

## Rayuela: Chapter 55 as Take-(away)

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In his "Tablero de Dirección" for the reading of *Rayuela*, Julio Cortázar informs the reader that he can approach the novel in many ways, but mainly two. The first possibility, designed for the "traditional" or passive reader, allows a sequential perusal of the fifty-six chapters pertaining to the first two sections, "Del lado de allá" (Paris) and "Del lado de aquí" (Buenos Aires). The active, participating reader, on the other hand, will follow the alternate format suggested by the author—a reading that would insert chapters of a third section ("De otros lados") in apparently random order between the chapters comprising the first book, which retains its original configuration. There is, however, one notable exception: Chapter 55 is conspicuously absent from the second book. Generally critics of the novel have either disregarded this omission or noted it without further comment. However, it is my contention that elision constitutes an affirmative gesture. What Cortázar leaves out of the second book reveals as much about his philosophy of art as what he inserts, and asserts, through the *Morelliana* of the third section. Absence is, in fact, a kind of presence, like the silences of John Cage's "experimental" music: "For in this new music nothing takes place but sounds: those that are notated and those that are not."<sup>1</sup> If anti-literature represents, as Ihab Hassan would have it, "will and energy turned inside out,"<sup>2</sup> silence becomes, as in Cage, both an aperture and a form of expression. I would first like to explore here what Cortázar may very well have expressed through the exclusion, which I believe to be intentional, of Chapter 55 from the second book of *Rayuela*. I will then attempt to clarify the often problematical relationship between the two books in light of the interdependence of "something and nothing" (Chapter 55 and the lack thereof), graphically illustrated by Cage in his "Lecture on Nothing":<sup>3</sup>

now		there are silences	But
words	make	help make	and the
silences			the

It has been argued that silence is that perfect state beyond language and form toward which all literature strives. In *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Roland Barthes insists that modernity begins with the search for an impossible Literature. At one extreme of this search, the artist employs ancient and classical forms which he believes transcend History. At the other, he mines literary language and creates a chaos of form in order to deny History. Although Barthes suggests the possibility of a neutral state between these poles, the rationale of the latter school, to which Cortázar appears to belong, is of most interest here. According to Barthes, those writers who would free language from order, end by creating their own laws and defining new conventions for literary language. Their final recourse, as they flee this ever newly-created order, is

<sup>1</sup>John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup>Ihab Hassan, *The Literature of Silence* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Cage, p. 109.

silence.<sup>4</sup> Thus, theirs is a language of suicide, of literature led to the gates of the promised land, defined by Barthes as "un monde sans littérature."<sup>5</sup> Silence not only frees us from the restrictions of language and the burden of History but implies the existence of a world that has ceased to need literature. Ihab Hassan, who holds that art is a form of action, suggests that "perhaps the function of literature, after all, is not to clarify the world but to help create a world in which literature becomes superfluous."<sup>6</sup> Bustrófedon, the voice of absence in Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres*, embodies this future state of literature in his memoirs, "Algunas revelaciones," consisting of four blank pages—presumably the ultimate revelation.

Such silences at the center of the novel may signal optimism, the anticipation of a world in which language will no longer define the limits of imagination and form will no longer circumscribe art. Nonetheless, the literature of silence remains quite audible, sustaining itself at a mortal margin, according to Barthes, "pour mieux chanter sa necessite de mourir."<sup>7</sup> Blank pages and a world without literature aside, Cabrera Infante offers the following compromise through Bustrófedon: "si quieres alguna clase de posteridad . . . la grabas, así, y luego la borras, así (haciendo las dos cosas ese día, menos con las muestras pasadas) y todos contentos. ¿Todos? Yo no sé."<sup>8</sup> This literature on the brink of silence, taped and immediately erased, seems to be a more viable alternative than total silence. In *Rayuela*, the absence of Chapter 55 opens an abyss at the center of the second book, a promise or a threat of sustained silence. However, more important at present than the possibility of absolute silence is Cortázar's "salto hacia el silencio," which Octavio Paz identifies in *Corriente alterna*.<sup>9</sup> Cortázar's handling of the omission of Chapter 55 induces a metaphorical silence characteristic of a literature on the verge of abdication. In an effort toward understanding the mechanics of this omission, I would first like to examine the attitudes and the tendencies toward silence which lie at its roots.

In *The Literature of Silence*, Ihab Hassan identifies a specific current of negation at the heart of anti-literature: "The point is this: silence develops as a metaphor of a new attitude that literature has chosen to adopt toward itself. This attitude puts to question the peculiar power, the ancient excellence of literary discourse—and challenges the assumptions of our civilization."<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, in response to some questions posed by Rita Guibert for *Life* magazine, Cortázar attacked the sanctity of History and the venerability of art. He discredited reverence for the presumed sacred and enduring qualities of the work of art, finding that as a form for preserving the past and as an object of preservation, art reflects only the necessary deadness of tradition:

By the way, for how long must we go on clinging to libraries? With every day that passes I realize more that those apparently obsolete ivory towers

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<sup>4</sup>Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1953), p. 54.

<sup>5</sup>Barthes, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup>Ihab Hassan, "Beyond a Theory of Literature: Intimations of Apocalypse?" *Comparative Literature Studies*, 1 (1964), 266.

<sup>7</sup>Barthes, p. 55.

<sup>8</sup>Guillermo Cabrera Infante, *Tres tristes tigres* (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1971), pp. 257-58.

<sup>9</sup>Octavio Paz, *Corriente alterna* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1967), p. 48.

<sup>10</sup>Hassan, *Literature of Silence*, p. 15.

have all their floors right up to the roof occupied by a race of scholars who are horrified by any extraliterary invasion of literature, which they think of as the product of man's conformism, rather than the free gesture of Prometheus when he stole fire from the gorillas of his day. This brings me back again by analogy to the problem of a writer's "commitment" to his subjects, because the occupants of ivory towers turn as pale as death at the very idea of making a novel from situations or figures in contemporary history, their idea of literature being basically aseptic and uchronic, stretching out pathetically toward eternity and absolute and permanent values. *Has for hinstance the Odyssey, has for hinstance Madame Bovary, et cetera.* Many writers, painters and musicians have stopped believing in such permanence, that books and art should be made to endure; although they go on writing or composing as well as they possibly can, they have given up any superstitious belief in a lasting object, which is really a bourgeois relic that is being liquidated by the increasingly vertiginous speed of history.<sup>11</sup>

Cortázar stresses here the same necessity the surrealists felt for a revitalization of literary forms and language—only possible to the extent that a work is created to *not* endure. As a response to "spasmodic antics aimed at an increasingly improbable permanence,"<sup>12</sup> he constructs a novel opposed to permanence and rigid form, a novel which, like those works Barthes calls the great works of modernity, stops on the threshold of Literature. For, "Le Roman est une Mort; il fait de la vie un destin, du souvenir un acte utile, et de la durée un temps dirigé et significatif."<sup>13</sup> In order that the novel not be a death, it must become provisional, a tenuous human expression that stands at the brink of History. Cortázar therefore cultivates in *Rayuela* a form that, like the game of hopscotch which the reading of the second book approximates, represents a constant process of improvisation and adaptation; the novel is an activity and not an end. It survives the speed of history by its refusal of History—its ability to mobilize its form and thereby continually accommodate itself to the demands of the moment. ("Difícil explicarle que cuanto más frágil y precederó el armazón, mas libertad para hacerlo y deshacerlo."<sup>14</sup>)

Cortázar tells us through Morelli in the "capítulos prescindibles" that "sólo vale la materia en gestación" (p. 453). His statement will echo in Ihab Hassan's description of the use of improvisation as a metaphor for silence in the novel: "Finally, literature strives for silence by accepting chance and improvisation; its principle becomes indeterminacy. By refusing order, order imposed or discovered, this kind of literature refuses purpose. Its forms are non-telic; its world is the eternal present."<sup>15</sup> Cortázar creates this eternal present in *Rayuela* by refusing to transmit a message or impose another well-wrought urn upon tradition. Because the novel exhibits a reverse entropy, ever tending toward order, the novelist may conscientiously reject order by focusing on the gestation of the novel, its ongoing creation and self-apprehension. Through its ability to generate new relationships between its elements and realize forms which are materially unachieved, *Rayuela* projects itself into the future. Its protean evasion

<sup>11</sup>Julio Cortázar cited in Rita Guibert, *Seven Voices* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1973), pp. 293-94.

<sup>12</sup>Guibert, p. 294.

<sup>13</sup>Barthes, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup>Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1963), p. 379. I am citing from the 1968 edition; subsequent parenthetical references will be to that edition.

<sup>15</sup>Hassan, *Literature of Silence*, p. 13.

of History is a form of silence. To further defeat the forces of Order, Cortázar demands a reader-accomplice who, in the act of reading, will create, through his transitory and unrepeatabe experience of it, a new work at each moment. *Rayuela* therefore indicates the threshold to a maze of nearly unlimited combinations of meanings and potential personal interventions in the text and encourages the reader to "esperar lo inesperado."<sup>16</sup> Emphasizing what may be possible rather than what the text actualizes, the novel functions through its ability to evolve instead of through its inherent rigidity of form.

*Rayuela's* capacity for improvisation and self-generation, manifested in its use of the game of hopscotch as a structural model, finds a revealing parallel in Cortázar's interest in music, and particularly jazz—a recurrent theme in the novel. Insofar as music operates in an essentially atemporal dimension, a *durée* which suspends external time to mark its own time, each note is an unrecoverable moment from which each successive note departs in an unforeseen direction. Writing on Cortázar, Malva Filer characterized jazz as not admitting definitive forms: "se da en él, por el contrario, la coincidencia de la creación y la ejecución en un solo momento de expresión libre e irrepitable."<sup>17</sup> Cortázar, like those writers described by Barthes who would deny History, strives for such a coincidence of creation and execution in an unrepeatabe sequence. This underscores the fact that the novel, as Cortázar regards it, is neither sacred nor eternal, but a fugitive moment of conception which replaces historical time with a continual present on the verge of the future. Moreover, the work only endures to the extent that future readers participate in this moment of simultaneous creation and expression. I offer the following to facilitate that complicity.

In a section of *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* called "Take it or leave it," Cortázar elaborates on the correspondence between jazz and his view of the ideal literature:

Diferencia entre "ensayo" y *take*. El ensayo va llevando paulatinamente a la perfección, no cuenta como producto, es presente en función de futuro. En el *take* la creación incluye su propia crítica y por eso se interrumpe muchas veces para recomenzar; la insuficiencia o el fracaso de un *take* vale como un ensayo para el siguiente, pero el siguiente no es nunca el anterior en mejor, sino que es siempre otra cosa si realmente es bueno.

Lo mejor de la literatura es siempre *take*, riesgo implícito en la ejecución, margen de peligro que hace el placer del volante, del amor, con lo que entran de pérdida sensible pero a la vez con ese compromiso total que en otro plano da al teatro su incontestable imperfección frente al perfecto cine.

Yo no quisiera escribir más que *takes*.<sup>18</sup>

Cortázar denies permanence and perfection here to emphasize performance and the necessary transcendence of the literary vision. He further explains how, when a great jazzman dies, a record company will frequently produce, from its archives,

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<sup>17</sup>Julio Cortázar, *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* (México: Siglo Veintiuno, 1968), p. 44.

<sup>17</sup>Malva E. Filer, "La búsqueda de la autenticidad," in *Homenaje a Julio Cortázar*, ed. Helmy F. Giacomani (New York: Las Americas, 1972), p. 204.

<sup>18</sup>Cortázar, *La vuelta*, p. 201.

a recording of several "takes" of one theme. Commenting on the implications of listening to a work in multiple variations of itself and, as it were, eavesdropping on the artist's interruptions and recommencements, Cortázar remarks on the power of the disc "que puede abrirnos la puerta del taller del artista, dejarnos asistir a sus avances, a sus caídas."<sup>19</sup> This opening of the door on the artist's activity is comparable to what Cortázar attempts with Chapter 55, which, while it may be purely coincidental, ends with this same word "caída." With this chapter, he offers the reader a sense of participating in the immediate creative process of the author, encouraging him to experience the novel as a performance and, as such, temporary rather than timeless. In the novel, all order is, as Barthes indicates, "un meurtre intentionnel."<sup>20</sup> The eternal present and the margin of danger which are Cortázar's response to order represent a necessary step in the direction of silence.

In the first book of *Rayuela*, Chapter 55 relates Traveler's insomnia on the night of Oliveira's descent with Talita to the morgue of the mental institution. Talita subsequently returns to discuss with Traveler Oliveira's imagined recovery, through her, of his missing Maga. In the second book, Cortázar omits the chapter itself but reconstructs it in chapters 129 and 133, which supply an additional detail from this same sleepless night in Traveler's reading of a plan by Ceferino Piriz for a society of nations. The first two sentences of Chapter 55 are reproduced verbatim in the corresponding sentences of Chapter 129. The second version of the third sentence ("El sillón de mimbre parecía más fresco que la cama y era una buena noche para seguir estudiando a Ceferino Piriz" p. 567), however, slightly amplifies the original ("El sillón de mimbre parecía más fresco que la cama y era una buena noche para quedarse leyendo" p. 375). Cortázar continues to make apparently arbitrary substitutions ("Talita se habría ido a trabajar a la farmacia," on page 375, becomes "Talita se habría vuelto a su farmacia" on page 570), deletions ("De todas maneras era raro que Talita no hubiera vuelto de la farmacia," on page 375, becomes "'es raro que Talita no vuelva'" on page 579), and revisions ("'Esta tan contento de tener miedo esta noche, yo sé que esta contento,'" on page 378, becomes "'Esta tan contento de tener miedo esta noche, yo sé que esta contento en el fondo'" on page 590). While these otherwise unaccountable modifications do not appear to improve upon the prose, they do provide the reader with a sense of spying upon the creative activity of the author. The work no longer pretends to present a selected and definitive version but several variations on a theme designed to stress the project rather than the result. In keeping with the character of the "take," Cortázar does not alter the sequential order of the phrases as they appear in the first book. Moreover, every sentence of Chapter 55 finds some form of representation in these "replacement" chapters: Chapter 129 includes the first three sentences of Chapter 55, and the remainder appear in Chapter 133. Ostensibly, the chapter from the first book figured as one possible performance of a piece of fiction, which Cortázar "replays" later with elaborations to demonstrate the plasticity of the novel, its capacity for improvisation and the marginality it would like to share with jazz. The embellishments of the second performance, notably the added material from Ceferino's paper, may be equivalent to the ad-lib of the jazz musician, or perhaps an intervening solo from a guest performer. In accordance with Cortázar's insistence that if a "take" is really good, it is not an improvement on the preceding execution but something different, these later chapters are not mere echoes of Chapter 55 or critics of the novel, such as David William Foster who remarked without further

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<sup>19</sup>Cortázar, *La vuelta*, p. 201.

<sup>20</sup>Barthes, p. 31.

explanation on the absence of Chapter 55 from the table of directions,<sup>21</sup> might have noted its duplication. As it stands, each succeeding chapter, like each "take," is at once a new experience and a petition.

The same philosophy which inspired Cortázar's treatment of Chapter 55 prompted, I believe, his publication in the *Revista Iberoamericana* of a suppressed chapter of *Rayuela* (originally 126) which he says essentially generated the first two sections. When he found upon completion of the novel that this "piedra fundamental" prematurely crystallized the process to which it subsequently gave birth, he attempted to remedy the situation by deleting the names of the characters, thus rendering the chapter ambiguous. When this proved unsuccessful, he reluctantly omitted it (replacing it with a citation that begins "Por qué, con tus encantamientos infernales, me has arrancado a la tranquilidad de mi primera vida . . ." p. 563). He later offered it to the journal with the gaps remaining where the names of the characters had been erased and a note containing the following statement: "Hoy que *Rayuela* acaba de cumplir un decenio, y que Alfredo Roggiano y su admirable revista nos hacen a ella y a mí un tan generoso regalo de cumpleaños, me ha parecido justo agradecer con estas páginas, que nada pueden agregar (ni quitar, espero) a un libro que me contiene tal como fui en ese tiempo de ruptura, de búsqueda, de pájaros."<sup>22</sup> Cortázar's desire to thank his readers with an unedited manuscript, a key to the process of the novel's composition, shows to what extent he stresses the importance of the reader's ability to reconstruct the author's creative activity ("Así el lector podría llegar a ser copartícipe y copadeciente de la experiencia por la que pasa el novelista, en el mismo momento y en la misma forma" p. 453) and provides a parallel to what he intended to accomplish within *Rayuela* through his treatment of Chapter 55. He in fact insists on this opening of the door on the artist's activity as a means of rupturing the closed order toward which the novel tends.

I believe I have shown here that Cortázar's exclusion of Chapter 55 constitutes an intentional and significant gesture. It opens a silence at the center of the novel and at the same time contributes toward the novel's leap in that direction by creating the improvisational and eternal present essential to its denial of History and repudiation of abiding values in the work of art. An acknowledgment of the importance of this omission must conduce to a reexamination of the relationship between the "two books" of *Rayuela*, to which it provides a valuable and perhaps intended key. Referring again to Cage's "Lecture on Nothing," we find that words make silences. Obviously, Chapter 55's absence in book two derives from its presence in the first book. Without its appearance, we have neither a discernible silence nor a privileged insight into the improvisational nature of the second book. This would indicate a necessary symbiosis of novel and antinovel.

A view of Chapter 55 as a "take" and as an affirmative omission must lead, then, to an unequivocal conclusion about the interdependence of *Rayuela*'s two books. However, in an article, "Notas sobre el 'Tablero de Dirección' en *Rayuela* de Julio Cortázar," which appeared in the above-mentioned issue of the *Revista Iberoamericana* dedicated to Cortázar,<sup>23</sup> Ken Holsten rightfully called attention to

<sup>21</sup>David Foster, in his chapter on Cortázar in *Currents in the Contemporary Argentine Novel* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975), p. 104, notes the absence of Chapter 55, as well as, erroneously, that of chapters 57 and 59.

<sup>22</sup>Julio Cortázar, "Un texto inédito de Cortázar," *Revista Iberoamericana*, 39 (1973), 388.

<sup>23</sup>Ken Holsten, "Notas sobre el 'Tablero de Dirección' en *Rayuela* de Julio Cortázar," *Revista Iberoamericana*, 39 (1973), 683-88.

the fact that many critics of the novel have assumed that the author proposed a double reading of *Rayuela* when he had, quite emphatically in fact, indicated a choice between two approaches to the book. Holsten verified this by citing both the "Tablero de Dirección" and *La vuelta*, in which Cortázar makes the following statement:

En *Rayuela* definí y ataqué al lector-hembra, al incapaz de la verdadera batalla amorosa con una obra que sea como el ángel para Jacob. Si se dudara de la legitimidad de mi ofensiva, baste este ejemplo: críticos reputados con sede en Buenos Aires empezaron por no entender el doble sistema posible de lectura de la novela, y de ahí pasaron al *pollice verso* después de asegurar patéticamente que la habían leído "de las dos maneras que indica el autor," cuando lo que proponía el pobre autor era una opción y jamás hubiera tenido la vanidad de pretender que en nuestros tiempos se leyera dos veces un mismo libro.<sup>24</sup>

If the reader were to ignore the blatant irony of the last sentence and take Cortázar's option literally, he would have to consider a single book within whose limits he could not derive the desired effect from the reciprocal relationship between Chapter 55 and chapters 129 and 133 nor appreciate the palpable silence at the heart of the second book. The silences of the antinovel, both real and metaphorical, rely on the tradition of the novel. Just as he labels essential chapters "prescindibles," Cortázar often proclaims the opposite of what he means. Although he clearly states in the table of directions and insists in *La vuelta* that he intends a choice between two possible readings, he repeatedly draws the lessons of the second book from the presence of the first, and a reexamination of the "option" offered to the reader will demonstrate the absurdity of any choice between the two.

Cortázar in fact proposes in his table of instructions only the illusion of an option, which for the active, or participating, reader grants less freedom than he otherwise may have felt. He offers this "choice" for the sole purpose (as he admits) of singling out and attacking the passive reader, whom such an unconventional proposition as the table of instructions will already have discouraged from reading this novel. The female reader, as the object of Cortázar's attack, is rather a component of the traditional novel than an actual reader possibility. While Ken Holsten argues efficaciously for the merits of the second book, no self-respecting reader could "choose" the first book with its "tres vistosas estrellitas que equivalen a la palabra *Fin*" and the dispensable chapters which the author assures him he can ignore with a clear conscience. Consequently, Cortázar has effectively eliminated rather than suggested an option. The logical result of the fact that the first book never counted as an option is that it cannot then be disregarded as such. Its purpose is not, as the author ironically claims in his instructions, to provide an alternative for the traditional reader ("que por lo demás no pasará de las primeras páginas, rudamente perdido y escandalizado, maldiciendo lo que le costó el libro" p. 452), but rather to provide the novel Cortázar's antinovel contains and to offer the assumptions about literary orders that it cancels. The second book relies on the first book for its condemnation of conventional plots, passive readers and numerically-ordered systems as well as for its illustration of Cortázar's contention that the best literature is always "take." The first book posits an order that the second book ruptures, a plot that the second book makes irrelevant, and a permanence that the second book undermines by altering its figurations and exposing them as subject to the caprice of their creator.

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<sup>24</sup>Cortázar, *La vuelta*, p. 142.

*Rayuela* contains clues in addition to Chapter 55 as to the indispensability of both books. As soon as the participating reader makes what must be the obvious choice between the two systems offered by the author and begins the second book with Chapter 73, he confronts the following argument, which he may apply to his act of selection: "El solo hecho de interrogarse sobre la posible elección vicia y enturbia lo eligible . . . Parecería que una elección no puede ser dialéctica, que su planteo la empobrece, es decir la falsea, es decir la transforma en otra cosa" (pp. 438-39). At this point, the reader, if he has taken the author at his word, has already made such a dialectical election between the two methods of reading and thereby impoverished the possibilities of his options. Nonetheless, based upon the system Cortázar has established, he cannot "choose" the first book in the manner in which it has been offered to the passive reader. His situation has become impossible: the author has extended him a non-option disguised as a choice and subsequently reproached him, in effect, for the act of selecting the inevitable. Only by transcending the either/or principle of Western rationalism which Cortázar criticizes throughout *Rayuela* can he solve his dilemma. While electing to disregard the first book, he must simultaneously read it, thus extricating himself from the dialectics of what Octavio Paz has called the Western world of " 'esto o aquello' " and entering the Eastern world of " 'esto y aquello' y aun de 'esto es aquello.' " <sup>25</sup> *Rayuela* and the antinovel operate within this seemingly self-contradictory world in which art sings of its necessity to die. Anti-literature is literature nevertheless, but it is radically ironic in that it attacks the form and the language it employs. The reader must therefore, like the antinovel, live with conflict and read the first book in order to understand the novel which he must "elect" to not read.

A consideration of the premises of the antinovel and its relationship to the novel will further testify to the impossibility of an option between the two as they are represented in book two and book one, respectively. Jean-Paul Sartre first formulated a definition of the antinovel in a preface to Nathalie Sarraute's *Portrait d'un inconnu*: "Les anti-romans conservent l'apparence et les contours du roman; ce sont des ouvrages d'imagination qui nous présentent des personnages fictifs et nous racontent leur histoire. Mais c'est pour mieux décevoir: il s'agit de contester le roman par lui-même, de le détruire sous nos yeux dans le temps qu'on semble l'édifier, d'écrire le roman d'un roman qui ne se fait pas, qui ne peut pas se faire . . ." <sup>26</sup> Insofar as it does conserve the appearance of the novel, the antinovel does not constitute a true alternative to the traditional novel. As Roland Barthes points out in *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, literature of negation comes to define its own tradition. Literature as well as anti-literature are forms of order. The alternative to art is consequently not anti-art, but silence, and to promote its own eventual absence, the novel must contest and cancel itself ("¿Para qué sirve un escritor si no para destruir la literatura?" p. 503). For this reason, book two both contains book one and stands in relation to it; the first book is the object of an activity for which it provides the components. Unless one selects the former, there is no choice between novel and antinovel: the second book is written in terms of and in the terms of the first. The antinovel is a novel engaged in a particular activity—deconstruction carried on as a form of composition ("Si el volumen o el tono de la obra pueden llevar a creer que el autor intentó una suma, apresurarse a señalarle que está ante la tentativa contraria, la de una resta implacable" p. 595). Book one is the quantity from which book two "subtracts," as it pursues a process that adds to its volume while undermining the foundations of Art. The goal of this subtraction is a silence and an openness beyond the reach of literature, briefly glimpsed in the absence of Chapter 55.

<sup>25</sup>Octavio Paz, *El arco y la lira* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1956), p. 94.

<sup>26</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to Nathalie Sarraute, *Portrait d'un inconnu* (Paris: Union Générale D'Éditions, 1956), p. 7.