

Visual Theory in Antonioni's *Blow-Up* and its Source, Cortázar's "Las babas del diablo": A Psychoanalytic Point of View

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Introduction

Michelangelo Antonioni based *Blow-Up* (1966) on Julio Cortázar's short story, "Las babas del diablo" (1959)[1], but, it is difficult to see any similarities beyond the most obvious. Indeed, on the surface, Antonioni's "existentialistic" and "absurd" film barely resembles Cortázar's "fantastic" short story. Yet when we examine both works from a psychoanalytic point of view, we find that they have an Oedipal scenario, and that both authors choose the photograph to represent the castration complex[2].

As is well known, Cortázar was influenced by Freud, and his works are often examined in the light of psychoanalysis theory[3], and there are also psychoanalytic interpretations of *Blow-Up*. In the first place, naturally enough, most articles on Cortázar do not refer to Antonioni's *Blow-Up*, and since the psychoanalytic articles on *Blow-Up* use psychoanalytical theories only to explain Thomas' strange behavior, most of them neglect to compare *Blow-Up* with its source, "Las Babas del diablo".

So, this paper regards both works as representations of both authors' dreams told by free association, and tries to clarify the close relationship of the works and both authors' common understanding of the photograph, by using psychoanalytic theory.

1. Outlining "Las babas del diablo" and *Blow-Up*

Before discussing both works, we should confirm their outlines. I commence with "Las babas del diablo".

One Sunday, in November, Michel, a professional translator and amateur photographer, sees a couple who at first seem like a boy and his mother, but the woman appears to be seducing him. Michel is intrigued and takes their photograph. At that instant, the woman notices him and demands the film. But as he refuses, they have a quarrel. During that time, the boy flees. Then, an ominous man with a clown-like white face gets out of a car parked nearby and joins the woman. Unnerved, Michel also flees. A few days later, Michel enlarges the photograph of that scene to the size of a poster, and puts it on the wall in front of his desk. After that, he sometimes looks at the photograph and indulges in erotic reverie about the couple. At other times, he interrupts his work to examine the woman's face and the blots on the railing in the photograph. In the last analysis, he thinks taking the photo had been a good act.

But one day, the blow-up becomes a moving image and shows what would have occurred if he had not been there to snap the picture. The woman encourages the boy to look at the ominous

man's car, which is out of the frame. Michel notices that he was wrong. The woman was a lure for the man to procure the boy. Michel cries helplessly. Then, somehow, his cry reaches into the world of the photograph and the woman looks back in surprise. Then the camera pans to the man and zooms in on him, and at the same time the blot moves out of frame. Surprised and angered, the man looks at Michel with black holes in the place of eyes. At that instant, something like a large bird passed across the frame and the boy once again flees successfully. Out of breath, Michel stand in front of the man and the woman, and then the man pushes his hands towards Michel until his hand blocks out the photograph. Michel closes his eyes involuntarily. When he opens them again, the photograph shows a blue sky with floating clouds and he has become a camera either psychologically or physically.

Next, the outline of *Blow-Up*[4].

One day Thomas, a fashion photographer, sees a couple, a young woman and an old man embracing each other, and snaps away. Then the woman notices him and demands the film, but he refuses. They have a quarrel that gets nowhere. So she gives up and leaves. But actually, she follows him from the park and demands the film again, by offering herself. Thomas gives her a fake film, and they are about to enter the bedroom, when the delivery of a propeller he bought earlier that day is delivered, preventing them from having sex.

After she leaves, he develops the film, examines the prints, and finds a blot at the end of her line of sight. To discern what it is, he repeatedly enlarges it. At first, he cannot understand what it is, so, he prints all the frames and arranges them in sequence. The photographs then became a primitive montage, revealing the blot to be a pistol. Because of Thomas' presence, it appears, what would have been a murder ended in a mere attempt, and as a result, he thinks, he saved someone's life. Thomas feels excited about this, but it is not true. After a while, he discovers another blot in another print. He photographs the photograph and blows it up repeatedly until the photograph takes the appearance of a mesh of silver-halide dots. The blot now seems to reveal the corpse of a man.

Though it is midnight, Thomas returns to the park for the second time and actually finds the corpse. He touches it. Then he hears a twig snap and hurries away. He goes to visit his painter friend, Bill, but he is making love with his girlfriend. When he returns to his studio, he finds that all his negatives and prints have been stolen except for an exaggeratedly enlarged photograph of the blot that shows the corpse. Then the painter's girlfriend visits him. Thomas shows her the remaining blow-up, and she is reminded of her partner's abstract paintings. After that, Thomas attempts to talk to his editor friend Ron about the corpse, but Ron is intoxicated and can't take seriously what Thomas says.

In the morning he returns to the park for the third time and the body is missing. Thomas is at a loss. Then white faced students acting like clowns come along, and a couple start to play a game of tennis without any balls. Thomas watches them from a distance. In the rally, the imaginary ball flies over the fence. The female player encourages him to toss it back. He hesitates a moment, but eventually he runs up to where the imaginary ball fell, and imitates throwing it back. The mimes resume the game, and we can hear the sound of a ball that does not exist. Then a camera catches him in the center of the lawn, until at last he disappears, leaving the field empty.

2. The Psychoanalytical interpretation of both works

Now that we have outlined both works, let us look for similarities from a psychoanalytic point of view.

They each have a core constellation of a woman, a crime, and a photograph, and both end in seemingly inexplicable conclusions. In particular, the most salient feature of both works is the photograph, which shows what was really happening at that time, in "Las babas del diablo" by the still image turning fantastically into a movie; and in *Blow-Up* by becoming movie-like by the arrangement of photographic frames into a primitive montage. At first, however, we are unable to see any similarities beyond the most obvious.

It is a common thought that Cortázar combines existential questioning with experimental writing techniques in his works, and we can therefore say that Cortázar and Antonioni are contemporaries within the same existentialistic background. However, only a few critics have compared both works. The works seem so different that, for many scholars, it seems that *Blow-Up* was only loosely based on Cortázar's story. So, most critics think that the works only have a slight connection, and that their main themes are completely different. "Las babas del diablo" is a story in the 'fantastic' genre. On the other hand, *Blow-Up* is an 'absurd' story, like Antonioni's other previous 'existentialistic' films. Of course, there are some critics who analyze *Blow-Up* from the existentialistic point of view. They feel that both works share something, but they do not develop the idea[5].

On the other hand, among the dozens of commentaries, only a few try to establish a close relationship between "Las babas del diablo" and *Blow-Up*, and what most of these commentaries focus on is the photographs. Nevertheless, their interpretations are problematic because every critic uses the words "camera" and "photograph" as if they are the almost same thing, and because they try to analyze both works based on a simplistic and nonprofessional understanding of photography. Consequently, every critic automatically misses the important fact that both each protagonist changes his way of seeing the scene of the couple. Initially, the protagonists see the couples "through the viewfinder of a camera", but when they see it again, it is not through a viewfinder but "through a photograph"[6]. I will discuss this crucial difference later in this article, in association with my psychoanalytic interpretation of both works.

To make matters worse, critics to date presume that Michel represents Cortázar qua writer. But Cortázar is actually not only a writer but also an amateur photographer like Michel. Nevertheless no critics postulate that Michel represents Cortázar the photographer. This might be because of the famous beginning of "Las babas del diablo", where Cortázar, using the voice of the hero as narrator, talks about the limits of verbal language. Subsequently, many critics think that both works treat the limits of the two respective media and the differences between them: the camera-and-photograph compound for Cortázar represents his writing, and the camera-and-photograph compound for Antonioni represents his cinema.

But, in my interpretation, Cortázar's camera is neither a substitute for the writer's typewriter nor a symbol of his literature, and Cortázar does not contrast photography with language to explain his literature. Instead, Cortázar's literature is rather a substitute for his photography. That is to say, "Las Babas del diablo" is written from a photographic point of view. We should

not forget Cortázar the amateur photographer, who published his own photo book *Porsa del Observatorio (From the Observatory)* in 1972.

In short, both works are so difficult, so ambiguous and so unusual that each critic interprets them as they wish without sufficient evidence. However, both are nightmarish stories, where we get lost between reality and fiction, and we can't overlook the uncanny and anxious atmosphere in both works. So, what evokes the nightmarish atmospheres in both works?

As is well known, Cortázar was influenced by Freudian theory, and for him writing short stories was a sort of therapy for his neurosis, instead of psychoanalysis. As he used his neurotic symptoms as inspiration for his short stories, he did not go to a psychoanalyst[7]. In fact, in the beginning of "Las babas del diablo", there is a description suggesting that this story is Cortázar's own nightmare. The story's narrator is the hero himself, who is a translator and amateur photographer like Cortázar. And the hero, without exactly knowing why, says that he tries to "to get rid of a tickle in the stomach" by telling his weird thing[8]. This attempt to treat neurotic symptoms by talking is thus like "free association". If we regard this story as author's neurotic symptomology told by free association, we can change the question asked above into the following: What repressed impulse or idea can we find in the uncanniness and anxiety in "Las babas del diablo"? And can we find the same impulse in *Blow-Up*?

According to Freud, the sense of the "uncanny" derives from the castration complex. In "The Uncanny" (1919), Freud, interpreting E. T. A. Hoffman's "The Sand-Man" (1815), retraces the uncanny elements in the "Sand-Man" to the anxiety caused by the infantile castration complex[9]. The castration complex comes from the anxiety when the child fears his father will castrate him to punish his Oedipal wish to eliminate the father and to possess the mother. So, to deal with the castration complex, the child tries to repress his Oedipus complex to overcome his castration complex. But when the Oedipus complex is stimulated for some reason, we feel a fear of castration again. And it appears for us as the "uncanny".

Well, can we find symptoms of the Oedipus complex and the castration complex in both works? Yes, we can find them easily. In "Las babas del diablo", we can regard the boy as a child, the elder woman as a mother, and the ominous man as a father. In this case, a father's threat of castration corresponds to the ominous man's intention of homosexual child abuse. And moreover, if we regard the boy as the double of Michel, the scene where the ominous man gets angry with Michel instead of the boy, also means the threat of castration [10].

In *Blow-Up* too, we can find the infantile Oedipal wish and the castration complex. Thomas tries to have sex with a young woman. Then later, he finds the dead body of a middle-aged man in the photograph. In these scenes, we can find the Oedipal wish fulfilled by "displacement". In addition, there is also the motif of the double in *Blow-Up*. Thomas' double is the young man who peers at him and his friend Ron from outside the restaurant. The young man has blond hair like Thomas. Moreover, we can find another resemblance between the shot taken by Thomas' camera and the one fired from the killer's gun. So, if we can regard Thomas as the child, the woman as the mother, the man as the father, and the third man as the double of the child, we can find an Oedipal scenario in *Blow-Up*.

Now let us confirm the castration complex in *Blow-Up*. If the embracing couple, peeped at by Thomas, represents the father and the mother, this scene is the "primal scene". According to

Freud's "From the history of an infantile neurosis" (1918 [written in 1914])[11], the primal scene is the coitus of the parents as witnessed by the child. Freud analyzes the dreams of the "Wolf Man"—his case name for the patient from the article—and thinks that the "Wolf Man" witnessed his parents engaged in rear-penetration, or "wolf-style", coitus. We can follow his account as below.

When the "Wolf Man" first sees the primal scene, he cannot understand what it means. But, when he comes to notice the anatomical differences between his parents and connects them with the primal scene, he reconstructs the scene as the castration of his mother by his father.

The memory of his father's violent action, the satisfied look on his mother's face and the wound, that is, her genitals, is combined with his insufficient knowledge about the anatomical differences between the two sexes. Then, castration becomes real for the "Wolf Man", and he is tormented by a conflict; "If you want to be sexually satisfied by Father, you must allow yourself to be castrated like Mother; but I won't have that"[12]. Freud thinks that because of this conflict, the "Wolf Man" developed a neurosis.

In *Blow-Up* too, the photograph morphs into a nightmarish, primal-scene image. Before developing the film, Thomas thinks his photograph will show a "peaceful and still" scene. But, when he blows the pictures up after the woman leaves, one frame becomes a scene of an attempted murder, and the other frame becomes the image of a corpse. Thomas later returns to the park, and actually finds the dead body.

In addition, *Blow-Up* also has a scene corresponding to the mother's satisfied face in the primal scene. Thomas goes to Bill's home after returning from the park. Then he sees his friend making love with his girlfriend through the venetian blinds. She notices him and he attempts to leave, but she stops him with her gaze. She shows an enraptured look on her face while they continue looking at each other. As Thomas looks away, the camera, acting as Thomas' eyes, wanders over the surface of Bill's Pollock-like painting on the wall above the bed, as if it reflects Thomas' disturbance by the woman's looking back at him.

3. The change of visibility as castration anxiety

Here we compare both works. First, let us compare the scenes of both heroes' voyeurism. Of course it must be admitted that the symbolism of the couple in the park in *Blow-Up* is not identical with that of the couple in "Las babas del diablo". The couple in "Las babas del diablo" represents a mother and her son, while the couple in *Blow-Up* represents parents. However, because Michel's peeping represents the Oedipal wish and Thomas' peeping represents the primal scene, we can safely say that both scenes represent one phase of the Oedipus complex.

Then let us compare the scenes where the photographs show the truth in both works. They give us very different impressions. In "Las babas del diablo" the photograph tells the truth in a fantastic way, while the photograph in *Blow-Up* does so in a realistic way. Yet both scenes represent the same thing, that is, the threat of castration.

Here we should notice both heroes change their way of seeing. Both heroes see the couple twice, though in different ways. At first they see a couple through a viewfinder, and both regard the scenes as beautiful. Then, when the heroes see the scenes of the couples again, not through

the viewfinder, but on prints, the blown-up images show the horrible truth in their different ways.

Of course, the viewfinder aspect and the photographic image are both connected with the camera. But they give the heroes completely different visions. We can explain the reason as below.

The viewfinder, such as a reverse Galilean viewfinder of the Contax1.1.2 in “Las babas del diablo” and a SLR (single-lens reflex camera) viewfinder of the Nikon F in *Blow-Up*, consists of many lenses. So it is similar to a telescope that reinforces the naked eye, and it is, moreover, closely related to a Renaissance-painting perspective, whose very subjective vision gives the viewer a privileged point of view. But, the vision through a photograph is different from the one through a viewfinder. As Walter Benjamin said in “Little History of Photography” (1931), in photographic images “a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious” and it gives us a “shock” effect[13]. The heroes also see in their photographs what their subjective visions of the naked eye had overlooked or repressed, when their photographs become movie-like.

Yet in both works, the unconscious which appears in the printed photos presents not just things overlooked by human eyes, it reveals the author’s own and his hero’s Oedipal complex and castration complex. Thus photography gives the hero a “traumatic” experience. In “Las babas del diablo”, the photograph becomes animated, like a movie, when the blots in the photograph disappear in accordance with the movements of the camera, and the photograph transforms to show the “uncanny” reality. On the other hand, in *Blow-Up*, “uncanny” images, such as the pistol and the corpse, appear on the exaggeratedly enlarged blots in the photographs, which take hold of the hero. In both works, these blots trigger “the uncanny”.

So we should refer here to the idea of the “punctum” by Roland Barthes in *La Chambre claire* (1980), rather than Benjamin’s “shock”. For Barthes, photography is an indefatigable expression of Lacan’s “*tuché*” (Greek: τύχη, *túchē*, chance, fate)[14]. Using Lacan’s term in the beginning of his book, Barthes explains that a “punctum” is a “blot” which pricks me[15]. So, what is *tuché*?

In *Seminaire XI* (1973), Lacan names “the encounter of the real” as *tuché*. When “the real” that was repressed by a language appears through a seam (mesh, network) of the symbolic order of language, the viewer feels it looks back at us. So, Lacan calls the breakthrough of “the real” as “the gaze”. In a famous discursive example, Lacan compares this “gaze” to the blot of Holbein’s “Ambassadors” (1533). When you view the painting from a certain angle, you can make out that the blot is a skull, painted in anamorphic projection, and it looks back at you.

We can notice here that the blots of Michel’s and Thomas’ photographs are similar to the apparently amorphous blur in the “Ambassadors”. When these blots stop being blots by being seen from a different angle, or by enlargement, the pictures change their meaning, break the viewer’s subjective way of seeing, and traumatize them[16]. Now we can sum up the common points of both works as below.

By viewing again the scenes of the couples as a primal scene, this time not through a viewfinder, but through a photograph, neither hero is any longer the privileged viewer. Both heroes are no longer subjects who dominate the objects which they are looking at, but they become controlled by the “uncanny” gaze looking back at them from photographs as “a space informed by the unconscious” and “an indefatigable expression of Lacan’s *tuché*”. At this point

in both works, the photographs become movie-like. The "uncanny" appears in their photographs to look back at them; the one in "Las babas del diablo" is the ominous man's intention of homosexual child abuse, and the other in *Blow-Up* is of the phallic imagery of the gun and the dead body. The loss of position as privileged viewer would, accordingly, stimulate both heroes' repressed castration complexes.

Moreover, from our interpretation given above, we can now understand that Antonioni developed, through cinematic montage, the theme of the change of visibility as castration anxiety. In the beginning, the hero of *Blow-Up* plans to publish a photographic collection about the miseries of the lower working class in London. One of the photographs taken in the park would appear on the last page of the book. Thomas intends to contrast these photographs of the lower class with the one of the couple in the park. At first, he intends only to express his vision of London by the arrangement of his photographs. But, when he blows his photographs up and arranges them to find out why the woman wanted the film roll so much, the series of prints shows something unexpected, two blots in two different photographs, one a gun, the other a dead body.

We can see here two different kinds of cinematic montage. The first arrangement of photographs is a type of montage that creates the continuity of time and space, that is, a fictional story. Therefore such a montage conceals the truth, like a dream which can be a substitute for "the repressed". On the other hand, in the second arrangement of photographs, the hero makes a montage to find the woman's "wish", and therefore he interprets the photographs, much as a psychoanalyst interprets a dream to find a repressed "wish" of a patient. So, in this montage, he does not arrange the photographs to create his story. Instead, the photographs rather encourage him to arrange them. In a sense, the photographs here look back at him.

Thus, in *Blow-Up*, by becoming a psychoanalysis of a dream, the second montage unveils the truth in the blots as the "uncanny" in the photographs, much as the animated photograph does in "Las babas del diablo". In consequence, Antonioni does not base *Blow-Up* loosely on the short story of Cortázar. Instead, Antonioni successfully develops its themes with special care in his own field of cinema.

Conclusion: Final Scenes as the Acceptance of Castration

As explained above, when we compare both works psychoanalytically, it turns out that the photographs that become movie-like represent the fear of castration. Antonioni further develops this theme in his cinematic field. So, can the heroes, who represent the boys Oedipal boys, overcome their castration complexes? In closing this paper, I confirm that they did.

According to Lacan's theory, which differs from Freud's explanation of castration anxiety, the acceptance of castration makes it possible for a child to repress the Oedipus complex and the castration complex. Lacan's thought is as below. In Lacan's mirror stage, the child identifies himself as his mother's lost penis. Therefore, the person who is castrated is not the child but the mother, and the acceptance of castration means to break the bond between the mother and the child [17].

So, when we follow this thought, the fact that at the end of the story Cortázar's hero says that he becomes the impotent lens of a camera signifies that the child was cut off from the mother

and has lost the omnipotence that the mother gave him.

Then, can we find a scene in *Blow-Up* where these complexes are repressed? Yes, we can see this in the scene of an unseen tennis game. Initially, like the “Wolf Man”, a child feels the fear of castration because of his incomplete anatomical knowledge. But actually the mother was not castrated, and never had a penis at all. So, when the child understands that the mother’s penis is not castrated but was always absent, he is released from the fear of castration and also from the bond with his mother. Then he steps in to a new world dominated by the father.

According to Lacan, this repression of desire for the mother occurs especially in and through language. For a child who lives in the world dominated by vision[18], man is superior to woman because the penis is prominent and the vagina is hidden and difficult to see. So, the child knows only the penis out of the two sex organs, and thinks of the woman as a man without a penis: castrated. But the words, “man” and “woman” are equal and incompatible at the same time. So, when a child learns this pair of words, they enter the dimension of language, and both sexes become equal in the mind of a child. Later, a child understands that his mother is not castrated and she has the other sex organ. After that, the child will not identify with the mother’s penis any longer.

As a typical scene where a child learns a pair of words, Lacan takes Freud’s grand-son’s game with a small bobbin, mentioned in “Beyond the pleasure principle” (1920). According to Freud, his grand-son played with bobbin, throwing it over the bed and pulling it from there. Then he repeatedly pronounced the opposition of the words “fort–da”, meaning “here–there”, or “present–absent”.

In the repeated “appearance and disappearance” of a bobbin without words, the presence of the bobbin would be superior to its disappearance. But when a child throws and pulls it with the pair of words; “fort” and “da”, both situations are situated equally. Unlike in the world dominated by vision, there is no superiority or inferiority in the world dominated by two opposite words.

The story line of *Blow-Up* follows this theory accurately. The dead body corresponds to the mother’s penis, which is both the object of her desire and what the child tries to find. As the child tries to solve the problem of the whereabouts of the mother’s penis, Thomas also looks for the woman’s desire in the photographs and tries to find the dead body (a phallic thing). And as the child begins to understand that the mother doesn’t have a penis, Thomas also understands eventually that the dead body doesn’t exist.

In the final scene, Thomas is watching an imaginary tennis game played by a couple with clown-like faces. An invisible ball flies over the fence and the woman encourages him to pick it up. He finds it and throws it back. At that time, he could understand that his one-night adventure was possible even without a dead body. Then, like a penis, the dead body changes from something lost to nonexistent, and, like a child who steps into the world of the father, Thomas also disappears, by fading out while standing in the middle of the screen image of the green rectangle, the grassy field of the park that fills the screen[19].

This green rectangle corresponds to the blue sky which the photograph shows at the end of “Las babas del diablo”. In the end of the short story, the silence of blue sky would represent the disappearance of the fear of castration, after the acceptance of the primal scene. The green rectangle in *Blow-Up* works in a similar way. If Thomas, in the green rectangle, signifies the blot

in the photograph, and Thomas' disappearance from it signifies the disappearance of the blot in the photograph, the last shot also signifies that the anxious regard looking back at Thomas; the fear of castration, is repressed. So, the blue sky in "Las babas del diablo" and the green rectangle in *Blow-Up* are concluding counterparts. Of course, Thomas does not stand in the same position as Michel who sees the movie-like photograph at the end of the story. Instead, we the spectators stand there, so this enables us, the spectators, to be in Michel's position, and therefore we can accept the theme of "change of visibility" as our own experience more directly than "Las babas del diablo"[20].

Note

- [1] Julio Cortázar, "Las Babas del Diablo," *Las Armas Secretas*, Sudamericana, 1959. Edición de Susana Jakfalvi, Cátedra, 2012.
- [2] Several articles that make a psychoanalytic interpretation of *Blow-Up*. I am indebted to the ones listed below. However, these works use psychoanalytic theory to explain Thomas' strange behavior, and therefore most of them do not compare *Blow-Up* with its source, "Las Babas del diablo". Melvin Goldstein, "Antonioni's *Blow-Up*: From Crib to Camera," *American Imago*, 32 (Fall 1975); Jacob A. Arlow, "The Revenge Motive in the Primal Scene", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, vol. 28, 1980; Daniel Dervin, *Through a Freudian Lens Deeply*, Analytic Press, 1985; Robert T. Eberwein, "The Master Text of *Blow-Up*", *Close Viewing*, ed. by Peter Lehman, Florida State University Press, 1990.
- [3] See René Prieto, *Body of Writing*, Duke University Press, 2000, p.258; see also Cynthia Schmidt-Cruz, *Mothers Lovers, and Others*, State University New York Press, 2004, pp. 76-77. Using psychoanalytic theory, both books analyze the power relationship between femininity and masculinity in his works.
- [4] See *Blow-Up: A Film by Michelangelo Antonioni*, Modern Film Scripts, Simon and Schuster, 1971.
- [5] See Peter Brunette, *The films of Michelangelo Antonioni*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 109; Seymour Chatman, *Antonioni, or, The Surface of the World*, University of California Press, 1985, pp. 139-140.
- [6] For example, Marvin D'Lugo thinks that both heroes identify with their technology, and by saying so, he ignores the differences in seeing a couple in two scenes. As a result, he concludes both heroes' excessive identification with their technology caused their tragedies (Marvin D'Lugo, "Signs and Meanings in *Blow-Up*: From Cortázar to Antonioni", *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 3, 1975, Salisbury State College). However, perception through a viewfinder dates back to the Renaissance technology of geometric linear perspective, while seeing through a photograph belongs to nineteenth-century chemical technology. The respective visual technologies come from very different eras. Yet, as he does not distinguish clearly the terms of "camera" and "photography", he can conclude as described above.
- [7] "Perhaps it is an exaggeration to state that all successful short stories, and especially the fantastic ones, are neurotic products, nightmares, or hallucinations which are neutralized as they materialize into concrete forms and are removed from the original seat of the neurosis . . . in any case, in any memorable short story this polarity can be seen, as if the author had wanted to rid himself of the creature as quickly and as completely as possible, exorcising it in the only way possible for him: writing it." Cortázar, "Del cuento breve y sus alrededores," *Ultimo Round*, p. 37, quoted and translated by Evelyn Picon Garfield, in *Julio Cortázar*, Frederick Ungar, 1975. See also Ilan Stavans, "Justice to Julio Cortázar," in *Julio Cortázar*, ed. and with an introduction by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House, 2005, p. 199.
- [8] Julio Cortázar, "Blow-Up", in *Blow-Up and Other Stories*, trans. Paul Blackburn, Pantheon Books,

- 1963 (under the title *End of Game*), p. 116.
- [9] Sigmund Freud, “Das Unheimliche”, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 12, Imago Publishing, 1940, S. 238-46.
- [10] We can continue our psychoanalytic interpretation of “Las babas del diablo” as below. According to Cortázar’s biography, when he was four years child, his father left his family and he grew up surrounded by women. In the fatherless family, he would develop a close love-hate relationship with his mother. It is easy to see in his many short stories his unresolved Oedipal desire, and the seductive, threatening nature of the mother in the absence of a father figure (see especially his stories “Cartas de mama”, “La salud de los enfermos”, “La señorita Cora”, “En nombre de Boby”). But different from these stories, “Las babas del diablo” does have a father figure, and we can see in him not only the positive Oedipal complex, but also the negative Oedipal complex in Cortázar. Unlike positive oedipal complex, when the subject wishes to possess the parent of its own sex and regards that of the opposite sex as its rival, it was called “negative Oedipus complex”. For Cortázar the boy, the absent father would be not only the object of his hate but also the object of his affection, and if it is true, we can regard the uncanny man’s homosexual conspiracy as Cortázar’s wish to be loved by his father instead of his mother.
- [11] Sigmund Freud, “Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose”, *Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 12.
- [12] Ibid. S. 74.
- [13] Walter Benjamin, “Little Story of Photography”, *Selected Works*, vol. 2, part 2, The Belknap Press imprint of Harvard University Press, [1931–34] 1999, pp. 511-12, p. 527. See also, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility,” *Selected Works*, vol. 3, 2002, p. 117.
- [14] Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire. Note sur la photographie*, Seuil, 1980, p. 15.
- [15] Ibid. p. 27.
- [16] See Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire XI*, Seuil, 1973.
- [17] See Jacques Lacan, “ch. 10 Les Trois Temps de l’Œdipe,” *Séminaire V*, Seuil, 1998.
- [18] Michel and Thomas as photographers represent this.
- [19] In *Through a Freudian Lens Deeply*, Daniel Dervin finds that this scene represents “the possibility of restoring the child–mother bond placed jeopardy by the primal scene witnessing, but only if it is to be placed on another level and radically redefined”. And in the notes he also says that “One is put in mind of the child’s game of losing and finding (“fort–da”) his toys to deal with his mother’s absence: to pick up and throw the ball is to regain mother (see Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*, 1926)” (*Through a Freudian Lens Deeply*, Analytic Press, 1985, p. 86). Following Freud’s thought, Dervin understands that this scene shows how a child compensated or reassured himself by staging the disappearance and return of the bobbin within his reach. I also agree that the imaginary tennis game by the clown-like couple corresponds to the “fort–da” imaginary game. But I think that the bobbin in the game of “fort–da” represents a child himself as his mother’s penis (a child who links inseparably with his mother) rather than his mother. The reason is because, as I mentioned in my text, I think this scene shows that a child learns the impossibility that he is a mother’s penis by introducing the pair of words in this game.
- [20] I wish to thank Peter Cheyne (my colleague, Shimane University, British Literature and Culture), Matthew Bannister (Waikato Institute of Technology, School of Media Arts) and Stephen Hayne (English teacher) for comments that have helped to improve this article.

* This paper is based on my previous article; 「「悪魔の涎」の翻案としての映画『欲望』——精神分析的解釈から明らかになる両作品の共通点について」 / “Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* as Adaptation of Cortázar’s “Las babas del diablo”: The Correspondence of these works, made clear from a psychoanalytical point of view”, in *Bigaku*, No. 247 (The Japanese Society for Aesthetics, 2015, pp. 85-96). But I here developed and expanded its theme, emphasizing the aspect of visual theory in both works.