the act of reading, the ontological quest is constantly advancing, taking place as the new man or new woman keeps building a bridge, connecting dissimilar elements, and constructing new languages, new politics, and bringing about a new world. The ontology of the new person is of constant becoming, of continual reading and writing, invention and creation. The next two chapters will explore how this ontology of becoming is performed by Oliveira in *Rayuela* and Andrés in *Libro de Manuel*.

CHAPTER II – The Ontology of 'El Hombre Nuevo' in *Rayuela*: Horacio Oliveira, or the Searcher for Himself

In this chapter, I intend to discuss Cortázar's 'hombre nuevo' by analyzing how the main protagonist of *Rayuela* – Horacio Oliveira – engages in an ontological search, and what transformations he experiences as a result of his quest. I will demonstrate that the process of becoming an 'hombre nuevo' is an endless individual performance and complex social transformation. In the following chapter I will continue this examination by discussing Andrés Fava in *Libro de Manuel* who is a character who expands Oliveira's search by introducing a 'political awakening' as part of becoming an 'hombre nuevo'. In the previous chapter, 'el hombre nuevo' was defined by Morelli and 'El que te dije' as an individual in constant becoming, with a non-egoistical perspective of the world, who continuously connects dissimilar elements by inventing new ways of expression and interaction with others.⁸

Oliveira engages in an ontological search which resembles the act of reading as it challenges the searcher to open up to other understandings of reality. Oliveira can be envisioned as Morelli's accomplice reader that relates the questions he encounters in his readings into his own life. Morelli defines the individual as a searcher when he argues that “el hombre no es sino que busca ser” / “man only is in that he searches to be” (R369/H363). This translates into the recognition of the main character of what he is not, and of what it is that he is searching for. The implied reader does not know where the search will take the characters and can only accompany

8 Oliveira and Andrés find themselves in situations in which they must learn how to interact with others in ways out of the petite bourgeois intellectual that they embody at the beginning of their respective novel. For example, Oliveira drinks from the same bottle as a vagabond in order to dis-educate his senses: “Deseducación de los sentidos, abrir a fondo la boca y las narices y aceptar el peor de los olores, la mugre humana” / “Untrain the senses, open your mouth and nose wide and take in the worst of smells, human funkiness” (R218/H209). And, as we will see in the following chapter, Andrés decides to join 'La Joda' without understanding his reasons behind.

the author as a “copartícipe y copadeciente” / “coparticipant and cosufferer” in the experience of writing (R401/H397). The living bridge between the reader and the author is also extended into the search as performed by the characters: the author and the reader search along with Oliveira. His ontological search elaborates and clarifies on the theme of the living bridge and its relationship to the new person. In the crucial chapter forty-one of *Rayuela*, in which Talita becomes the bridge between Oliveira and Traveler, Oliveira realizes that “No hay centro, hay una especie de confluencia continua, de ondulación de la materia” / “There is no centre, there's a kind of continuous confluence, and undulation of matter” (R249/H241). For the 'hombre nuevo' this implies that he cannot consider himself to be the centre of his reality, and thus his living bridge should be envisioned as in constant building.

As Morelli suggests, *the searcher is what he or she is by searching to be*. This definition may put into question whether the searcher can ever apprehend his or her being, and consider him or herself a new person. Once in Buenos Aires Oliveira describes “un zarpazo ontológico, che, una tentativa para apoderarse de lo inapoderable” / “an ontological clawing, yes, an attempt to seize the unseizable” (R399/H394). Oliveira acknowledges the impossibility of seizing a sense of fixed being. It is a desire to become which drives his search. The new person's search is to grasp a reality that is in 'continual flow and movement', as in a river upon which the living bridge is built. Oliveira believes that the end of his search involves a sense of reconciliation within himself and with others, which he attains momentarily at the end of *Rayuela* with Traveler and Talita. By the term 'reconciliation', Oliveira refers to a small community of individuals that have been able to interact freely from social conventions. Oliveira, Traveler and Talita invent their own games, talk with humour, and express their love for each other.

Critic Saúl Yurkievich calls the Cortázar's character the “*eros ludens*” who has access to the “liberated zone” composed of games, love and humour (“*Eros ludens*” 99). Love in Cortázar's fiction, Yurkievich argues, “is reconciliation, the freest alliance with substantial reality without deforming or distancing filters (social and cognitive conventions and stereotyping language)” (“*Eros ludens*” 100). In this light, I want to demonstrate that these three liberating forms of interaction – games, love and humour – emerge from within the character as a result of a desire to become a new person. The reconciliation that Oliveira attains with Traveler and Talita, in other words, should not be interpreted as the end of the game. I read it as a new start, a continuation of the game with new inventions to understand the world and oneself. In this regard, in her analysis of Cortázar's longer fiction, Gordana Yovanovich argues that “Cortázar's main goal in *Rayuela* is to probe the question, What is a human being? He searches for the answer not from the outside, but from the inside out” (*Character Mosaic* 62). To look from the inside out, to spark the inner fire, is a hard lesson that Oliveira learns from La Maga. At first he searches to become someone else, to appropriate the imagination and 'magic' properties that he ascribes to La Maga. The search is continued in the company of Talita and Traveler, a close relationship that shows Oliveira what a human being is as the individual in active relationship with others.

'El hombre nuevo' can be defined at this point as an individual that *is* by searching to *be*, and in the process *becoming* a new person. As the implied reader and literary critic that I desire to become, this chapter is mostly based on an exegetical reading and critique of *Rayuela*. It begins with Oliveira in Paris, where he searches for La Maga. It then moves with Oliveira to Buenos Aires, where the search takes a new turn with Traveler and Talita. In order to analyze Cortázar's ontological approach, I will compare Oliveira's 'ontological clawing' to Mexican

intellectual and writer Octavio Paz's description of the individual as possessing the potential “*de volver a ser, otro hombre*” / “of his becoming once again – another man” (24/28). According to Cortázar, Paz was able to uncover “algo que es con mucho uno de los fuegos centrales, si no el mismísimo fuego central del hombre” / “something which is by far one of the central fires, if not the central fire itself of man” (*Cartas 337/mt*). To spark the fire is also Cortázar's objective in the living bridge with the reader and an elemental aspect of the new person. I will close by reflecting on two issues that are not fully addressed in *Rayuela*: gender and politics.

'El Lado de Allá' / 'From the Other Side': Oliveira searches for La Maga

Oliveira is a Europeanized Argentine intellectual living in Paris who meets a Uruguayan woman escaping from her past. 'La Maga', as she is known for the rest of the novel, is a woman with intuitive and imaginative abilities that are inspiring for Oliveira. In fact, Oliveira's ontological search is at first a search for La Maga. In the first chapter of the Paris segment of the novel, Oliveira asks himself, “¿Encontraría a la Maga?” / “Would I find La Maga?” (*R15/H3*). Oliveira seeks to gain those playful manners with which La Maga lives easily with the reality that he struggles to grasp with his bourgeois self-understanding and worldview. Oliveira challenges himself in terms of his life and his own self in order to understand, to find, La Maga. The disparities in knowledge and culture between the two are deep and difficult to settle. However, Oliveira explains that La Maga and he share one quality: “caer de continuo en las excepciones, verse metida en casillas que no eran las de la gente, y esto sin despreciar a nadie” / “always falling into exceptions, seeing herself stuck in huts not meant for people and all this without despising anyone” (*R19/H7*). Both resort to humour, to endless conversations about pataphysics

– “hablábamos de patafísica hasta cansarnos” / “I spoke about pataphysics with La Maga until we both were tired” (R19/H7) – and form a loving relationship with play and humour at its foundations.

Cortázar combines playfulness and humour as fundamental means in the transformation towards 'el hombre nuevo'. In *Rayuela* it appears first through the relationship between Oliveira and La Maga, and it is then accentuated with the introduction of La Maga's son, Rocamadour. Mother and son play a major influence upon Oliveira's ontological question as he finds himself unable to explain the world that La Maga and Rocamadour inhabit. Oliveira thinks that in order to reflect about La Maga and Rocamadour he needs to “acercarme mejor a mí mismo, dejar caer todo eso que me separa del centro” / “get so much closer to myself, to let everything that separates me from the center drop away” (R27/H15). However, Oliveira starts to realize his mistake in continuing to refer to a 'centre', “sin la menor garantía de saber lo que digo, cedo a la trampa fácil de la geometría con que pretende ordenarse nuestra vida de Occidentales” / “without the slightest guarantee that I know what I'm saying, and I slip into the trap of geometry, that method we Occidentals use to try to regulate our lives” (R27/H15). Oliveira links his inability to understand La Maga and Rocamadour to his lack of understanding of his own self. In order to gain a better sense of reality, Oliveira challenges all those assumptions that he has learnt through formal education, as in the case of geometry. Oliveira's search, thus, emerges from two points: first, from his own background and knowledge of Western culture; and second, through his relationship with La Maga and the challenge she presents to Oliveira's assumptions.

As a searcher, Oliveira attempts to make sense of his world by focusing on the reality that surrounds him. Rather than trying to understand himself through long readings, he decides to go

out in the streets of Paris looking for La Maga. The reader can perceive from Oliveira a desire to become someone else, to break the mold of what he has been. Oliveira reads Morelli, who responds to a quote in French by the influential philosopher Georges Bataille, “Sí, se sufre de a ratos, pero es la única salida decente” / “Yes, he suffers once in a while, but it is the only decent way out” (R481/H479).⁹ Oliveira is in such situation: he struggles to understand La Maga but does not know how the instinctual and the imaginative abilities that she embodies can fit with his own worldview. At the same time, Oliveira questions his notion of Western civilization and knowledge using as a base his own familiarity with the system he is criticizing. As Morelli states, “no se trata de una vuelta a la Edad Media ni cosa parecida” / “it is not a question of return to the Middle Ages or anything like it” (R482/H480). Oliveira does not seek to erase the knowledge he has learnt but rather to search for a connection between his immanent reality and what he knows.

Oliveira's desire to become requires him to bridge dissimilar aspects of his new life. He wants to be able to awaken his imagination and instincts in order to move around as easily as La Maga does. When Oliveira is engaged in intellectual conversations with the other members of the 'Club de la Serpiente' – all of them highly educated, with the exception of La Maga – La Maga “se asomaba a esas grandes terrazas sin tiempo que todos ellos buscaban dialécticamente” / “was always reaching those great timeless plateaus that they were all seeking through dialectics” (R37/H25). The bridge between imagination and knowledge, instincts and reasoning, and by extension, between Oliveira and La Maga, is not present at this point because Oliveira and the members of the Club approach the world mainly through reason. Oliveira finds himself incapable of ‘jumping’ to La Maga's side, to cross the 'bridge'. He is still unable to reach her

9 The quote from Bataille is taken from his novella *L'Abbé C* and it reads: “Il souffrait d’avoir introduit des figures décharnées, qui se déplaçaient dans un monde dément, qui jamais ne pourraient convaincre” (In R481/H479).

beyond his contact with her body and her visible emotional expressions: “estás del otro lado, ahí donde me invitás a saltar y no puedo dar el salto ... no te alcanzo, no paso de tu cuerpo, de tu risa ...” / “you are from the other side, from there you invite me to jump and I cannot make the jump ... I cannot reach you, I cannot get beyond your body, your laugh ...” (R427/H425). This stage of Oliveira's *búsqueda* appears anthropomorphic and gender-biased: Oliveira believes that he must fully possess La Maga in order to enter her world. He searches for ways to reach La Maga (“¿Encontraría a La Maga?” / “Would I find La Maga?”), but he cannot simply swallow her spontaneity and imagination into himself.

The process of becoming a new person, we learn through Oliveira, requires more than just imitation or the embodiment of another person. He longs to be able to see through the eyes of La Maga in order to experience her world: “Ah, dejame entrar, dejame ver algún día como ven tus ojos” / “Oh, let me come in, let me see some day the way your eyes see” (R108/H96). However, he is not active enough. Oliveira awaits to be awakened by the mere fact of his relationship, but he cannot experience a self-transformation without being an active player. Hence, the reader is told about Oliveira:

“Y todo el tiempo él había esperado de esa alegre embriaguez algo como un despertar, un ver mejor lo que lo circundaba, ya fueran los papeles pintados de los hoteles o las razones de cualquiera de sus actos, sin querer comprender que limitarse a esperar abolía toda posibilidad real, como si por adelantado se condenara a un presente estrecho y nimio” (R424).

“And all the time he had been waiting for a kind of awakening to come from out of that happy drunkenness, a clearer view of what was around him, whether the colored wallpaper in hotels or reasons behind any one of his acts, without wanting to understand that by limiting himself to waiting he had abolished all real possibility, as if he had condemned himself in advance to a narrow and trivial present” (H422).

Oliveira is acting at this point like the passive reader that Cortázar criticizes through Morelli because he expects to enter into a process of consciousness-raising and self-discovery by the sole

agency of the author. In order to create a living bridge, as Cortázar seeks in his fiction, the reader follows the guidelines provided by the author which the reader must make meaningful through his or her active participation. The same is true when La Maga's clues are in question.

Before her disappearance due to the death of Rocamadour, La Maga gives Oliveira a small hint for his becoming. She tells Oliveira: “Tenés miedo, querés estar seguro. No sé de qué... Sos como un médico, no como un poeta” / “You're afraid, you want to be sure of yourself. I don't know... You're more like a doctor than a poet” (R88/H76). La Maga does not elaborate on her differentiation between a doctor and a poet, but Oliveira comprehends. He comes to recognize that his intellectual background does not suffice to make sense of his immediate reality. He confesses to himself that he was falling into “el imbécil orgullo del intelectual que se cree equipado para entender” / “the stupid pride of an intellectual who thinks he's capable of understanding” (R206/H196). His intellectualism does not serve to capture the poetic richness of everyday life, such as the coloured wallpaper of the hotels that he frequents with La Maga. In their relationship, Oliveira “sentía crecer un aire nuevo” / “would feel a new air come over [him]” (R106/H94). Words begin to acquire a real meaning for Oliveira. For instance, a few hours after their separation, Oliveira says that “ya mi pena *se llama* pena, mi amor *se llama* mi amor...” / “my sorrow is already *called* sorrow, and my love is *called* love...” (R107/H95). Oliveira has begun to move towards a re-encounter with his reality by actively participating in his own transformation and recognizing the mistakes of his purely intellectual approach.

In order to advance in his ontological search and become a new man, Oliveira needs to take a new approach to himself. He realizes that La Maga was in a more liberated position from social conventions and norms than he is himself. Hence he wishes to tell La Maga that “el molde

hueco era yo, vos temblabas, pura y libre como una llama ...” / “I was the hollow shape, you used to tremble pure and free as a flame ...” (R206/H195-6). Oliveira reveals at his first encounter with La Maga that he was “un hombre que se creía hombre” / “a man who thought he was a man” (R429/H427). In other words, Oliveira acknowledges that there is more reality within himself to gain as a man. Oliveira does not know what there is to gain or lose, but decides to continue in the search.

As Oliveira puts it, he is in search for a “kibbutz del deseo” / “kibbutz of desire” (R212/H203). In order to reach his kibbutz, the “rincón elegido donde alzar la tienda final” / “the chosen place in which to raise the final tent” (R212/H203), Oliveira must first descend into the deepest part of himself. Oliveira has failed to reach La Maga and now finds himself lost. To recognize that he is lost is a success in Oliveira's search. He acknowledges that his “búsqueda incierta era un fracaso y que a lo mejor en eso precisamente estaba la victoria” / “vague search had been a failure and that perhaps victory was to be found in that very fact” (R212/H204). Protagonist, implied reader, and author, are at this point undergoing a similar process of *búsqueda*. The aim is to descend into the deepest level of their selves and concentrate on their desire towards becoming a new person.

Oliveira's awakening beneath the bridge

We have seen that Oliveira's search is at first for La Maga, whom he wants to but does not know how to reach. As she disappears, after awakening in Oliveira a desire to be intuitive, he is left to explore different areas of his life. He desires to reach a “kibbutz of desire,” but this place is not spiritual in nature. As Oliveira stresses, the kibbutz to attain is “del deseo, no del alma, no del

espíritu” / “of desire, not of the soul, not of the spirit” (R213/H204). Oliveira believes that in order to reach his kibbutz, he must look at the richness and diversity of everyday life: “ese encuentro incesante con las carencias, con todo lo que le habían robado al poeta, la nostalgia vehemente de un territorio donde la vida pudiera balbucearse desde otras brújulas y otros nombres” / “that ceaseless meeting up with lacks, with everything they had stolen from the poet, the vehement nostalgia for a land where life could be babbled out according to other compasses and other names” (R213/H204). The process of becoming an 'hombre nuevo', the attainment of the kibbutz, implies a liberation from structures through the continual reiteration of the poetic of everyday life.

Significantly at this stage of the process, Oliveira engages in a temporary relationship with Emmanuèle, or 'la clocharde', a vagabond that sleeps by the side of the river and beneath a bridge. It was one of Oliveira's and La Maga's urban exercise to observe 'la clocharde'. A conversation begins and sympathy arises between the two, and Oliveira is referred as “el nuevo,” the new vagabond: “Fumaban y fumaban, hablando y mirándose con simpatía” / “They smoked and smoked, talking and looking at each other sympathetically” (R214/H206). Oliveira makes “un esfuerzo viril para soportar el olor” / “a manly effort to stand the smell” (R216/H207) of the vagabond in order to endure in the conversation, and by inference, in his descending process. From there, the conversation turns into drinking and sexual interaction that will result in unexpected consequences.

Emmanuèle takes Oliveira into the deepest and the darkest side of himself. The filthiness that Oliveira experiences in company of Emmanuèle is considered by him to be an opportunity for transformation: “Deseducación de los sentidos, abrir a fondo la boca y las narices y aceptar el

peor de los olores, la mugre humana” / “Untrain¹⁰ the senses, open your mouth and nose wide and take in the worst of smells, human funkiness” (R218/H209). Oliveira's education has obfuscated his senses and must now confront aspects of life that he has avoided in order to gain a grasp of that everyday reality. Oliveira senses that a kibbutz is also beneath Emmanuèle's desires: “algo le decía que también allí había un kibbutz, que detrás, siempre detrás había esperanza de kibbutz” / “something told him that there was kibbutz there, that in back of it all, always in back, there was hope for a kibbutz” (R218-9/H210). An existential search can also be present in the most decadent and uneducated of society. In order to reach our 'kibbutz of desire' it is important to return to the origins of life, and the experience with Emmanuèle helps him 'dis-educate' his senses so that he can begin to ascend again, but this time in a more authentic, less alienated way.

Oliveira's experience with Emmanuèle constitutes an awakening in his search for La Maga. In his descent, while being detained by the police for having sex in public with 'la clocharde', Oliveira realizes that “lo único decente era ir hacia atrás para tomar el buen impulso, dejarse caer para después poder quizá levantarse ...” / “the only decent thing to do was to take a step back in order to get a better start ...” (R222/H213). The eroticism and playfulness of Oliveira's resolution bring to his mind the richness of a simple way of interaction – to play games such as hopscotch. These are games that a child can play without a full understanding. Oliveira, however, recognizes the complexities that a simple game can enclose. As Cortázar reminds the reader, who is also playing hopscotch by reading the novel:

“para llegar al Cielo se necesitan, como ingredientes, una piedrita y la punta de un zapato ... eso que la Maga había sabido tan bien y [Oliveira] mucho menos bien, y el Club más o menos bien ...

10 'Dis-education', if translated literally.

sin necesidad de vedanta o de zen o de escatologías surtidas, sí, llegar al Cielo a patadas, llegar con la piedrita” (R223).

“in order to get to Heaven you have to have a pebble and a toe ... what La Maga had known so well and [Oliveira] much less well, and the Club more or less well ... without need of Vedanta or Zen or collected eschatologies, yes, reach Heaven with kicks, get there with the pebble” (H215).

Oliveira adds that the kibbutz that he is now beginning to experience has been present within him since his childhood: “el Cielo era nada más que un nombre infantil de su kibbutz” / “Heaven was nothing but a childish name for his kibbutz” (R223/H215). Consequently, a simple game such as hopscotch becomes a rich metaphor for life. In this game, the new person does not seek to attain a Heaven out of this world, but rather to create a Heaven in which desires converge and invent new ways of interaction with others. Oliveira's relationship with La Maga takes him to experience dimensions of life that he had been educated to dismiss as simple and trivial. The break up with her and his encounter with Emmanuèle 'dis-educate' him and take Oliveira back to his childhood and playful self. In the second section of *Rayuela*, he continues his awakening in company of Traveler and Talita with whom he engages in playful and intellectual games. Reminiscent of Morelli's literary project jumping from one chapter to another, in 'el lado de acá' / 'this side', in Buenos Aires, Oliveira 'jumps' with his childhood friend and his wife, continuing and expanding his search for the understanding of his being. The search, however, now acquires a more successful union with others.

Oliveira's return to Buenos Aires and the continuation of the search through games

As a bureaucratic result of his scene of public sex with Emmanuèle, Oliveira is forced to leave the European cultural centre and to return to Buenos Aires. It does not take long for Oliveira to realize that “la vuelta era realmente la ida en más de un sentido” / “his coming back had really

been his going away in more than one sense” (R236/H228). His return and the type of life he finds in Buenos Aires serve as a step forward in his ontological quest. He is received by Manuel Traveler, his best friend and his 'otro' / 'other' in Argentina. Manuel is accompanied by his wife, Talita. It is through his relationship with Traveler and Talita that Oliveira is able to continue the process of transformation by which he seeks to become a new man. Oliveira, now more than before, continues to attempt to relate intuition and imagination with reason and education. Against his expectations, Oliveira finds this model at work in Talita, from whom he will learn how to establish a living bridge between himself and others. In particular, games become their living bridge to communicate and interact freely from linguistic conventions and social norms.

The first appearance of Traveler and Talita serves as a contrast between Oliveira's relationship with La Maga, and that of his best friend in Argentina. Whereas Oliveira and La Maga are separated due to their different perspectives on life, Traveler and Talita try to establish connections with each other. In this regard, every morning they exercise the challenging practice of translating their dreams into words, in which they count on their mutual support. The reader is told that Traveler and Talita “se esforzaban por traducir con palabras del mundo de fuera todo lo que habían vivido en las horas de tiniebla” / “tried to put into words the world they had been living in during darkness” (R540/H539). This practice is Traveler's own initiative in order to grasp unconscious experiences such as dreams and intuition with the help of Talita. She, like La Maga, is very intuitive and is not guided in life purely by reason, like Oliveira. Unlike their male partners, the two women possess what Oliveira and Traveler lack and seek to recuperate with their help. However, Talita is different from La Maga because she is more rational and she actively engages with Traveler's attempt to gain a better understanding of life.

In the attempt to 'build a bridge' with Oliveira and reach his male 'other', Traveler searches for commonalities between Oliveira and himself. His own family name, Traveler, is an example of irony because he has never travelled with the exception of short trips to Uruguay and Paraguay. He considers Oliveira as the “doble que tiene más suerte que él” / “double who is luckier than he” because Oliveira has travelled to Europe (*R231/H223*). Despite their differences, however, and the fact that Oliveira is more of a 'traveller' than Traveler, his best friend emphasizes their common grounds (Oliveira is his “double”) rather than their differences. In terms of luck, the reader may ascribe a higher degree of luck to Traveler than Oliveira. He embraces life as it is and tries to overcome difficulties by engaging with Talita in long sessions of games.

Traveler and Talita play games in order to endure their poor living conditions. They play to recreate and entertain themselves as “recurso extremo contra la melancolía porteña y una vida sin demasiado” / “a last resort against the melancholy of Buenos Aires and life that didn't have too much” (*R229/H221*). It should also be noted that Traveler uses his games to hide “esas honduras elementales que lo preocupan” / “those elemental depths that worry him” (*R230/H222*). As in the case of Oliveira, a process of existential questioning has invaded Traveler's consciousness. Nevertheless, a supportive and active relationship, such as the one between Traveler and Talita, does not by itself guarantee a process of transformation into a new person.

Instead of deepening the ontological question, Traveler and Talita engage in games that help them cope with the existential boredom of life in Buenos Aires. Also, Talita takes on a role of conventional wife in order to console Traveler. If her husband is suffering from existential preoccupations, “hay que acompañarlo sin hablar mucho, cebarle mate, cuidar de que no le falte

tabaco, cumplir el oficio de mujer cerca del hombre pero sin taparle la sombra, y eso es difícil” / “she has to along with him and not say very much, prepare his *mate*, make sure that he never runs out of tobacco, do her duty as a wife alongside her husband but never casting her shadow on him, and that's what's difficult” (R230/H222). Their close relationship allows them to live in a supportive environment, but it also makes it difficult for either of them to descend into a labyrinth from which to re-emerge as a 'new person'.

The friendship between Oliveira, Traveler and Talita, would serve as a 'bridge' to balance their perspectives on life and to continue the process of transformation in Oliveira and initiate it in Traveler and Talita. Oliveira's arrival provides an aspect of intellectual seriousness to the games of the couple, acting as a step forward in their linguistic explorations and a breaking point from the social establishment. Traveler and Talita engage with Oliveira in long sessions of language and intellectual games to the eventual disapproval of their neighbours. Oliveira, whether intentionally or not, begins to involve Traveler and Talita in his ontological search and rupture from social protocol. Oliveira benefits from the support of the couple and their positive approach to life and connection to the simple and trivial. The care and understanding in the friendship between Oliveira, Traveler and Talita makes the bridge between the three characters alive and serve as a coagulating element in the creation of 'el hombre nuevo'.

'El hombre nuevo' requires both dimensions of existence, the intellectual and the simple, and they need to be 'bridged' in a particular way. Oliveira wants to advance in his search and has achieved a level of communication by which he is able to realize the mistakes he committed in the relationship with La Maga. However, Oliveira has not yet been able to reconcile the simple and trivial with the rational and conscious. He finds a living model in Talita. He never expected

to see La Maga through someone that is stable, that works, and is married to his best friend in Buenos Aires. If an analogy can be constructed in relation to the 'texto desaliñado' / 'text out of line' that Morelli proposes and the stability that Talita portrays, it seems to suggest that there should be a certain level of order for the text to come into fruition, and therefore, for the birth of the new person.

Talita demonstrates to Oliveira that a direction or order needs to be established in order for the ontological quest to succeed. As Oliveira acknowledges, Talita is an unusual case of “modestia misma, cosa rara en una diplomada argentina” / “modesty itself, a rare thing in an Argentine woman with a degree” (R397/H393). He struggles to reconcile her modesty, on one hand, and her professional knowledge, on the other. Talita reads encyclopedias and engages with Oliveira and Traveler in long sessions of language games. Talita illuminates a path that Oliveira has difficulty finding. She shows him how to build a bridge, how to balance reasoning and intuition, knowledge and imagination, order and playfulness. This does not come easily as Oliveira's mourning for La Maga makes him regard any form of endearment as a “zarpazo ontológico, che, una tentativa para apoderarse de lo inapoderable” / “ontological clawing, yes, an attempt to seize the unseizable” (R399/H394). He is in a situation of seclusion. But the state of loneliness is a necessary step on the road to finding one's meaningful life and being.

In *El Laberinto de la Soledad / The Labyrinth of Solitude*,¹¹ Mexican author Octavio Paz argues that an individual's solitude is, in fact, a significant directive in his or her process of transformation. Paz argues that “En cada hombre late la posibilidad de ser o, más exactamente, *de volver a ser*, otro hombre” / “In every man there is the possibility of his being – or, to be more exact, of his becoming once again – another man” (24/28). Paz envisions an individual's

11 Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, trans. Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove Press, 1961).

transformation as a reattachment to the ontological possibility of becoming, as opposed to a destination or ending. Using the example of Oliveira, he is seeking the possibility to become 'another man'. For Paz, this is a potential that inhabits the individual, and hence it must be performed in the solitude of the subject. However, in agreement with Oliveira (“... todo lo que le habían robado al poeta ...” / “... everything that they had stolen from the poet ...” [R213/H204]), Paz notes that the individual has been detached from such ontological potential. As he argues in regards to the Mexican subject: “El mexicano siempre está lejos, lejos del mundo y de los demás. Lejos, también de sí mismo” / “The Mexican is always remote, from the world and from other people. And also from himself” (25/29). The reasons for the detachment are various, and Paz does not attempt to identify their origins.

Rather, Paz emphasizes that “todo desprendimiento provoca una herida” / “every separation causes a wound” (53/64). The wound, Paz argues, engenders “un sentimiento de soledad” / “a feeling of solitude” (53/64). By recognizing this feeling, solitude can acquire “un carácter purgativo, purificador” / “a purgative, purifying character” (53/64). In connection to *Rayuela*, Oliveira has come to regard love as an ontological wound and now requires the purifying effect of solitude in order to continue in his search. As Paz states, “El solitario o aislado trasciende su soledad, la vive como una prueba y como una promesa de comunión” / “The solitary or isolated individual transcends his solitude, accepting it as a proof or promise of communion” (53-4/64). Oliveira's transformation implies a process of self-discovery but, as Paz suggests, the individual's solitude gives way to transcending such state of self-isolation. The possibility of becoming must be explored and accomplished internally, however this does not entail a process of separation from society or between individuals.

In their new way of interaction through the creation of games, the process towards becoming a new person implies an important element of rebellion against cultural and social norms. Thus, Oliveira adds a sense of seriousness to Traveler and Talita's games. Instead of playing as a way to cope with life, they are now able to perform their games in public and with the purpose of exploring languages and to break with other social groups. Oliveira has found two playmates that understand and are able to engage in their games. As an example of their way of interacting, Oliveira, Traveler and Talita play with words from a randomly selected page of the dictionary. Upon witnessing their interactions, their neighbours refer to them as “locos” / “crazy” or “estúpidos” / “stupid” (R238/H231). Their way of communicating through games is not for the approval of others, who are fixed to the conventional behaviour of the Western adult. Through their games, Oliveira goes beyond his role as 'intellectual' and begins to set the foundations for the living bridge towards reconciliation, the next step in the ontological search towards 'el hombre nuevo'.

The bridge towards reconciliation

The incursion of Oliveira into the intimacy of the 'Travelers' has important consequences for all three characters. Given the complex structure of the novel, I want to highlight the bases of my analysis of the bridge as one of the main aspects in the process of becoming a new person. First, the bridge unites reasoning and intuition, knowledge and imagination; however, it should not be approached as a synthesis of opposites. As Oliveira realizes, dialectics create hierarchies and categories that “no sirven más que para perderse” / “are of no use except to get lost in” (R429/H427). Second, the living bridge does not presuppose an absence of uncomfortable or

challenging experiences. In fact, the disruption that La Maga brought to Oliveira's life created an 'ontological wound' within himself that served as an elemental step in his journey. Oliveira is acting similarly with Traveler and Talita. He has become the 'other' of their close loving relationship, bringing to light diverse issues that had gone unaddressed such as Traveler's profound desire to start his own ontological journey, and Talita's already advanced position in the search. Third, Morelli's definition of the individual as a 'searcher' is reflected in the continual attempt to construct a bridge that is not an external or independent object, but rather an extension and reconciliation of one's self towards 'lo otro' / 'the other thing'.

In the crucial chapter forty-one, the reader takes part in the construction of a bridge that reflects the unconventional behaviour of Oliveira, Traveler and Talita. Oliveira is in need of nails and mate leaves and asks Traveler for some. Instead of crossing the street to deliver the items, they decide to build a bridge made of two thin pieces of wood which are tied to furniture in their apartments. In the relationship between the three Argentine characters Talita understands that there is a bridge between Traveler and Oliveira of which she serves as the foundation. The boards that bridge the two apartments are only a physical link, just as she appears as a physical being that encapsulates the connection between the two men. Hence Talita thinks to herself: "Estos dos han tendido otro puente entre ellos ... Si me cayera a la calle ni se darían cuenta" / "Those two have got another bridge working between them ... If I were to fall into the street they wouldn't even notice it" (R255/H247). While Talita's presence links the two men as they both believe they are in love with her, Talita fears that they would not be able to realize if she were to fall because she is only an instrument in their connection.

Talita fears for her life but decides to cross the fragile bridge in order to awaken the male

searchers. The reader can thus witness an awakening reaction happening in Oliveira. While observing Talita, Oliveira questions the concept of 'centre': "Un centro tan ilusorio como lo sería pretender la ubicuidad. No hay centro, hay una especie de confluencia continua, de ondulación de la materia" / "A centre as illusory as it would be to try to find ubiquity. There is no centre, there's a kind of continuous confluence, and undulation of matter" (R249/H241). Oliveira's search has taken a more advanced stage. He has gone from taking a person as the aim of his search to an understanding of life as a constant and continual flow of matter.

The living bridge leads the searcher towards a process of 'reconciliation'. The concept of 'reconciliation' refers to the recognition of 'lo otro' within the individual. Thus, Oliveira wants to reach "eso que no tiene nombre, digamos a esa conciliación, a esa reconciliación"/ "the thing that doesn't have a name, that conciliation, let's say reconciliation" (R496/H496). In the small community of three active searchers, the reconciliation between Oliveira, Traveler and Talita presupposes a certain level of confrontation with those individuals that behave in accord to the 'great habit'. These "normal" individuals may regard the new persons as 'locos' / 'crazy'. Such is the case of Talita defending Oliveira from 'la Cuca', their boss's wife. Talita tells 'la Cuca':

"– No sea idiota – dijo Talita ...

"– Ay, ay, ay, – dijo Oliveira, balanceándose en la ventana –, y yo que creía que las farmacéuticas eran tan educadas.

"– ¿Vos te das cuenta? – dijo Traveler –. Estuvo gloriosa.

"– Se sacrificó por mí – dijo Oliveira –. La otra no se lo va a perdonar ni en el lecho de la muerte" (R354).

"– Don't be an ass – Talita said...

"– My, my, my – said Oliveira, teetering on the window –, and I thought that pharmacists had such good manners.

"– Did you notice? – Traveler said –. She was glorious.

"– She sacrificed herself for me – Oliveira said –. The other one is never going to forgive her, not even on her deathbed" (H348).

Talita closes the novel with an expression of solidarity and rebellion that was not expected by

Oliveira and Traveler. She continues in her role as the symbol of balance and connection. Talita demonstrates that the searcher does not become completely rational or intuitive, but rather learns how to react depending on the situation. Hence Talita provides solidarity towards Oliveira, and rebellion against the bourgeoisie of the 'great habit'. The new person, hence, should be understood as a heterogeneous process of transformation that responds according to the necessities and background of each of the searchers.

The new person cannot remain in the bridge by him or herself. The bridge involves recognition of 'the other thing' within the searcher as well as the others externally. It expresses an ontology that allows for heterogeneity of the individual based upon an open dialogue between the searchers. Regardless of their differences, the three friends are able to encounter themselves at the end of the novel. Oliveira learns from Traveler and Talita to value commonalities over differences, that is, to extend himself as a bridge towards others. The reconciliation in the bridge expresses an endearment and love that cure the searcher from the ontological wound, and the 'dull fire'. It calls for a sense of solidarity and diversity in response to the exclusionary structures of the establishment.

'El hombre nuevo' after Rayuela: gender and politics

When the author is successful in establishing the living bridge with the reader, Oliveira, Traveler and Talita are examples from which to take a new look at life. As Santiago Colás argues in relation to the invention of games by Oliveira and his friends, "there is no end to invention, and that the next step is to close the book and to continue to invent a different relation between writing and reading and living" ("Inventing" 10). Thus, the emergence of the 'hombre nuevo'

necessitates the participation of the reader after the end of the narrative. Likewise, Yovanovich points out that “Reader who fill in the gaps do not passively follow Oliveira in his search, but search with him, enriching their own personality” (*Character Mosaic* 93). Cortázar provides little information about the physical appearance his characters. The reader creates those characters, filling in the gaps the author leaves in their portrayal, inventing thus along with the author. The reader also searches with the character, for the new person in construction, which she or he brings into the world.

The ontological search takes place within the individual but it also necessitates others. Yovanovich adds that *Rayuela* “tells us that an individual, Oliveira, is himself plus all the people he comes in contact with” (*Character Mosaic* 93). As we have seen, Oliveira's becoming would have been impossible without his experiences with La Maga, the 'Club de la Serpiente', Emmanuèle, and perhaps more importantly, Traveler and Talita. Certainly, Oliveira is not at a similar stage of reconciliation with himself and others when he comes in contact with each of these characters. Women are especially important in Oliveira's transformation. Significantly, the characters of La Maga, Emmanuèle and Talita appear in relationship to the figure of the bridge.

While Oliveira becomes 'el hombre nuevo', the transformation of women is less strongly emphasized. In her article “The New Man (But not the New Woman),” Argentine scholar Martha Paley Francescato argues that Cortázar's fiction communicates specifically with male readers and excludes female readers. Francescato enumerates the main protagonists of Cortázar's longer fiction: “Medrano, Horacio, Juan, Johnny Carter – all are men who live searching for something ... And Andrés, especially Andrés, the prototype of the new man” (135).¹² However, the

¹² Horacio corresponds to Horacio Oliveira, and Andrés to Andrés Fava. For the rest: Medrano: *Los Premios / The Winners*; Juan: *62: Un Modelo para Armar / 62: A Model Kit*; Johnny Carter: “El Perseguidor” / “The Pursuer.”

predominance of female characters such as La Maga, Emmanuèle and Talita can also be interpreted as a critique of masculinity. Talita, for example, appears in a more advanced position than Oliveira and Traveler. She has already comprehended life as a living bridge between herself and others. Talita is also the one who rebels against their bosses who are figures of the 'great habit' that Oliveira has been attempting to circumvent. The predominance of Talita in the second section of the novel demonstrates that 'el hombre nuevo' is not a process exclusively for men. Talita can be considered a new woman – she bridges imagination and knowledge, and is well aware of her immediate reality.

Interestingly, Cortázar apologized for referring to passive readers as female readers by saying that he had become 'half woman', and therefore, a 'new man'. Feminist literary theorist Cynthia Schmidt-Cruz cites an interview in which Cortázar declares to Uruguayan author Cristina Peri Rossi: “Me equivoqué ... Pertenezco a una generación muy machista y cuando dije eso, respondía a un código cultural reaccionario y atrasado ... Pero sabés bien que me he corregido y soy un hombre nuevo, es decir, medio mujer” / “I was wrong ... I belong to a machista generation and when I said that, I was responding to the reactionary and backwards cultural code ... But you know that I have corrected myself and I am now a new men, that is, half woman” (17/*mt*). Cortázar relates his machismo in *Rayuela* to his cultural background, which he regards as anachronistic and reactionary. Schmidt-Cruz notices that “with two words – 'medio mujer' – Cortázar lets his defenses and blows open the boundary between 'masculine' and 'feminine'” (17). Hence Cortázar's depiction of male characters as the searchers is considered positive by Schmidt-Cruz. She argues that “Cortázar's constant search for, and his apparent dependence on, this (irrational) female 'other' can be seen as part of a generalized self-

questioning of patriarchal discourse or the 'master narrative'" (6). In *Rayuela*, Talita, in particular, shows Oliveira how to balance knowledge and intuition and improve his relationships with others. The male intellectual has to descend from his social status in order to become an 'hombre nuevo'. Cortázar does not consider the 'hombre nuevo' as a process exclusive for men, but in fact extends the living bridge of the new person to include an eradication of gender divisions.

'El hombre nuevo', thus, requires a high degree of education and self-criticism. Cortázar himself demonstrates that the search cannot stop. Instead he advances by recognizing his mistakes. Similarly, Oliveira enters into a continuous questioning and revision of the structures of intellectualism and education. 'El hombre nuevo' is a person that is aware of the immanent reality in which he or she interacts with others. It is driven by a desire to become more authentic, to have access to a language that reflects the fire that emerges from within the individual, and not to imitate the dull and colourless fire of the great habits. The new person approaches everyday life with poetry, connecting dissimilar elements, opposing habitual systems, and inventing games.

In *Rayuela* we witnessed the transformation of Oliveira, Traveler and Talita, the three new persons that create a solidarity bond between one another. There are no signs, however, to say that they are interested in extending their close and small community. From the previous chapter I have concluded that a new person holds a non-egoistical worldview. Egoism is certainly absent between the three friends. They defend and support each other. At the same time, we have learnt from Oliveira's relationship with La Maga that the transformation can only come from within the individual. *Rayuela*, in other words, offers a model of individual

awakening.

Oliveira's individual awakening in *Rayuela* is echoed in Cortázar's 'political awakening' the same year of the publication of *Rayuela* during a visit to Cuba. The ontological search from then on incorporates an important level of social and political transformation. Thus, Andrés in *Libro de Manuel* does not desire to become a new man for himself but rather for someone else – Manuel, the young son of Patricio and Susana, who are both active members of 'La Joda'. The 'hombre nuevo' becomes the 'man of the future'. Manuel, Carmen Ortiz points out, “seguramente, será el 'hombre nuevo' que imaginaba Cortázar en un mundo socialista, más justo y humanitario” / “surely, will be the new man that Cortázar envisioned in a socialist world, more just and humane” (185/*mt*). *Libro de Manuel* continues the search and the construction of 'el hombre nuevo' which takes its foundations from Oliveira and *Rayuela* as a whole. Critic Margaret Safir is correct to argue that “*Libro de Manuel* is not a repetition of *Hopscotch*, but a continuation which necessarily builds upon the earlier novel and goes beyond what was established there; it is not a reiteration of the earlier novel, but an outgrowth of it, and inevitable and desirable Volume II of *Hopscotch*” (95). We now turn to *Libro de Manuel* to continue our own search for 'el hombre nuevo' and its political implications.

CHAPTER III – The Political Implications of 'El Hombre Nuevo' in *Libro de Manuel*:

Andrés Fava, or the Searcher for the New Community

In *Libro de Manuel* the reader is introduced to Andrés Fava, a character that extends the ontological search of Horacio Oliveira in *Rayuela* into the social and political dimensions. This chapter will discuss the political implications of Cortázar's 'hombre nuevo' by exploring the process that inspires Andrés to join the political struggle of 'La Joda', a small and playful guerrilla cell in Paris. In order to examine Cortázar's political vision, this chapter will also include material from the author's non-fictional essays. Using *Libro de Manuel*, I will demonstrate that the ontological search moves towards the invention of a new community that preserves and enhances the creativity of the individual.

Similarly to his counterpart in *Rayuela*, Andrés is a highly-educated Argentine living in Paris. For Andrés, films and music play an important role in his political awakening and ontological search. Andrés and *Libro de Manuel* expand the bridge initiated by Oliveira and *Rayuela*. The active reader that Oliveira represents becomes an active listener and viewer in the case of Andrés. For instance, Andrés concludes that “Un puente es un hombre cruzando un puente, che” / “A bridge is a man crossing a bridge, by God” (*LdM30/MfM23*) after reflecting on the presence of a piano in a piece by German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen. Andrés argues:

“Hombre nuevo, sí: qué lejos que estás, Karlheinz Stockhausen, modernísimo músico metiendo un piano nostálgico en plena irización electrónica; no es un reproche, te lo digo desde mí mismo, desde el sillón de un compañero de ruta. También vos tenés el problema del puente, tenés que encontrar la manera de decir inteligiblemente, cuando quizá tu técnica y tu más instalada realidad te están reclamando la quema del piano y su reemplazo por algún otro filtro electrónico (hipótesis de trabajo, porque no se trata de destruir por destruir, a lo mejor el piano le sirve a Stockhausen tan bien o mejor que los medios electrónicos, pero creo que nos entendemos). Entonces el puente, claro. ¿Cómo tender el puente, y en qué medida va a servir de algo tenderlo?” (*LdM29-30*).

“A new man, yes: how far away you are, Karlheinz Stockhausen, most modern musicmaker mingling a nostalgic piano with full electronic iridescence; it's not a reproach, I'm telling it to you from my own self, from the easy chair of a fellow traveller. You've got the bridge problem too, you have to find the way of speaking intelligibly when, perhaps, your technique and your most deeply installed reality are demanding that you burn the piano and replace it with some other electronic filter (a working hypothesis, because it's not a question of destroying for destruction's sake, more than likely the piano serves Stockhausen as well or better than electronic means, but I think we understand each other). The bridge, then, of course. How is the bridge to be built and to what degree is building it going to serve any purpose?” (*MfM22*).

Importantly, the concept of the 'hombre nuevo' is now mentioned within the narrative: Andrés declares to be a “compañero de ruta” / “fellow traveller” in the process of becoming a new man along with Stockhausen. Andrés considers himself a part of a community in search. However, he questions the possibility of establishing a bridge with others through a piano, which may appear as a symbol of the past. However, as Andrés stresses, the objective is not to destroy, but rather to use the resources that the committed artist knows how to employ in an inventive way, and thus participate in the emergence of the new person. Neither the remoteness nor the closeness to the 'hombre nuevo' entails pausing the search. Rather, the living bridge of the 'hombre nuevo' should be envisioned as constantly to-come.

The implied reader of this novel, then, is Manuel – the son of two members of 'La Joda', Patricio and Susana. Andrés concludes from Stockhausen's piano: “tender de todas maneras el puente y dejarlo ahí; de esa niña que mama en brazos de su madre echara a andar algún día una mujer que cruzará sola el puente, llevando a lo mejor en brazos a una niña que mama de su pecho. Y ya no habrá falta un piano, lo mismo habrá puente, habrá gente cruzándolo” / “build the bridge by all means and leave it there; out of that baby girl suckling in her mother's arms a woman will come someday who will walk by herself and will cross the bridge, carrying in her arms a baby girl suckling at her breast. And a piano will no longer be needed, there'll be a bridge all the same, there'll be people crossing it” (*LdM30/MfM23*). At the same time, Andrés is

challenged by the members of 'La Joda' who, through their political strategies, attempt to establish a bridge in the present moment without first engaging in a process of self-examination.

From Andrés and 'La Joda' I argue that the creation of the new community implies a twofold process of individual and collective transformation. It begins within the individual in the becoming of an 'hombre nuevo'. I want to explore the potential that this ability to become has as a political force to reject authority and instill rebellion. In terms of the collective, I argue that Cortázar seeks to uncover a collective eroticism as the river on which to build the bridge between new men and new women. This is what 'El que te dije' in *Libro de Manuel* refers as “el gran río caliente del amor, la erótica de una revolución” / “the great hot river of love, the eroticism of a revolution” (*LdM97/MfM85*). I seek to relate this collective erotic river of love as an instinctual and highly political force towards social unity and responsibility.

This chapter begins by reviewing the political development that Cortázar experienced between *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel*. The objective of this review is to provide the political context in which the latter novel was published and to analyze 'el hombre nuevo' by taking into account its political dimension. I will then move to a close reading of *Libro de Manuel* focusing on its political production of meaning. To further analyze Cortázar's philosophical and political development of the new person, I will compare the ontology of the searcher to the work of the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose concepts of the 'rhizome' and becoming resonate with Cortázar's connection between the individual and the collective. In regards to the political evolution of the 'hombre nuevo', I will use Critical Theorist and New Left proponent Herbert Marcuse to explore the political implications of the new person and the nature of the 'microagitaciones' of 'La Joda'. We will finish by relating Cortázar's 'hombre nuevo' to the

construction of a new Latin America as an elaboration of the concept of Cuban poet and intellectual José Martí's 'Nuestra América'. 'El hombre nuevo', we will conclude, is Cortázar's own contribution to the construction of a new community in Latin America that creates a bridge of solidarity and unity between individuals in their collective search for identity and political independence.

Cortázar's political awakening after Rayuela

Shortly after the publication of *Rayuela* in 1963, Cortázar was invited to a conference at the 'Casa de las Américas' publishing house in Havana, Cuba. The Cuban Revolution caused a profound impression in Cortázar by showing, in the author's words, a “pueblo ajustándose el cinturón al máximo ... [pero que] mostraba al mismo tiempo un sentimiento de alegría, una sensación de haber llegado a un punto desde el cual podría encontrar su propia identidad” / “people tightening their belts to the maximum ... [but] showing at the same time a feeling of happiness, a sensation of having reached a point from which they could find their own identity” (“Entrevista” 130-1/mt). Cortázar encountered in Cuba what he was searching for through Oliveira in *Rayuela*: a reconciliation within oneself and with others in order to find one's own sense of identity. But the Cuban people were engaged in a process of transformation in a very different way from Oliveira and his friends – they were doing it as a nation.

In 1967, Cortázar writes in a letter to Cuban intellectual and political thinker Roberto Fernández Retamar that in Cuba “nació un hombre para quien los libros deberán culminar en la realidad” / “a man was born for whom books will culminate in reality” (“Carta” 207/mt). Before his visit, Cortázar declares he had identified with the symbolist French poet Mallarmé, for whom

reality “debía culminar en un libro” / “ought to culminate in a book” (“Carta” 207/*mt*). This shift in his approach to literature is referred by Cortázar as part of his 'political awakening'. According to Cortázar, his political awakening gives him an intention to write. He continues in his letter: “hoy sé que escribo *para*, que hay una intencionalidad que apunta a esa esperanza de un lector en el que reside ya la semilla del hombre futuro” / “today I know that I write *for*, that there is an intentionality that points to the hope that in the reader already resides the seed for the man of the future” (“Carta” 213/*mt*). There is one main issue from Cortázar's awakening that relates to the ontology and political implications of 'el hombre nuevo': the role of the author in a revolution of the new person.

Cortázar begins to consider himself as a committed author upon his political awakening. However, his model of literature does not aim to 'popularize' the political dogma of the socialist revolution. He was highly criticized by other leftist intellectuals and writers in disagreement over the role of the author in the revolution. A controversy between Cortázar and Colombian writer Oscar Collazos took place in 1969, in which the latter accused the Argentine author of a lack of seriousness and political perspective in his writing. According to Collazos, Cortázar's fiction is not directed toward a Latin American audience and is rather more concerned to reach “las 'alturas' de la cultura de la metrópoli” / “the cultural 'heights' of the metropolis” (31/*mt*). In regards to reality in Cortázar's work, Collazos finds in his writing “el desprecio de toda referencia concreta” / “in contempt of any concrete reference” (14/*mt*). Cortázar appears to Collazos disconnected from the Latin American reality and more committed to the elite culture.

Cortázar, in fact, feels deeply engaged with the socialist movements in Latin America. In his response to Collazos, “Literatura en la Revolución y Revolución en la Literatura” (“Literature

in the Revolution and Revolution in Literature”), he considers himself to be “comprometido y cara a cara con la realidad” / “committed and face to face with reality” (“Literatura” 46/*mt*). However, his notion of reality “es harto diferente” / “is quite different” (“Literatura” 46/*mt*) from that of Collazos. For Cortázar to write about reality does not translate into a 'realism' that focuses on social and economic conditions. The realism and reality that he seeks in his fiction “es mucho más que el 'contexto sociohistórico y político’” / “is much more than the 'sociohistorical and political context’” (“Literatura” 65/*mt*). He separates himself from conventional understandings of the political and reality, instead advocating for a socialism that reconciles the individual and the collective.

As a committed writer, Cortázar's act of writing becomes political because of its intention. He seeks to reflect a reality in his literature that impacts his reader, “que lo exalta, lo incita, lo cambia, lo justifica, lo saca de sus casillas, lo hace más realidad, más hombre” / “which exalts, incites, changes, justifies, drives crazy, makes him and her more real, more man and woman” (“Literatura” 65/*mt*). However, he does not place himself in a position of power over the reader. As much as that fiction exalts the reader, it has a similar effect on the author, who must continue to experiment in order to justify his own act of writing. Through his writing, he seeks to bring about a reality in which his reader has access to the playfulness and eroticism of the 'hombre nuevo'.

Cortázar acknowledges that his 'hombre nuevo' and his model of socialist revolution may not appear in the near future. However, the ontological search and the political struggle for liberation must continue. In *Viaje Alrededor de una Mesa*, the transcript of a debate with other Hispanists in 1970, Cortázar argues,

“Es preciso repetir que toda creación, más allá de cierto nivel, rebasa el presente de aquel que la recibe, y que precisamente así es como la creación más audaz se vuelve acto revolucionario en la medida en que éste se adelanta siempre y por definición al presente y va hacia el hombre nuevo. Hay libros, como hay gestos y sacrificios que contribuyen a inventar el *presente por venir*; ellos son ya ese futuro que se tiende sobre el presente para penetrarlo y fecundarlo” (32-33).

“It is important to repeat that every creation, over a certain level, exceeds the present of whom received it, and that it is precisely as such that the most audacious creation becomes a revolutionary act in the way that it anticipates itself and by the definition the present and it goes to the new man. There are books, as well as gestures and sacrifices that contribute to the invention of a *present to-come*; they are already that future that leans itself over the present to penetrate it and fecundate it” (*mt*).

Cortázar's philosophy and political model is all-encompassing but not totalizing. The new person and the new revolution are envisioned as creations of a present to-come. Cortázar, thus, avoids a dyadic relationship with the reader in which the author appears as the pedagogue and the reader as the learner. The 'hombre nuevo' and its new revolution remain as shared creations between the author and the reader. The reader participates alongside the author in a revolutionary act by inventing the time and reality of the 'hombre nuevo'. The 'new revolution' is to be performed by the 'hombres nuevos' themselves. It is a revolution that, similarly to the nature of 'el hombre nuevo', is defined by its eroticism and playfulness in an environment of solidarity and preservation of heterogeneity.

As Cortázar explains in an interview with Evelyn Picón Garfield, “el proyecto de una sociedad socialista la revolución no solamente hay que hacerla de fuera hacia adentro sino también de dentro hacia afuera en el plano de cada individuo” / “the project of a socialist society the revolution has to happen not only inwardly but also outwardly, from inside out, in the plane of every individual” (Picón Garfield 121/*mt*). In other words, every participant in the revolution must go through the search in order to establish his or her living bridge between intuition and reasoning, individuality and community. It is a search that cannot be forced from outside, but

rather it must be initiated freely from inside. In *Libro de Manuel*, it becomes Cortázar's challenge to balance reality and fiction while at the same time providing clues for the self-transformation of the reader. Thus, an analysis of the novel requires paying special attention to the creation of the 'hombre nuevo' and the political implications of an active act of reading.

Libro de Manuel: The political act of reading

In *Rayuela*, Cortázar relates the ontological search of Oliveira and the literary project of Morelli to an active involvement of the reader in the narrative and structure of the novel. In *Libro de Manuel*, the reader's participation acquires a political sense and thus expands the act of reading. In this section, I argue that in *Libro de Manuel* Cortázar seeks to transform the reader into an active political agent who participates as well in an ontological search. My argument follows the transformation and political awakening of Andrés and the struggle for revolution by 'La Joda', two narrative aspects that make of this novel a political act of reading.

Libro de Manuel begins with a preface in which Cortázar explains his intention to converge reality and fiction. The novel is his literary project to write about the political situation of Latin America while at the same time continuing to create fiction. He says that the conciliation of reality and fiction “no ha tenido nada de fácil, como acaso lo muestre el confuso y atormentado itinerario de algún personaje” / “has not been easy in the least, as can be shown, perhaps, in the confused and tormented path of some character or other” (*LdM7/MfM3*). Cortázar refers to the character of Andrés, who appears very advanced on his route towards becoming a new man in comparison to Oliveira at the beginning of *Rayuela*. Despite already recognizing playfulness and eroticism as central aspects of his life, Andrés is not able to take the final leap of

becoming until the end of the novel. Andrés finds himself confused after he has a dream in which he cannot remember what a Cuban man told him. According to Cortázar, the dream contains “la clave de esa convergencia de actividades hasta entonces disímiles” / “the key to that merging of activities which until then had been unlike” (*LdM8/MfM3*). Thus, the ontological search that Andrés has already initiated is not enough to grasp the dissimilar elements of reality that make up his own existence. As the narrative advances, Andrés considers his duty to decipher the dream and its secret message.

Andrés is challenged by the rebellious activities of 'La Joda', a small guerrilla cell led by his friend, Marcos, and composed of his circle of friends in Paris. Andrés is criticized by others because of his refusal to join 'La Joda'. For example, Susana, a member of the cell and mother of Manuel, says of him: “Andrés está como esperando una hora pero vaya a saber, en todo caso no es la nuestra” / “Andrés is like waiting for some moment, but who can say, it's not ours, in any case” (*LdM31/MfM24*). Patricio, also member and father of Manuel, describes him as follows: “Andrés, un argentino de los muchos que no se sabe por qué están en París” / “Andrés, one of the many Argentines who don't know what they're doing in Paris” (*LdM31/MfM24*). The members of 'La Joda', in comparison, consider themselves to know what they are doing: that they have a duty and a time to execute a political struggle. Andrés has decided to exclude himself and, as Patricio points out, he prefers to listen to “una cantidad de música aleatoria y lee todavía más, anda metido en líos de mujeres, y a lo mejor espera la hora” / “a wild amount of aleatory music and reads even more, he's always involved with women, and he's probably waiting for the moment” (*LdM31/MfM24*). He is waiting for his very own and personal moment to proceed.

'La Joda' begins its political struggle by performing what they call the 'microagitaciones'.

These are small actions in the form of theatrical 'performance' or 'happenings' with the purpose to ridicule the system. They go to the movie theatres and scream in the precise moment when – Marcos satirizes – “la Brigitte [Bardot] comienza a convertir la pantalla en uno de los momentos estelares de la humanidad” / “Brigitte [Bardot] starts to turn the screen into one of mankind's stellar moment” (*LdM67/MfM57*). They attend clearance sales, wait for big gatherings of shoppers, and ask the store guard whether “barren solamente una vez al año” / “they only sweep up once a year” (*LdM80/MfM70*). They ride buses and before getting off, they thank the bus driver in an exaggerated way. Lucien Verneuil, one of their French members, tells the driver: “Jamás me permitiría terminar este viaje sin antes dejar testimonio público del placer que he tenido, y que le ruego le haga extensivo a la administración de la R.A.T.P.” / “I could never let myself end this trip without first bearing public witness to the pleasure it has been for me and I ask you to pass that on to the administration of the RATP” (*LdM73/MfM63*). Through their 'microagitaciones', 'La Joda' tries to show to others the contradictions and ridiculousness of a system that sells itself as protective of everybody's rights. They attempt to initiate micro-revolutions at the everyday life level from which to construct an overarching political upheaval.

Andrés refuses to participate in the 'microagitaciones' and questions any efficiency in their final goal. He is not alone in this respect because Lonstein and 'El que te dije' agree with him. Andrés narrates that, while Marco uses the phone to make contacts for a new operation, “el que te dije, Lonstein y yo estábamos ahí sin decir nada en la medida que esas microagitaciones no nos daban la impresión de servir para gran cosa, y hay que reconocer que Marcos las contaba más bien como diversión” / “The one that I told you, Lonstein and I sat there too without saying anything while those microagitations gave us the impression that they were not worth very much,

and one must admit that Marcos himself considered them more as a bit of fun” (*LdM82/MfM72*). The reader is put at a crossroad between Andrés and 'La Joda'. Whereas Andrés believes that an ontological search is a necessary requirement for any political change to take place, 'La Joda' attempts to bring about a new political system without first self-examining and self-criticizing its own practices.

Although they use different strategies, Andrés and the members of 'La Joda' share the same ultimate intention: to create an 'hombre nuevo'. For Andrés, to become a new man implies a profound self-examination, which he performs while listening to music in his studio. In the case of 'La Joda', they concentrate on the political struggle for liberation from the old man. Their performances could be compared to the impact that the author seeks to implant in the reader as a first step towards self-transformation. However, the viewer of the performance may not be in the same situation as a reader and hence they are not able to connect with the political revolution. The audiences at the movie theatres react with anger; the store guard feels his work interrupted; and the bus driver does not understand the exaggerated expression of gratitude.

Marcos, nonetheless, defends the 'microagitaciones' as small steps in the right direction. He responds to Andrés's critique: “gota a gota se forman los mares y los granos de arena terminarán siendo roca cubierta de musgo” / “drop by drop the seas are formed and grains of sand will become a rock covered with moss” (*LdM74/MfM64*). For Patricio and Marcos, in comparison, the artistic habits of Andrés are self-reclusive and empower the political structures of the status quo. 'El que te dije', who acts as a witness of the actions of 'La Joda', explains,

“... para un Patricio o un Marcos hay toneladas como Andrés, anclados en el París o en el tango de su tiempo, en sus amores y sus estéticas y caquitas privadas, cultivando todavía una teoría llena de decoro y premios nacionales o municipales y becas Guggenheim, una música que respeta la definición de los instrumentos y los límites de uso ...” (*LdM84*).

“... for one Patricio or one Marcos there are droves like Andrés, anchored in Paris or in the tango of their days, in their loves and their aesthetics and their private little turds, still cultivating a literature full of decorum and national or municipal prizes and Guggenheim Fellowships, a music that respects the definition of the instruments and the limitations of their use ...” (*MfM74*).

Patricio and Marcos dismiss Andrés's practice of listening to music because according to them it respects and enhances the political structures that they are fighting. Andrés, on the other hand, argues to prefer a type of aleatory music that in fact breaks with the old structures of definition and limitation of use that Patricio and Marcos criticize. There is certainly a lack of communication between Andrés and the members of 'La Joda' which reflects the overall disconnection between art and politics in some of the revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As we saw above, Cortázar himself struggled to be considered a protagonist, artistically and politically, in the Cuban Revolution. Whereas 'La Joda' tries to establish bridges without philosophical foundations in the streets, Andrés stays in his studio to listen to music and, in the process, to build his own inner bridge which he hopes will serve as the site of his connection to others.

Arts and politics, the novel asserts, are not mutually exclusive. Due to their apparent division, however, 'El que te dije' argues that movements towards political transformation thus far have not translated into a generation of 'hombres nuevos'. Thus, he fears that Marcos is not aware of the rich political potential that he embodies and will rather fall in the labyrinth of the 'old man' once in power. 'El que te dije' meditates about the potential of a victory,

“Preguntarle a Marcos alguna vez si va a olvidarse del carajo y de la concha de tu hermana en caso de que le llegue la hora de mandar; mera analogía desde luego, no se trata de palabrotas sino de lo que late detrás, el dios de los cuerpos, el gran río caliente del amor, la erótica de una revolución que alguna vez tendrá que optar (ya no éstas sino las próximas, las que faltan, que son casi todas) por otra definición del hombre; porque en lo que llevamos visto el hombre nuevo suele tener cara de viejo apenas ve una minifalda o una película de Andy Warhol” (*LdM97-8*).

“He must ask Marcos if he's going to forget his shit and your sister's twat someday in case the time for leadership should arrive; a simple analogy, of course, it's not a matter of dirty words but what throbs behind them, the god of bodies, the great hot river of love, the eroticism of a revolution which someday will have to opt for (not the ones already with us, but the ones yet to come, the ones who are needed, which is practically all of them) a different definition of man; because from what we've seen, the new man tends to take on the face of an old man as soon as he sees a miniskirt or an Andy Warhol movie” (*MfM85*).

Symbols of the power of the 'old man' still survive in the minds of the revolutionaries, as for example, in their dismissive approach to women. In order not to repeat the obedient power structures of the past, the 'hombre nuevo' and the 'new revolution' must combine political abilities, such as those of Marcos, with artistic and intellectual skills, as represented by Andrés. Ludmilla, who at the beginning of the novel is Andrés's loving partner and later becomes the connecting point between Marcos and Andrés, wonders whether there was in fact a big difference between Rimbaud, the French innovative poet, and Lenin, the Russian political leader. She asserts that, if any, differences were in regards to “especialidades, de vocabularios sobre todo, y de finalidades, pero en el fondo, en el fondo...” / “specialties, vocabulary above all, and final aims, but underneath it all, underneath...” (*LdM100/MfM87*). Deeply within themselves, Marcos and Andrés, or Rimbaud and Lenin, are attempting to create the new person. Despite differences of vocabulary, they are journeying towards the centre of their own being, and thus revolutionizing their own personality with basis on a collective instinct for change.

In 'el hombre nuevo' converges the linguistic and artistic awareness of the intellectual with the political activism of the revolutionary. In *Libro de Manuel*, the eroticism of 'el hombre nuevo' becomes a collective instinct that leads the searcher to an ontological as well as a political involvement. Thus, an ontological search without a political awakening has not been completed. Cortázar bridges the desire for a self-transformation to that of an overall political and social revolution. The desires to change oneself and to influence others emanate from within the

individual and cannot be imposed forcefully. Cortázar's project is to initiate the desire for ontological and political change in the reader by using his intellectual and artistic skills. By engaging in the act of reading *Libro de Manuel*, we experience the ontological search of Andrés plus the political struggle of 'La Joda'. The reader is challenged to reconcile these two in order to advance in the process of creating an 'hombre nuevo' that is artistic, intellectual, and political. As much as erotic and playful, the 'hombre nuevo' is a socially responsible member of a collective. To define 'el hombre nuevo' requires the constant work of redefinition because he or she becomes more than the circumstances that surround him or her while at the same time acknowledging the reality of the collective in which he or she interacts.

Re-defining 'el hombre nuevo': Cortázar, Deleuze and Guattari, and Marcuse

In order to examine the aspect of social responsibility that Cortázar incorporates in the ontology of the 'hombre nuevo' in *Libro de Manuel*, this section analyzes Andrés's political awakening and the 'microagitaciones' of 'La Joda'. These two narrative aspects are interrelated because they emerge from the same point within the individual and shared the intention to create a collective of new men and women. The section starts with an examination of the strategies of 'La Joda' from the standpoint of the New Left. I compare the 'microagitaciones' to the new radicalism proposed by Marcuse in his *An Essay on Liberation*, which was published in the wake of the political uprisings that took place in Paris in 1968. 'La Joda', I argue, is fighting the structures of the status quo in a creative way. However, they may also fall in the trap of the old man by not self-criticizing their own actions and following a strong political dogma. The 'hombre nuevo', on the contrary, is open to constant transformation or redefinition. I continue by analyzing Andrés's

political awakening and becoming with the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. I argue that the philosophical and political evolution of 'el hombre nuevo' in *Libro de Manuel* facilitates the creation of a new community that redefines and expands itself by its openness to a collective sense of eroticism, playfulness, and social responsibility.

In *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse elaborates on the ontology of the revolutionary that liberates him or herself from the one-dimensional society. In a previous work, *One-Dimensional Man: The Ideology of Industrial Society*, he describes “a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behaviour* in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe” (*One-Dimensional* 26-27). The survival and expansion of capitalism is founded upon the establishment of rules of thought and behaviour, which qualify any ideas within its own terms. The participant in this form of society is manipulated by a way of thinking that discards any potential for transformation. It promotes, Marcuse adds, “a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood” (*One-Dimensional* 26). Rather than a critique towards reason, Marcuse attempts to show through reasoning the irrationality of the industrial society. Similarly to Cortázar, since his analysis breaks with the Establishment, it is a reasoning that does not follow conventional forms.

Thus, in his *Essay*, Marcuse develops a new way of understanding reason by relating it to an instinctual revolt and a new sensibility that is based on imagination and pleasure. His theory “take[s] root in the very nature, the 'biology' of the individual” (*Essay* 5). As in the case of the ludic and erotic new person, the nature of the individual embodies an imaginative and instinctual force that holds the potential to turn into “political rebellion” (*Essay* 9). Marcuse advocates for

the emergence of a liberated organism, that is, a new type of person that bridges imagination and reason in order to “make the process of production a process of creation” (*Essay 22*). The bridging of reason and imagination results in a “new sensibility,” which “has become a political force” (*Essay 22*). He argues that the revolution of the liberated individual contains a “strong element of spontaneity, even anarchism, in this rebellion, expression of the new sensibility, sensitivity against domination: the feeling, the awareness, that the joy of freedom and the need to be free must precede liberation” (*Essay 89*). The politics of the revolution ought to contain an element of unpredictability and contradiction that reflects the nature of the revolutionary individual.

Marcuse compares the spreading of the new sensibility to a virus that cannot be controlled by the Establishment. The virus is contagious “because the atmosphere, the climate of the established societies, carries the virus” (*Essay 22*). As a virus, the becoming of a new person makes itself present from inside out, as in the case of Oliveira for whom “ardemos dentro afuera” / “we burn outwardly from within” (*R390/H385*). As a virus, the new sensibility does not prevent a confrontation within the individual, but in fact encourages it. It necessitates this confrontation in order to establish a new order in which to operate. The challenge becomes how to manifest its political potential and spread it into a collective.

'La Joda' attempts to spread their virus of commitment through their 'microagitaciones'. Their strategy for political struggle against the Establishment does not follow the conventional form of violent attacks. Rather, their political confrontation centres on everyday situations. The 'microagitaciones' resemble the sensibility of spontaneity and rebellion that took place throughout the world in 1968 and that Cortázar uses to compare against “las revoluciones

prefabricadas” / “prefabricated revolutions” which “contienen en sí su propia negación, el Aparato futuro” / “contain their own negation, the Apparatchik of the future” (*Último* 60/mt).

Marcuse, similarly, proposes a new radicalism that incorporates the new sensibility within an organization for political liberation. He argues,

“The new radicalism militates against the centralized bureaucratic communist as well as against the semi-democratic liberal organization ... Therefore the aversion against preestablished Leaders, apparatchiks of all sorts, politicians no matter how leftist. The initiative shifts to small groups, widely diffused, with a high degree of autonomy, mobility, flexibility” (*Essay* 89).

Marcos, in this respect, leads a small group of revolutionaries that attempt to incorporate a playful strategy for political confrontation. Marcos recognizes the political potential of spontaneity and solidarity. He welcomes Ludmilla into 'La Joda' even though she does not have any experience or knowledge about socialist principles. However, Marcuse warns that spontaneity by itself cannot “possibly be a radical and revolutionary force” (*Essay* 89). Marcuse adds that its political potential can only come about as “the result of enlightenment, education, political practice – in this sense, indeed, as a result of organization” (*Essay* 89). The decentralized organization of the new radicalism should be accompanied by a process of enlightenment, that is, of self-criticism and examination. Without it, 'La Joda' runs the risk of repeating the scheme of the 'hombre viejo' by establishing norms and expectations.

As Marcuse argues, “self-determination begins at home – and that is with every I, and the We whom the I chooses” (*Essay* 88). The 'microagitaciones' reveal the problematic nature of the bridge that Andrés announces at the beginning of the novel: the bridge is not constructed by an ideology and party politics but by who becomes the bridge in him or herself as she moves steps towards a different reality. In order to create the environment of freedom the individual must liberate him or herself. It comes from within the individual and then it extends to the collective.

In *Libro de Manuel*, Cortázar shows that it is not sufficient to create only a new political situation. The individual has to be changed too. In this attempt, ontological searchers such as Oliveira and Andrés are the leaders who engage in a difficult process of a new political becoming.

In his process of political awakening, Andrés reaches a point in which he comes to realize Marcos's motives to organize 'La Joda'. 'El que te dije' narrates to Andrés a meeting of 'La Joda' at which Lonstein invites them to take a look at his mushroom. Andrés reflects,

“... cuando el que te dije me contó la visita al hongo yo estuve de acuerdo con él y pensé que Marcos sabía ver las cosas desde más de un lado, que no era el caso de los otros orientados resueltamente hacia la Joda. En esa comedia idiota había acaso como una esperanza de Marcos, la de no caer en la especialización total, conservar un poco de juego, un poco de Manuel en la conducta. Vaya a saber, che. Capaz que tipos como Marcos y Oscar (del que fui sabiendo cosas por el que te dije) estaban en la Joda por Manuel, quiero decir que lo hacían por él, por tanto Manuel en tanto rincón del mundo” (*LdM208*).

“... when the one I told you recounted the visit to the mushroom I agreed with him and thought that Marcos knew how to see things from more than one side, which wasn't the case with the others who were resolutely oriented toward the Screwery. In that idiotic comedy there was perhaps something like a hope for Marcos, that of not falling into total specialization, preserving a bit of play, a bit of Manuel in his conduct. God, who could say. It could even be that types like Marcos and Oscar (about whom I was getting to know things via the one I told you) were in the Screwery because of Manuel, I mean that they were doing it for him, for every Manuel in every corner of the world” (*MfM185*).

As in the case of Oliveira and Traveler in *Rayuela*, in *Libro de Manuel* Andrés learns from Marcos, who has been able to follow his instinct for social responsibility. Marcos does not use 'La Joda' for his own benefit but rather for the sake of a new generation, as represented by Manuel. Whether or not aware, Marcos senses that the men and women of the future call for a collective of individuals able to alter or counteract the conventions of the 'hombre viejo'. He does so by attempting to recover the child within his own self and integrating playfulness in their political strategies. Marcos's level of commitment suggests that political change in the individual could initiate an ontological transformation. However, the fact that Marcos is not aware of his

potential hinders the process of becoming a new man. Andrés, in comparison, may not agree with the 'microagitaciones' but he equally attempts to preserve “a bit of Manuel in his conduct.” However, he also needs to fight the system in order to keep “every Manuel in every corner of the world” alive. To rediscover the inner child in the process of becoming an 'hombre nuevo' requires the giving of opportunities for new life to others.

Significantly, Andrés has his dream about the Cuban the night that he proposes to Ludmilla the idea of a having a child. She rejects him: “No, mejor no. Yo puedo hablar de Manuel sin que por eso me salte la madre a los ojos” / “No, it's better we didn't. I can talk about Manuel without motherhood coming up into my eyes” (*LdM102/MfM89*). She adds that Francine, his lover, would not have a child with him either because she is “es demasiado inteligente, casi tanto como yo. Durmamos, Andrés, estoy deshecha” / “too intelligent, almost as smart as I am. Let's go to sleep, Andrés, I'm all done in” (*LdM103/MfM90*). Ludmilla's refusal to make love with Andrés reasserts her role as a member of 'La Joda'. She is not an obedient wife but rather a liberating, and liberated, woman. For Andrés, it signifies that the aspect of social responsibility to continue his ontological search does not mean the creation of a literal new person for him to care for. Rather, he must recognize the role of others upon his own process of becoming.

In a similar tone, Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* develop the system of the rhizome, in which any point within “can be connected to anything other, and must be” (7). They define the rhizome in relation to the multiple, which they argue “*must be made*, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available – always $n-1$ ”

(6). If we apply the rhizome to the 'hombre nuevo', there is a multiplicity within his individuality which, as Morelli says in *Rayuela*, “no es sino que busca ser” / “is in that he searches to be” (R369/H363). The 'hombre nuevo' is constantly in redefining because of an incompleteness that drives him to become more of what he is. The ability of individuals to search and become an 'hombre nuevo' emerges out of his connection to others, that in Deleuze and Guattari can include “the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial ... all manner of 'becomings'” (21). There is more than one becoming in this new person, who goes from becoming a woman to becoming an animal, and continues in a constant process of becoming.

Importantly for the discussion of the political implications of becoming, the rhizome does not have a centre and is non-hierarchical. Deleuze and Guattari state that the rhizome is a “nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states” (21). The rhizome is political by definition because it refuses a central system of power. As Andrés realizes in relation to Marcos, he is fighting to keep Manuel in his conduct, and thus rejecting the specialization of his individuality. Rather than an independent subject, Deleuze and Guattari argue that an individual is “an infinite multiplicity, and the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities” (254). Any individual, thus, has the ability to become by making a rhizome, which requires experimentation as in the case of the 'hombre nuevo'.

After Andrés has his dream, he decides to experiment with himself in order to decipher the secret message. He narrates his dream to Ludmilla,

“... cuando salgo soy un hombre que tiene una misión que cumplir, pero mientras lo estoy sabiendo y sobre todo sintiendo, sé también que no tengo la menor idea de cuál es esa misión ... Soy doble, alguien que fue al cine y alguien que está metido en un lío típicamente cinematográfico. Pero esto de doble lo digo despierto, no había ninguna doblez en el sueño, yo era yo y el de siempre ... Un

poco como si sólo gracias a esa acción que debería cumplir pudiera llegar a saber lo que me dijo el cubano, una inversión de la casualidad completamente absurda como te das cuenta” (*LdM116-7*).

“... when I go out I'm a man who has a mission to fulfil, but while I know that and most of all feel it, I also know that I haven't got the slightest idea of what the mission is ... I'm double, someone who went to the movies and someone caught up in a typical movie plot. But the idea of being double I'm telling you while I'm awake, there wasn't any doubleness in the dream, I was I and the one I always am ... A little as if only thanks to the act I was to fulfil could I come to know what the Cuban had told me, a completely absurd reversal of causality as you can see” (*MfM101*).

Andrés perceives a multiplicity within himself after his dream. He has become more than one, and part of his mission is to converge his individuality with the multiplicity. The logic of causality and linear temporality do not apply to his becoming. It is significant that Andrés, in order to decipher the message of the Cuban, engages in a deeper loving relationship not with Ludmilla, but with Francine, with whom he identifies. He regards Francine as a “francesita libresca y cartesiana (como yo)” / “little French girl, bookish and Cartesian (like me)” (*LdM155/MfM134*). While Ludmilla becomes more involved with 'La Joda' and participates in their plan to kidnap a Latin American diplomat in Paris, Andrés plans to take Francine to the dark side of the city and spend “una noche en ese hotel ... para que tengas tu primera lección en patafísica” / “a night in that hotel ... so that you can have your first lesson in pataphysics” (*LdM154-5/MfM134*). Andrés sees himself with the mission to awaken the playfulness – which he has learnt with Ludmilla – of Francine by descending into the other side of the bourgeois life and experiment together “lo que corre por debajo de la piel del día” / “what runs beneath the skin of the day” (*LdM155/MfM134*), to release their own potential for transformation.

The multiplicity in which Andrés perceives himself is between Ludmilla and Francine. He encounters himself in a “callejón sin salida pero con el doble nombre de Ludmilla y Francine” / “blind alley but with the double name of Ludmilla and Francine” (*LdM189/MfM168*). Deleuze and Guattari might argue that Andrés is attempting to become-woman. They explain

that “all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman. It is the key to all the other becomings” (277). Becoming, in this respect, does not refer to imitation or identifying with a woman. Deleuze and Guattari relate becoming to the process of desire by which “becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are *closest* to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes” (272). Andrés, for instance, initiates his process of becoming by recognizing where he encounters himself and then proceeds to connect to those that are closest to him in the blind alley between Ludmilla and Francine. He becomes through them. In both, he finds an eroticism that creates a temporary site of understanding beyond language. Andrés says that making love with Francine “era más que abolir las diferencias, establecer un territorio fugitivo de contacto, porque entonces Francine no solamente se despojaba de todo lo que la erguía contra mí sino que entraba por su cuenta, de la mano de un río de cobre” / “was more than abolishing differences, establishing a brief territory of contact, for then Francine not only rid herself of everything that raised her up against me but on her own, a river of copper leading her by the hand” (*LdM160/MfM139*). It is after an extreme episode of love with Francine that Andrés awakens as an 'hombre nuevo'.

By converging the power of his relationship with Ludmilla and Francine, Andrés is able to decipher the message in his dream to 'awaken'. He then decides to join 'La Joda', which can be transformed into a political organization in which individuality and multiplicity coexist. Andrés cooperates in 'La Joda' in his role of intellectual by putting together the album/book for Manuel. In the book, Andrés follows the intention of Marcos – who does not survive the kidnapping – to preserve Manuel in the conduct and give an opportunity of life to every Manuel around the world. Andrés continues his own becoming and political awakening by writing the

book in which the subject is a future reader, Manuel, whom he seeks to transform into an 'hombre nuevo'. The reader to-come will find a book in which the spontaneity and playfulness of an innovative political struggle plus the self-examination of an ontological becoming are combined into one. The *Libro de Manuel* becomes by itself Andrés's way of attacking the system.

In *Libro de Manuel* Cortázar demonstrates his commitment for the Latin American socialist cause by relating his own ontological project of the 'hombre nuevo' to the political liberation of the region. From 'La Joda' we learn possible ways to attack the Establishment based on spontaneous and playful strategies. The new sensibility and new radicalism that its model attempts to follow, however, should be accompanied by a process of enlightenment and education. Andrés fills in this spot within the organization by completing the album for Manuel and continuing his own process of becoming an 'hombre nuevo'. Despite their differences, Andrés and the members of 'La Joda' reconcile by acknowledging that they are fighting for the same purpose – to bring about a new reality in which the individual recognizes the role of others upon oneself, and hence individuality and multiplicity converge by redefining the individual and creating a new collective. A new collective of this sort, where eroticism, playfulness, and social responsibility flow together, is the new Latin America.

From 'el hombre nuevo' to 'la América Latina nueva'

The term 'hombre nuevo' was first used by José Martí in his essay “Nuestra América” / “Our America,” which was originally published in 1891. Martí criticizes the traces of European colonialism that had survived after the independence of the Latin American nations. He

advocates for a “cambio de espíritu” / “change in spirit” in order to create “nuestra América” / “our America” (163/292-3). Rather than liberating from oppressing structures of power, Latin America has in many ways repeated and reinforced the conventions of the 'Old World'. However, Martí argues that the Latin American individual embodies a potential to become “el hombre real” / “the real man” and establish a community of “hombres nuevos americanos” / “new men of America” (164/293, 165/294). The Cuban revolution, in this regard, brought about a change in spirit as experienced by Cortázar and his political awakening, which in *Libro de Manuel* is reflected through Andrés. In this section I argue that Cortázar's philosophical and political development of ‘el hombre nuevo’ through his literature is his own contribution to the emergence of a new Latin America that is truly independent in cultural and political terms.

As Rosalba Campra explains in *América Latina: La Identidad y la Máscara*, the Latin American literary community was deeply influenced by the Cuban revolution. According to Campra, the revolution translated into a process of “autoconciencia política” / “political self-consciousness” which was accompanied by the Latin American literary 'boom' with the publication of writers such as Ernesto Sábato, Julio Cortázar, Augusto Roa Bastos, Mario Vargas Llosa, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, and Manuel Puig, among others (22/*mt*). The political and literary revolution resulted in a momentum, Campra argues, to reclaim “el derecho a decir 'yo'” / “the right to say 'I'” (19/*mt*). However, after centuries of colonialism, it was still unclear what Latin America meant by saying 'Yo'. Campra says as Morelli that literature is a “búsqueda de ser” / “search for being” in which “América Latina se busca y se construye a sí misma” / “Latin America searches for and constructs itself” (20/*mt*, 7/*mt*). For Cortázar the search for a Latin American identity does not imply a division from other regions and cultures.

Rather, it is a search that, as in the case of 'el hombre nuevo', takes place from inside out and through a convergence of forces rather than a seclusion from others.

As a political development after *Rayuela*, Cortázar questions the post-colonial political structures at play in Latin America. At the same time, 'el hombre nuevo' utilizes the European cultural apparatus to promote a new spirit that represents the homogeneity and richness of the Latin American region. In *Libro de Manuel* the discrepancies and possibilities for solidarity between European and Latin American characters are shown within the members of 'La Joda', as well as in the relationship between Andrés and Francine. In this respect, in her analysis of the novel from a picaresque standpoint, Yovanovich argues that Cortázar is able to capture “the mercurial Latin American popular spirit which Andrés enriches with his European education, Marcos enforces with his political and military savvy, which Ludmilla incarnates with her wild imagination and empathy, and which Lonstein enriches with his linguistic and sexual innovations” (*Play* 96). Education, political activism, imagination, language, and eroticism are combined into one in the 'hombre nuevo'. As a collective, it does not reinforce the current political by respecting borders, but rather creates its own new community.

The 'hombre nuevo' does not count on economic or political incentives for his or her involvement in the global community other than the desire to become more real. Also, it demonstrates that Cortázar is not attempting to create a reality based on discrimination according to differences of abilities, socio-economic class, gender, nationality, etc. For the 'new person' to come into existence, Cortázar seeks a connection between knowledge (*homo sapiens*), workforce (*homo faber*), and playfulness (*homo ludens*). In *Libro de Manuel* these three are combined in the relationship Andrés-Francine-Ludmilla. Love, solidarity, and care appear as foundations for

the awakening. Similarly, for Martí the ideal governor of a Latin American nation as “el que sabe con qué elementos está hecho su país y cómo puede ir guiándolos en junto” / “[he who knows] what elements his own country is composed of and how he can marshal them” (160/290). Thus, the political agent must have a proper knowledge and a solidarity of spirit towards the actual condition and environmental resources of his or her country as well as a loving and caring intention for what the nature offers for the future.

As Martí emphasizes, “Gobernante, en un pueblo nuevo, quiere decir creador” / “*Governor*, in a new country, means *Creator*” (160/290). 'El hombre nuevo', whether or not a governor, seeks to create and innovate for the sake of everyone. In the case of the author, he writes for the reader, creating a literature that innovates and anticipates what is to-come. Martí's 'hombre nuevo americano' reconciles logos and praxis in order to plant and grow in unity “la semilla de la América nueva” / “the seeds of the new America” (168/296). Like a newly planted seed, Martí ascribes a sense of infancy to Latin America. It is precisely in the children, as in the case of Manuel, that Cortázar leads his searchers to find and recover the aspect of playfulness. It should be remembered that the search is not intended to allow the searcher to remain as an infant, but rather to emerge anew. In *Libro de Manuel*, Andrés' awakening comes despite his denial to renounce his European background as a petite bourgeois. An echo of Cortázar's own sentiments, Andrés says firmly: “No, no renuncio a nada, viejo” / “No, I won't give up anything, old man” (*LdM384/MfM345*). Similarly, Martí does not rescind the presence of the university in Latin America. He argues, “La Universidad europea ha de ceder a la Universidad americana” / “The European university must yield to the American university” (161/291). Thus, it is not a game of exclusion but rather of creation for the benefit of the new community.

Latin America, Martí and Cortázar assert through their essays and fiction, has the potential to transform into an 'América Latina nueva'. As in the case of the 'hombre nuevo', it is a search that comes from itself in order to liberate from all forms of oppression and reassert itself. However, its identity must recognize the role of others and thus rather than excluding, it includes others into a new community that imagines and creates together. The new community respects the individual and it acknowledges the multiple. It opens the door for a constant process of becoming and awakenings. As Cortázar told his audience in a speech about the state of the Latin American literature in 1976, 'el hombre nuevo' “tendrá que hallar las bases de una realidad que es verdaderamente suya y, al mismo tiempo, mantener la capacidad de soñar y jugar ... puesto que a través de esas puertas es por donde lo Otro, la dimensión fantástica y lo inesperado se introducirán siempre” / “will have to find the basis of a reality that is truly his and, at the same time, maintain the capacity to dream and play ... since it is through these doors that the Other, the fantastic dimension and the unexpected will always come up” (“Estado Actual” 150/*mt*). Cortázar uses his fiction to open that door and join his readers in the construction of the 'América Latina nueva' as 'hombres y mujeres nuevos'.

CONCLUSION – Ontology and Political Implications of 'El Hombre Nuevo'

I began this thesis by asking, what does Cortázar mean by 'el hombre nuevo'? I offered a definition through a careful reading of *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel*. My definition was divided into two main aspects of the Cortázar's ideal subject: ontology and political implications. I studied the nature of the 'hombre nuevo' from two angles: the relationship, or bridge, that is formed between the author and the reader to create the new person; and the impact of this shared creation who seeks to liberate his or her community by altering rigid structures of understanding.

I examined the ontological searches in which the author and the reader engage through the characters of *Rayuela* and *Libro de Manuel*, plus the political awakening that characterizes the latter. What Cortázar means by 'el hombre nuevo' evolves from one novel to the other. For instance, we have witnessed a development of 'el hombre nuevo' with the relevance of social commitment in the becoming of Andrés. In order to state an overall definition of 'el hombre nuevo', this conclusion will synthesize the findings from each of the three previous chapters.

I started by arguing that there is a close correlation between the author-reader relationship and the emergence of the new person. By engaging in an ontological search with the author, this dialogue has the potential to spark a new understanding of the world upon the reader. Importantly, there is not a pedagogue and a learner status between the author and the reader because both of them are learning through the experimentation in the narrative and the structure of the text. To establish the bridge requires a non-egoistical perspective of the world that is open to a continual becoming.

In *Rayuela* we learnt that the process of becoming should start within the individual. Oliveira discovers a desire to become playful and explore the eroticism of his body, as Morelli

intends through his writing. At first he tries to capture La Maga's easiness with life, but fails because to awaken as a new man is a process from inside out. He joins his instinctual forces with Traveler and Talita and together they are able to invent their own games, talk with humour, and express love for each other. Oliveira shows us that even though the ontological search takes place within the individual it also necessitates others.

Rather than a solitary intellectual, 'el hombre nuevo' follows the model of the reader that opens up to dialogue with the author to know more about him or herself. The new person emerges as he or she recognizes the role of others upon his or her life. It requires a high degree of self-criticism in order to avoid falling into new habitual practices. To become a new person calls for reconciliation but it also entails a confrontation to get rid of the assumptions of the 'old man'.

The confrontation against the 'great habit' has profound political implications for the ontology of the new person. Thus, *Libro de Manuel* extends the ontological search into social and political dimensions by adding social commitment as a vital force along with playfulness and eroticism. As we witnessed through the political awakening of Andrés, social commitment represents a collective rejection of the habitual culture and it gives foundations to form a new community of new men and new women in which the creativity of the individual thrives in an environment of solidarity and unity.

The politics of the new person reflects her nature of playfulness, eroticism, and social responsibility. Andrés's political awakening does not take place after reading political theory, but rather as an epiphany. His political inclinations and his desire to become an 'hombre nuevo' are instinctual forces. However, these forces are not to be separated from the criticism of the

intellectual. Andrés is able to bridge his ontological search with his political awakening by converging his linguistic and artistic awareness with the political activism of the revolutionary leader, as represented by his friend Marcos.

A site to construct the bridge and the continual becoming of 'el hombre nuevo' is the 'América Latina nueva', where eroticism, playfulness, and social responsibility flow together. The new person is aware of the social and political circumstances in which she is born but at the same time she is ahead of the current reality by anticipating and constructing a future to-come. The new Latin America is a project of continual becoming, of redefinition according to the creativity of the individual and the political needs of the collective.

Cortázar's ideal subject bridges ontology and politics. A philosophical self-examination is not complete without a political awakening. Even though his writing most of the time does not touch political issues, an ontological search is a first step towards the raising of consciousness of the reader. Also, 'el hombre nuevo' demonstrates that political activism necessitates intellectual criticism in order not to fall in the traps of the apparatchik.

The playfulness of the new person drives the human being towards a continuous process of invention. As a poet-inventor, the 'hombre nuevo' is a serious player of games with language to create new ways of expression. With the eroticism, the new person erases the division of body and mind. As a holistic individual, Oliveira begins to feel the meaning of the words coming out of his mouth. Andrés receives a message from his unconscious through a dream that calls him to awaken. Social commitment takes Andrés to relate his intellectual reflections to the creation of a new community. He does not need to renounce his artistic and intellectual interests, but rather enhances them for the richness of a collective that respects the heterogeneity of its members.

For further studies, I would like to explore in more detail the connection between ontology and politics that the new person entails. I believe this connection may give a new picture of political involvement in social movements as well as of the potential political background of ontological or other philosophical studies of the human nature. Specially, the bridge between instincts and reasoning may prove the authentic necessity of a socialist revolution that confronts the exploitation of the old man and replace it with a reconciliation between individuals, and the creation of a new community.

Following the philosophy of the bridge, I am also interested in researching the impact of the act of reading upon the reader in becoming an active political agent. Do readers participate more actively in politics than non-readers or readers of less participative narratives? Certainly literacy can be a powerful politically liberating weapon, but it must be fed with critical literature that challenges the reader to know more about him or herself. New technology of reading may popularize literature but at the same time it may disconnect the reader from the phenomenology of the act of reading and thus hindering the ontological search.

I have learnt many things in company of Cortázar's 'hombre nuevo'. It has been a long quest for a definition I hope I have made clear to my readers. As my finishing touch, I would like to summarize 'el hombre nuevo' in two words: transformation (individual and social), and happiness (personal and communal). Let the search continue without end.

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