

INSIGHT AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE:
A STUDY OF DONOSO'S EVOLUTION (1956 - 1981)

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DECLARATION

This thesis has been composed by me, and the work is my own.

ABSTRACT

The thesis is primarily concerned with the developing existential outlook of the Chilean novelist José Donoso, and with the evolution of his narrative technique. It concentrates on his major works written between 1956 and 1981. The first two sections constitute a consideration of his novels up to 1970: they chart the movement away from traditional realist procedures towards technical innovation and experimentation, as well as highlighting the passage from a feeling of disenchantment with life towards one of real terror before existence. A parallel relationship is postulated between this pattern of increasing structural complexity and the author's growing sense of metaphysical anguish: the breakdown of conventional structural patterns is seen as a reflection of the collapse of all faith in the notion of order in general. This process peaks in 1970 with the publication of El obscuro pájaro de la noche - at the same time the most complex and most despairing of his novels. However, after 1970 the pessimistic tone seems to decline, while style and form take on a less problematic appearance. The third section of the thesis is an analysis of this post-1970 phase in Donoso's writing: it is suggested here that the apparent relative simplicity of the later work is indicative of a more resigned attitude to life, that a moderation in viewpoint is expressed via a moderation of the element of formal complexity. Thus, changes in outlook are matched by changes in technique: in this way, narrative form is seen to function as a pointer to, or even as a metaphor of, the author's vision of existence.

At the same time, changes in technique are examined in relation to changes in modern Latin American fiction in general. Donoso's novelistic evolution - as well as epitomizing the transition from traditional realism to experimentation - is also seen to indicate a way forward after the experimental explosion or 'boom' asso-

ciated, by and large, with the 1960s. With regard, for example, to his later work, the thesis argues against dismissive criticism, developing instead the notion that his new style is not only a logical consequence of his intellectual evolution, but also a response to what he sees as the stagnation of the modern novel as a whole. The notion is that, although the 'new novel' was essentially a reaction against the perceived staleness of conventional realism, many innovations of modern fiction have themselves become standardized features of modern writing; in other words, in many cases, the innovations of the new novel have come to appear almost as conventional as the forms they replaced. Donoso's return to simpler forms is therefore seen as innovatory in the modern context. However, the thesis also argues that this simplicity is only apparent: rather than attacking the assumptions of realism head-on via outlandish structural distortion, the post-1970 fiction dupes the reader into accepting the novels as 'realistic' or - at least - as straightforward, but only to break down each novel's apparent pattern of development as it progresses. Thus, the earlier tendency to create alternative narrative structures is contrasted with Donoso's current attempts to subvert traditional realism from within by undermining the very realist patterns upon which his later novels appear to be based. The later work is not therefore seen as an out-and-out rejection of the principles of the 'boom', but rather as a sophisticated renewal and development of its methods.

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P.S.

P A R T I

CHAPTER ONE

CRITICAL REACTION TO DONOSO¹

The last decade or so has seen a proliferation of critical articles on Donoso. During this period differing critical attitudes have emerged and there is as yet no general consensus of opinion on the meaning of his fiction or on the best ways to approach his work. It is proposed to examine briefly some trends in Donoso criticism and to suggest some possible developments. My intention is largely to ignore merely introductory or expository criticism (e.g. that represented by such articles as those of Guillermo Carnero or Jaime Siles on El obsceno pájaro de la noche or the general chapters on Donoso in books²) and concentrate instead on what seem to be the more important and representative critical works.

A sizeable group of critics avoids trying to interpret Donoso's work at all, taking refuge in the idea that his novels (especially El obsceno pájaro) are impenetrable. Pamela Bacarisse points out that in El obsceno pájaro:

many pieces of information given to the reader are contradicted, many of the events recounted are then said not to have happened, there are conversations which may or may not have taken place and characters are themselves then someone else, or themselves and someone else. What the reader believes, on a narrative level, is up to him³.

She goes on to say that "it is surely impossible to know how to choose between the various versions of the truth we are given". Certainly El obsceno pájaro does contain many contradictory elements and on a narrative level is therefore difficult to decipher fully. However, this does not mean that the novel is impossible to interpret. Indeed Dr. Bacarisse herself goes on to give a highly plausible analysis of El obsceno pájaro, showing that the narrator's condition of ontological insecurity turns the novel into a willed process of evasion.

John M. Lipski, meanwhile, claims that the various facets of El obsceno pájaro "destroy the multiple signifiers and ultimately disappear in a dazzling verbal explosion"⁵ and Z. Nelly Martínez seems to believe equally that the multiple viewpoints of the novel and its many possible interpretations make it undecipherable. She considers that it shows "la derrota del Logos - Logos que apunta a un significado trascendente o presentido", which is replaced by "el juego de un sentido por siempre diferente y por siempre diferido"⁶. Martínez thus reduces the novel either to "la noción del diferimiento del significado último de un texto al ser aquél (el significado) arrebatado por la praxis de una infinita postergación" or to "la sucesión de diferencias de significado (de diferentes significados)"⁷.

In another article the same critic comments that:

así como las caretas simbólicas del narrador se invalidan mutuamente, también los diversos discursos se cancelan mutuamente revelando que la escritura misma es una máscara que enmascara el hecho de serlo"⁸.

and goes on to claim that:

al final de la novela, cuando la conciencia narradora se hunde en la oquedad, sólo quedan 'astillas, cartones, medias, trapos, diarios, papel, mugre', vale decir sólo restan palabras, objetos inservibles, vaciados de significación?

However, she produces no hard evidence to show that this is the significance of the final scene of El obsceno pájaro.

Her words clearly echo those of Severo Sarduy who, in writing about El lugar sin límites, compares the transvestite Manuela to literature itself. He feels that the "planes of intersexuality are analogous to the planes of intertextuality which make up the literary object"⁹. He sees literature, like transvestism, as a kind of mask; just as the mask of transvestism merely hides "the very fact of transvestism itself", so writing is merely a mask which covers up an emptiness beneath.

Such views are shared by other critics. In an article on El obsceno pájaro, Alicia Borinsky says that "los elementos de la obra...se presentan como superficies" but that "no guardan nada en su interior"¹² she concludes:

Leemos un juego de superficies que nos engaña porque no son, como estamos inclinados a desear, signo de interioridad. No hay nada detrás, sólo subsiste la ilusión de la máscara en una línea horizontal.¹³

Similarly, Sharon Magnarelli claims that:

the word in the novel becomes a surface, a simple envoltorio, the wrapping that never yields the object or subject that it pretends to cover¹⁴

and that:

the novel becomes a game with the discovery of the impossibility of unmasking or unwrapping the essence, with the impossibility of finding a centre, a core.¹⁵

Ignoring any possible social, existential and metaphysical implications of El obsceno pájaro, Magnarelli declares that Donoso is "presenting literature and the written word as the principal themes of the novel"¹⁶ and even suggests that "la mancha negra" of Muditó's ashes at the end of the novel merely reflects his reduction to words, his being nothing more than "a dark stain on a white page"¹⁷. In another article she makes her position quite clear:

The presence of the signifier once posited the presence of the signified; now the text accentuates the inevitable, eternal absence of the signified.

A similar conclusion is drawn by Alfred J. MacAdam:

What the narrator...says is in effect irrelevant. What matters most is the telling itself, the imposition of order (grammar) on arbitrarily chosen things (signs)!

It seems clear that such critics are not actually analysing or interpreting the text itself; rather they are bringing certain literary theories to bear on to the text. Sarduy's article relies heavily on quotations from Lacan, Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Jean-Louis Baudry.

Similarly Z. Nelly Martínez spends about half of her first above-mentioned article discussing the post-structuralist theories of Jacques Derrida with only an occasional reference to El obsceno pájaro itself. But can the implication that it is not worth trying to find any meaning in Donoso's work really be justified? Not according to D.L. Shaw who has written:

toda tentativa de presentar El obsceno pájaro de la noche como una serie de significantes sin significado está condenado de antemano al fracaso. Donoso es ante todo un hombre de ideas, un hombre con una cosmovisión muy definida, de la cual debe partir todo enfoque válido de su obra.²⁰

Hugo Achugar, in his book on Donoso, makes a similar point, though less consciously and less directly than Shaw:

la producción literaria en tanto producción social propone un proyecto ideológico que da cuenta - a pesar incluso de la voluntad del propio escritor - de un modo peculiar y determinado de entender y reaccionar frente a la realidad social.²¹

It is interesting to note that while Achugar actually chooses to emphasise ambiguity and indeterminacy as the essential features of the author's novels and stories, he is ready to assert of the short stories for example that "los textos... tienen una unidad que les viene de ser producidos por un hablante con una concepción del mundo determinada" and that "el conjunto de textos... tiene como todo acto humano un significado"²². It would seem, then, that for these critics the inherent ambiguity of the texts is not necessarily a barrier to understanding.

Donoso's own words might help. While on many occasions he has implied that there was no specific intention behind the writing of El obsceno pájaro, for example, and in a recent interview he goes so far as to claim that "el arte es irreductible a su significado"²³, this is not at all the same as saying that there is no meaning in his work. Indeed, in many other interviews

Donoso has frequently discussed the ideas behind his novels and has even commented on some specific themes or symbols. Thus in a recent interview, he describes his novels as "a play of balances and surfaces which have meaning and a continuity, a unity."²⁴ In another he recognises that it is "perfectamente aceptable" for different critics to see different meanings in his work:

es mejor que una obra pueda ser vista y entendida en muchos distintos niveles. A mí me agrada que los críticos digan que mis novelas son sociales, políticas, eróticas etc.; que presenten otros niveles que vengan a ampliar o a negar los que yo veo.²⁵

What this suggests is that art should not be brought down to a single meaning; he does not wish critics to "reducir la novela a una parte de sí misma."²⁶ In other words his work may have multiple and complex meanings but meanings nonetheless. He explains this idea to San Martín:

Una novela tiene tantos niveles que elegir; uno no me satisfaría. Decir que es algo, y negar las otras posibilidades. Quisiera que fuera una cosa tremendamente polifacética, tremendamente vital, tremendamente movible, tremendamente barroca... como las ciudades medievales que de alguna manera tienen un sentido.²⁷

Having argued, then, that there are meanings to be found in Donoso's work, let us now turn to how some critics have applied themselves to finding them. An obvious first category is that of the eccentric readings. A novel like El obscuro pájaro, for example, is an extremely complex work of art and one which presents many difficulties for reader and critic alike. This has resulted in a batch of rather odd interpretations. Silvia Martínez D'Acosta, for example, in an essay full of mysterious references to Indian rituals suggests that Humberto Peñaloza feels a homosexual attraction to don Jerónimo de Azcoitia, the repression of which causes his paranoia. Humberto's desire for Inés is seen as in

reality only a front for his sexual attraction to don Jerónimo. The same critic also claims that Humberto sees Peta Ponce as a mother figure, whom he rejects out of a fear of incest, and Dr. Azula is said to be the father figure who condemns the idea of incest.²⁸ In an article on Coronación, Ramona Lagos treats us to a psychoanalytical explanation of the importance of the colour pink to Andrés and later puts forward some curious interpretations based on an analysis of the significance (as she sees it) of the names of the characters in the novel. She also asserts that Andrés' collection of sticks represents a phallic symbol, and in analysing his relationship with Lourdes claims that the servant was in love with Andrés but that now "ha transferido sus sueños de amor hacia el gusto por el comer."²⁹ Equally curious offerings come from Anita L. Muller, who sees Mudito's death by fire in El obscuro pájaro as representing "su unión con Dios, su purificación y la destrucción de las fuerzas malignas" and the pumpkins as "el milagro del maná para las viejas hambrientas",³⁰ and from Francisco Rivera who sees the frustrated hopes for a miraculous child as a parallel for Humberto's frustrated attempt to become a writer.³¹

Other critics disguise pedestrian observations with rhetoric, sometimes to a point at which the critic's comments seem to be almost totally devoid of meaning. This is the case of Paul West among sundry others. He writes of El charleston:

this Donoso in a minor key is still an iridescent vertical invader of horizontal categories.³²

As for Tres novelitas burguesas, West says:

the surprises ... are irrevocable and, for all their sheen of ephemera gloatingly pinned onto cork, diagnostic of the human brain itself, done almost with a brain-side manner.³³

Fortunately, however, there have been more convincing attempts at interpretation. A frequent approach is via social comment, and some critics heavily emphasise this element in Donoso's work. Guerra Cunningham,

for instance, sees Coronación as a novel concerning "la caída total del mundo aristocrático en decadencia",³⁴ while in reference to the characters of the same novel John S. Brushwood claims that "their obvious function as a commentary on the Chilean oligarchy... transfers the reader's attention to a specific political situation".³⁵ The most complete examination of Coronación of this nature is the sociological investigation undertaken by a group headed by Luis Bocaz: they discuss the novel purely in the light of Chile's social and economic position in the 1950s.³⁶ Similarly, Charles M. Tatum sees the "central theme" of El obsceno pájaro as "the demise of a feudal society" and "the decay of an oligarchical system".³⁷ Even Antonio Cornejo Polar sees it as "la gran novela de la decadencia burguesa".³⁸

The problem with this approach is that it tends to over-simplify, for clearly there is much more even to Donoso's early work than social criticism. Several critics (including, for example, José Promis Ojeda, Isis Quinteros and even Tatum himself in a different article³⁹) have pointed out that there are as many similarities as contrasts between the social classes in Donoso's novels. Others (such as Kirsten F. Nigro and John J. Hassett⁴⁰) have actively attacked social interpretations. In fact Donoso himself has insisted that "no tengo ninguna visión social"⁴¹, and has elsewhere declared:

Nada me irrita tanto como los críticos que reducen mis novelas a sus elementos sociales, esos que quieren que yo haya escrito el canto de cisne de las clases sociales chilenas.⁴²

A substantial amount of Donoso criticism, while avoiding such reductivism, has nevertheless centred on a fundamental theme of Donoso's work which does have some social relevance. This is the idea that the rational world based on the principles of social convention prevents the individual from fulfilling himself on an instinctual level because it forces him to suppress his more natural inclinations. This concept is central to

Tatum's approach. He believes that:

Donoso's fiction leaves the impression that a rigid set of conventions, mores, and values dominates his characters of all social classes frustrating spontaneous self-expression⁴³

George R. McMurray points out in his book on Donoso that this theme is linked with the Surrealists' dream of "the liberation and transformation of man which they hoped to accomplish through the establishment of a direct link between the objective and the subjective realms and through the elimination of the contradictions between the real and the imaginary"⁴⁴. Perhaps the most thorough treatment of this theme is that offered by Hernán Vidal in his book, José Donoso: surrealismo y rebelión de los instintos⁴⁵. Vidal interprets all of Donoso's novels from this point of view and supports his argument with extensive references to the theories of Carl Jung. The book is cogently argued and well written but it contains in my view a number of misinterpretations of specific aspects of Donoso's work and once more it often tends to over-emphasise the more social implications of its main theme. Equally it sometimes appears to offer interpretations that are rather too optimistic. Although he recognises that the liberation of the unconscious can have disastrous consequences, Vidal often seems to think that Donoso really does believe that man can achieve fulfilment in this way. McMurray is more cautious: he emphasises Donoso's pessimism and suggests that "the surrealists' aspiration of ameliorating the human condition through their artistic endeavor would more than likely strike him as naïve"⁴⁶, a thought echoed by Quinteros in her book⁴⁷. Nevertheless, the basic theme of Vidal's book reflects a central concern of Donoso's writing, and this is a subject to which critics (such as Promis Ojeda, Tatum and many others) have returned again and again.

Plainly interpretations like those of Vidal and McMurray must in some way relate to a consideration of

the mental states of the protagonists of Donoso's stories and novels. This leads us on to a fifth trend in Donoso criticism, namely that which attempts to analyse his work on the basis of a psychological or psychoanalytical examination of the texts. Many critics have pointed out Donoso's lack of faith in the unity of the personality and his obsession with its disintegration. Josefina A. Pujals's study of El obsceno pájaro - though often vague and rambling - is essentially concerned with psychological breakdown.⁴⁸ John Caviglia puts the emphasis on the mental collapse that follows any attempt at rebellion against the collective values of our society: "the abandonment of the norm...leads not to unique individuality but to disintegration and chaos".⁴⁹ This reminds us of Vidal's stress on Jung's concept of the repressive effect that the collective unconscious has on the individual, a point taken up by Helen Calae de Agüera in her useful article on Tres novelitas burguesas.⁵⁰ There is also a great interest in actually describing the process of mental disintegration. McMurray for example details the symptoms of schizophrenia and goes on to show how Humberto Peñaloza of El obsceno pájaro manifests the characteristics of a schizophrenic patient. Pamela Bacarisse similarly sees Humberto's condition as one of schizophrenia with elements of ontological insecurity, and she puts forward an excellent analysis of the text based on this diagnosis.

However, there have also been many less satisfactory attempts at this kind of analysis. The unwisdom of taking the psychoanalytical process too far was mentioned à propos of Ramona Lagos's article on Coronación. Sometimes too, this kind of approach results in the substitution of closely argued analyses by vague and unhelpful comments. Typical of many is Emir Rodríguez Monegal, who sums up the author's work as the expression of "una realidad

torturada y pesadillesca, una realidad que completa el mundo de la superficie, que lo lastra de sombras, que lo duplica en claves terribles"⁵¹ Such nebulous statements are sadly familiar to students of Donoso.

The same problems occur when critics try to establish relationships between myth and Donoso's work. Prominent here are Quinteros, Hortensia R. Morell, G. Durán and especially Richard J. Callan.⁵² Although Quinteros and Callan do make many stimulating points in their work, one cannot help feeling that they sometimes go too far in their desire to seek out mythical elements in Donoso's novels. This tends to deflect them from the task of analysing what the works under consideration are in the end about. Such an approach is perfectly valid when it aids our understanding of the texts, but, as Donoso himself has suggested, this is often not the case. In an interview with McMurray he said:

I believe some critics tend to overemphasise mythical interpretations which often do not greatly increase the reader's understanding of a literary work.⁵³

It may be time for critics to place less emphasis on psychological or mythical examinations of Donoso's work, and to turn directly to the texts themselves in order to try and find out what it is that Donoso has to tell us about the human condition. There is now, I think, a need for an approach which will pay more attention to the levels of meaning in his novels, while at the same time bearing in mind the essentially ambiguous nature of much of his work and taking into account the multiplicity of elements that go to make it up. This would contribute to a greater understanding of Donoso's work without contravening the author's own wishes that his novels should not be interpreted reductively.

A major area of thematic significance which

has been particularly neglected is that relating to the existential and metaphysical aspects of Donoso's work. Apart from the vague references to nothingness and hopelessness that recur in Donoso criticism, there have been very few attempts to analyse exhaustively and clearly this side of the Chilean author's writings. Only a few critics have explicitly and unambiguously referred to the importance of this theme. Shaw insists it is "un tema fundamental en la obra de Donoso: su nostalgia de la fe, de un Dios garante de un 'orden' existencial sin el cual no hay más que caos"⁵⁴. Robert Scott observes that "Donoso has always been concerned with death and its horror"⁵⁵, and in a useful article (despite its jargon and its obsessive desire to relate the argument to the theories of Ernest Becker) suggests that El obsceno pájaro dramatises the individual's need to fight against the annihilation represented by death. In an article on the short stories, McMurray points out the importance in Donoso's work of "la angustia existencial del hombre moderno en un mundo caótico desprovisto de Dios"⁵⁶. He develops this idea more fully in his book on Donoso, especially in relation to El lugar sin límites and El obsceno pájaro, - an approach followed also by Victorio G. Aguera with regard to the former novel.⁵⁷

However, the theme has not been dealt with as fully as it deserves, since most critics have hitherto chosen to see man's anguish mainly as a result of sociological or psychological factors, or, as in the case of Achugar, as a result of his awareness of the inherent ambiguity of reality; Even Celeste Kostopulos who stresses Donoso's "preoccupation with the individual's anguish before human existence"⁵⁸, examines this theme only in relation to society's suppression of indivi-

duality. This problem is especially relevant to Coronación and Este Domingo. The metaphysical aspect of these novels has really only ~~once~~ been discussed in relation to the individual characters' expressions of fear. There has been no real attempt to see the existence of this obsession on a symbolic level underlying the plot of these two novels. Even in considerations of El lugar sin límites and El obsceno pájaro critics have tended to couch their language in vague abstractions whenever they have touched on this aspect of the novels.

Hitherto we have mainly been concerned with thematic interpretations of Donoso's work. One reason for this is that the majority of Donoso criticism actually takes the form of content analysis, most of it being concentrated on El obsceno pájaro. Apart from the would-be semiotic and structuralist approaches mentioned at the beginning of this study (which do not always clarify our understanding of Donoso's work), there have been very few convincing attempts at a sophisticated, formal analysis of his fiction.

Nevertheless, we can begin to distinguish several types of critical reaction to the formal aspect of Donoso's novels. Some critics simply include a few passing references to the novel's structure in the course of a largely thematic or generalized study. Rodríguez Monegal, for example, contrasts briefly what he sees as the traditionalism of Coronación with the more professionally executed Este Domingo and comments on the importance of symbolism and juxtaposition without investigating their technical impact on the novels in any depth. The formal level of Hasset's general article on El obsceno pájaro merely involves references to the novel's "unique narrative structure"⁵⁹ which he sees as "an endless series of repetitions, substitutions and transformations" which has the effect of "forcing

the reader to constantly readjust his visual apparatus to accomodate the next wave of images passing before him"⁶⁰.

Other critics make more specific observations about the novel's structure, but these often stand in isolation and do not constitute a genuine departure from content analysis. Isaac Goldemberg and Ramona Lagos for instance both offer essentially thematic interpretations of Coronación. But at the same time the former does suggest that the novel is structured around the interaction of a social and psychological axis and points to the existence of three layers of isolation.⁶¹ Lagos meanwhile emphasises the novel's division into three parts and the parallels between misia Elisa's two parties. It is a pity that these ideas were not more fully developed. We see a similar pattern of approach in Caviglia's article on El obsceno pájaro. His analysis is not essentially formal but he does make a brief attempt to demonstrate how the novel's jumbling of different points in time shows "the distance between disillusion and an adolescent's illusory desires"⁶². Promis Ojeda's article on Donoso's work is also largely thematic but he too includes useful formal observations, especially on El obsceno pájaro whose structural basis he sees as one of contradiction and ambiguity. He also makes the interesting point that Donoso's work progresses from the presentation of the process of conflict (Coronación, Este domingo) to a situation where the reader is given a more general image of the actual state which results from such conflicts (El lugar sin límites, El obsceno pájaro).

The most common type of critical approach to the formal aspect of Donoso's novels (especially El obsceno pájaro) is to introduce a general comment on style and structure without making an adequate attempt to develop or explain it. Thus Eyzaguirre refers to El obsceno pájaro as an "obra mucho más ambiciosa que las anteriores" which "no deja lugar a dudas del gran dominio de Donoso sobre el arte de novelar"⁶³. However,

this is all he says about the novel. He does not attempt to explain the functioning of Donoso's artistry in El obsceno pájaro. Similarly, J. Marco comments on the same novel that "la forma es también el contenido" and states that, despite the novel's apparent chaos, Donoso's "maestría organizadora" points to the existence of a hidden structure which makes sense of the novel as a whole.⁶⁴ What Marco does not explain is the relationship between form and content, or what the hidden structure of El obsceno pájaro actually is.

It is of some interest that of the books devoted to Donoso none takes an exclusively or even predominantly formal approach. When their authors do consider the technical aspects of Donoso's work they tend to discuss them in relation to the features of the new novel as a whole. In other words, their most common feature is to point out how Donoso's use of ambiguity and audacious structures constitutes a challenge to the traditional novel's simplistic perception of reality. To be sure Quinteros goes some way beyond this, particularly in her comments on Este domingo and El obsceno pájaro, and McMurray includes useful, if rather general, remarks on Donoso's technique in the creation of mood and his use of symbolism and stream of consciousness. When Vidal, on the other hand, comes to grips with the structure of El obsceno pájaro, the account he gives is in my view confused and even contradictory. Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat, in his recent book on Donoso, does avoid the normal pattern of content analysis, but his rag-bag of different literary theories - despite some interesting points - gets him little ^{beyond an} assertion of the self-referentiality of the texts: his aim is to establish "una relación homológica entre la producción lúdica y la producción literaria, una analogía estructural de cuatro términos que pone en evidencia la homogeneidad o isomorfía del lenguaje modelado y del lenguaje modelador"⁶⁵. Perhaps the best general work in this respect so far is

Achugar's. Although his approach is more thematic than formal, an awareness of the importance of Donoso's fictional technique is implicit throughout his study. His book emphasises the process of development in Donoso's presentation of ambiguity within reality, seeing his work as having moved from the simple opposition of appearance and reality to a total denial of objective reality in El obsceno pájaro. While there is room for disagreement with some areas of Achugar's analysis, his book is a significant contribution to Donoso criticism and certain aspects of his general thesis are closely relevant to any formal analysis of Donoso's work.

It is clear, then, that although some kind of consensus exists on a few points there has as yet been no overall assessment of Donoso's fictional technique. With regard to Coronación, the critics seem to be polarised into two groups: those who emphasise the traditional elements of the novel and those who see important innovative elements in it. Critics like Cedomil Goić, for instance, have attempted to show that Coronación's technique is not as transparent as it might at first seem.⁶⁶ Goić argues that Donoso's skilful manipulation of point of view gives the reader a more convincing and more ambiguous vision of reality. Goić is the only critic to really develop this idea (although G. I. Castillo-Feliú⁶⁷ and Quinteros paraphrase him in their studies of Coronación) and this important article must be seen as marking a major development in critical interpretations of Donoso's first novel. The point is taken up briefly by Gutiérrez Mouat who argues that "la novela decide subvertir las mismas convenciones que privilegia para aludir a otra forma de narrar, cada vez más carnavalesca y menos realista".⁶⁸ Achugar too is one of the few critics to emphasise the fact that traditionalism and innovation are "elementos coexistentes en el texto".⁶⁹ This is an important pointer towards the path that

future criticism of Coronación should follow. It is not enough simply to show the existence of realist or avant-garde elements in the work: we must endeavour to demonstrate the transitional nature of the novel by examining analytically the tensions created by the co-existence of two potentially conflicting elements within a single literary artefact.

The structure of Este domingo has received more critical attention. This is probably because the novel's symmetrical structure is relatively easy to identify and it is not surprising therefore that the vast majority of formal analyses of this novel have been descriptive in nature. Joan Rea Boorman's section on Este domingo, in her book on the new novel⁷⁰ and Quinteros's structural analysis of it both fall into this category. While both critics point out that the novel's technique creates a more ambiguous picture of reality, they do not clarify sufficiently how this is achieved. Even McMurray, in his chapter on Este domingo, only offers general observations about the novel's organization and about Donoso's evocation of mental processes. María del C. Cerezo's analysis remains as the most penetrating so far.⁷¹ So, it must be said that most of the formal discussions of Este domingo have not progressed far beyond straightforward descriptions of Donoso's arrangement of his material. Analyses of El lugar sin límites have also tended either to ignore its formal aspect or to offer only passing comments of a very general nature.

The majority of formal criticism has meanwhile been concentrated on El obsceno pájaro. Myrna Solotorevsky's articles contain useful ideas on transmutation devices and binary oppositions.⁷² Lipski too makes some relevant points about Donoso's style and his use of "paradigmatic interpenetration" in order to generate ambiguity. But at the end of his earlier article he unfortunately slips into vague, semiotic jargon and instead of clarifying his stance seems to

plump for the idea that the novel is ultimately undecipherable. Several other critics, including Achugar, Quinteros and Gertel⁷³, also advance the view that ambiguity and indeterminacy are fundamental to the novel's structure. But we seem to have been slow in developing critical techniques which are adequate for dealing with the extremely complex form of works like El obsceno pájaro, Fuentes's Terra Nostra or Sábato's Abaddón el exterminador. It is possible, however, that the recent article by Georgescu on the last-named novel may indicate a way forward based on modified Barthesian principles.⁷⁴

Meantime, some of the best analyses of Donoso's technique are to be found in José Donoso. La destrucción de un mundo edited by Antonio Cornejo Polar. Indeed Cornejo Polar himself, both in his introduction and in his article on El obsceno pájaro, emphasises the importance of the relationship between form and content. He says of El obsceno pájaro, for example:

no se trata de "decir" destrucción; se trata, más bien, de encontrar algo así como un significante no arbitrario que plasme, encarnándolo, ese significado.⁷⁵

His identification of a law of substitution as the structural basis of Donoso's work is a significant critical achievement. Adriana Valdés shows the importance of substitution and reversability in her article on El obsceno pájaro in the same book. Following the theories of Todorov, she examines the motif of the "imbunche" on a verbal, syntactic and semantic level and suggests that the various motifs with all their contradictions do help to bind the novel together in some kind of unity.⁷⁶ Raúl Bueno Chávez applies the law of substitution to Este domingo and, although his study limits itself to a small area of analysis, shows an important aspect of the organizational basis of the novel.⁷⁷ Fernando Moreno Turner meanwhile offers a description of the narrative technique of El lugar sin

límites and shows how the rule of inversion can be applied to almost all of the characters.⁷⁸

While Valdés and Moreno Turner sometimes fail to relate their points fully to the meaning of the novels and some of the other articles are only partial studies of the aspect of technique under consideration, they do point the way forward for future criticism to follow. A more sophisticated formal approach to Donoso's work is vital for a more complete appreciation of this author's fiction.

Future criticism will also of course have to incorporate Donoso's later work. The bulk of work on Donoso comes to a rather abrupt halt after El obsceno pájaro. This is perhaps due to the disappointment of some critics, like Shaw, at what they see as the relative simplicity of the later work after the tortuous complexities of El obsceno pájaro. However, it is plain that the quality of a novel does not depend on its stylistic and structural complexities. Indeed Donoso's later work is to some extent a reaction against the tendency to see a good novel as one which maximises complexity. The new novel emerged as a reaction against certain stereotyped forms of literature and Donoso may be worried that it is now close to replacing one set of stereotypes with another.

The criticism to appear so far on Tres novelitas burguesas has been fairly sparse and sometimes rather superficial. There have been several recent articles on Casa de campo, though very little on La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria and El jardín de al lado. If past experience is any guide future considerations of these novels will, as usual, emphasise their more specific themes (such as the political aspect of Casa de campo and the more personal aspects of El jardín de al lado - though already the discussion is quite varied with regard to the former novel). However, it will also be interesting to con-

sider whether or not we can detect any change in Donoso's narrative technique and attitude to literature, or see any development from the position of metaphysical anguish and pessimism that for the most part characterises Donoso's work up to and including El obsceno pájaro de la noche. The movement away from the darkness, chaos and complexity of El obsceno pájaro to the lighter, more simple and more humorous tone of the later work may indicate if not a change in attitude then at least some kind of progression or evolution. The seriousness and the sense of despair are without ^{doubt} still there, but we can perhaps intuit a greater sense of calm and acceptance.

To conclude: despite sporadic allusions to its partial incomprehensibility and a few eccentric approaches, Donoso's work has given rise to a first phase of criticism which has been largely concerned with interpretation of content. Different approaches: social psychological and mythical are already well represented, though greater emphasis remains to be placed on Donoso's basic existential malaise, its possible sources and development. While considerable areas have been explored and some quite closely mapped, there is more systematic work to be done here, especially with regard to novels other than El obsceno pájaro and with regard to the latest works, where a change of outlook may be underway. Far less has been done, however, on Donoso's literary technique, the structural arrangement of his narratives, the devices employed, the narratorial stance or the ways in which effects are achieved. There is room for comparative study of his symbolism, his use of irony and the actual means by which he presents the ambiguity of reality. Finally the development of his style remains to be examined. Only when we begin to give systematic attention to Donoso's works as what they are, that is,

literary artefacts, and not merely vehicles for the expression of ideas, can we consider that Donoso criticism has really taken off.

It is the aim of this thesis to move towards the kind of critical approach mentioned above: that is, a greater concentration on the developments and changes in Donoso's vision of the human condition, and on the evolution of his narrative procedures. I shall be concentrating on his novels between 1956 and 1981: this means the exclusion of any detailed consideration of the short stories, Poemas de un novelista and Cuatro para Delfina. The examination of individual works will begin with an extensive chapter on Coronación which it is hoped will serve as a "point of departure". Thereafter, the thesis will be divided into two sections covering the pre- and post- 1970 periods in Donoso's writing. It is proposed to devote a chapter in each section to follow out successively the "existential" approach - that is, reviewing the stages through which his outlook passes. This process will be complemented by chapters on individual works or groups of works: it is my intention to examine the progression of Donoso's attitude to literature and to attempt to show that the shifts of technique are in some way related to (or at times even metaphors of) the author's intellectual evolution.

CHAPTER TWO

CORONACIÓN : A NOVEL OF TRANSITION

Critical reaction to Donoso's first novel, Coronación, has been mixed. Opinions differ widely, both in terms of thematic interpretation and in terms of artistic evaluation. The most common initial reaction to Coronación was to see it as a novel of social criticism. However, many critics have since come to emphasise the novel's presentation of the conflict between man's natural instincts and the repressive effects of social convention. A few have pointed to the importance of the theme of existential anguish in Coronación, but there is still room for further development here. As for the formal aspect of the novel, very little work has been done in this area, with critics falling basically into two groups: those who emphasise the novel's traditional, realist nature and those who see innovative elements in it. However, it is the very co-existence of these two elements within one text which in my view holds the key to an understanding of the literary significance of Coronación.

F.W.J. Hemmings declares that Coronación "is best described as a nineteenth century novel" and goes on to say that "everything about it is redolent of naturalism in its heyday"¹. Fernando Alegría tells us that "Donoso ha entroncado la novelística del 50 con la vieja tradición del realismo chileno" and makes the charge that "su sentido de la tradición... carga (su obra) de fórmulas literarias que la novela de la segunda mitad del siglo veinte ha descartado ya definitivamente"². Rafael Conte complains that "lo que no acababa de convencer en Coronación era la técnica narrativa, mimética, pasada tal vez"³. Hernán Poblete Varas asserts that "José Donoso es esencialmente realista" and "despegado a su realismo, descuida por completo el ámbito de la fantasía"⁴. R.A. Latcham also saw

Coronación as a traditional novel but he attacked it because it was not realistic enough: "Donoso usa y abusa en su novela de resortes truculentos, de situaciones absurdas que poseen menos valor que sus análisis de caracteres o detalles de ambiente social".⁵

Others have been more forthcoming in their praise of Coronación. V. Hernán Díaz Arrieta ("Alone") is full of praise for this "composición magistral"; because of its ambiguity, its lack of any real heroes and its emphasis on internal reality he sees it as a typical example of the new novel.⁶ Anita Arroyo, in a disappointing analysis, also pays tribute to the novel: she is particularly impressed by the scene depicting Andrés' madness which she thinks is "pintada de mano maestra por Donoso".⁷ Enrique Anderson Imbert is equally impressed: he thinks Donoso writes "con arte de pintor o, más bien, de coreógrafo".⁸ Finally, Cedomil Goić, in what is probably the most careful study of the style and structure of Coronación, suggests that it is not just a traditional novel but a modern and innovative one. It represents a "ruptura con las formas de la realidad" and reflects a surrealist interest in "una nueva esfera de realidades interiores" and "nuevas formas o modos de experiencia".⁹ His views are supported by Quinteros and Castillo-Feliú.¹⁰

Some critics, however, are more cautious. They appreciate the positive and innovative elements of Coronación but also recognize that there are residual traditional elements in the novel. Vidal, for example, is well aware of its limitations, and is not completely satisfied with Donoso's technical presentation of his subject matter:

Vemos que Coronación, novela de primeras armas, tiene una base irracionalista que se posesiona de estados mentales crepusculares y oníricos y de momentos de gran tensión psíquica, en que los instintos más bajos de los personajes fluyen a flor de piel. Sin embargo, este material, que habría

requerido un lenguaje lírico y un punto de vista consecuentes con diafanidad y ambigüedad, es tratado con un lenguaje que con frecuencia pretende una precisión "clínica", de esforzada elegancia e inhibido casticismo, que con comillas pide perdón por su lenguaje popular y se detiene con ojo sociológico sobre superficies "típicas" que no se han liberado totalmente del naturalismo".

Similarly, McMurray feels that :

despite its artistically inspired structure, philosophical depth and psychological probings, Donoso's first novel is not without serious defects... The novel lacks the subtle integration of form and content and the vital tension between internal and external realities that characterize the author's subsequent works.²

It should be emphasised that traditional and innovative elements exist side by side in Coronación. Gutiérrez Mouat writes that "el lenguaje del juego permite marcar una adhesión al orden social... pero también un punto de partida"³. Rodríguez Monegal describes Donoso's work as "naturalista y onírico, literal y simbólico, tradicional y renovador."⁴ However, he does not go on to develop any explanation for the co-existence of these diverse elements within one novel. Cornejo Polar comes closer:

Coronación es un texto transicional en términos de historia literaria: soporta en efecto, una desigual vigencia de modelos narrativos, cuyos extremos resultan definitivamente contradictorios y delata así el ánimo de un narrador insatisfecho con la tradición y ansioso por definir su propio campo narrativo.⁵

Achugar takes up this point in his book on Donoso:

Ya que puede ser leída, y lo ha sido, como un producto último de la tradición criollista realista y también como un ejemplo del resquebrajamiento de ese mismo código, hoy... podemos integrar ambas lecturas - dando un paso más - como elementos coexistentes en el texto.⁶

He concludes that:

La primera novela de Donoso pues, marcaría con precisión el momento de pasaje de un antes al después de sus tres novelas posteriores vinculado a la nueva novela latinoamericana.⁷

Coronación is, then, transitional in nature, and a much closer analysis of this aspect of the novel needs to be attempted. The thematic and artistic tensions within the novel suggest that Donoso was still tied to the conventions of social realism but at the same time engaged in a nascent struggle to renovate his literary technique in order to give expression to a new way of perceiving reality. At this stage Donoso was undecided in his outlook both philosophically and at the literary level: there are therefore unresolved conflicts of intention in the novel which can be perceived both in terms of his exploration of sundry, irreconcilable themes at one and the same time, and in terms of structure and narrative technique. The overall impression is one of unresolved unity of theme and technique. A close thematic and, more especially, formal examination of Coronación should yield an explanation for this unresolved unity, demonstrating that Donoso was caught between the demands of literary tradition and the simultaneous need to strike out in a new direction.

Anderson Imbert tells us that Coronación "presenta contrastes entre la clase alta y la clase baja, entre vidas en descomposición y ruina... y vidas de una pujante masa"¹⁸. Eyzaguirre thinks that each event in the novel "marca etapas de la decadencia de la familia Abalos y, por extensión, de una clase social chilena en vías de extinguirse"¹⁹. Similarly, Guerra-Cunningham thinks the novel is about "la caída total del mundo aristocrático en decadencia"²⁰, and Yerko Moretic and Carlos Orellana see misía Elisa and Andrés as "los exponentes de un estrato social en clara decadencia y descomposición"²¹. Rosa Chacel even claims that the relationship between Andrés and Estela is intended to reflect the attitude of the Spanish "conquistadores" to the natives of Latin America²², while Arturo Arias and Neide Luzia Rezende claim that the novel tries to "nier la lutte de classes": "ce projet idéologique pourrait appartenir à la quête d'une auto-affirmation de la part des

couches moyennes de la société chilienne des années '50".²³

Clearly we should not take social interpretations of Coronación too far, and Donoso was perhaps right to tell Eduardo Godoy that:

si los críticos ven en mis libros solamente un instrumento de protesta social me indigna. Y si es así, son torpes y ciegos.²⁴

Equally proper are the assertions of Promis Ojeda for example, that there are as many similarities as differences between the two social classes depicted in Coronación.²⁵ Quinteros goes even further, claiming that there is no element of social conflict in the novel: "en ningún instante aparece aquí la problemática de la novela proletaria chilena, que denuncia la explotación de una clase por la otra"²⁶, but this is manifestly not the case. In fact, Donoso himself, in the aforementioned interview with Godoy, was forced to admit that Coronación displayed many of the characteristics of protest literature: "Coronación es eso, no puedo negarlo".²⁷

Let us briefly summarize Donoso's main areas of attack. He emphasises the wealth, frivolity and superficiality of the rich as demonstrated by such characters as Inés, María, Adriana and above all Trenchita. In contrast to this we are shown the dire conditions of the poorer classes of Santiago (and, later, Valparaíso): we read, for example, of the appalling hovel Mario inhabits and witness the misery and discomfort of the toothless, wretched Dora. We also see the indifference of the rich to the plight of the poor and we are given numerous examples of the hollow liberalism adopted by characters like Andrés and don Ramón in order to placate their consciences. There is even an element of environmental determinism in the novel. Andrés thinks that René, Dora and Mario live "una vida en la que todo lo siniestro - el crimen, los vicios, el robo,

todo - era posible y hasta comprensible...porque cualquier cosa era mejor que abandonarse a esa miseria".⁸ Similarly, Mario also blames the environment for making him turn to crime:

Al fin y al cabo ni él ni René eran los verdaderos culpables. Estela era culpable de todo, también la Dora y los chiquillos; y la miseria que lo había obligado a abandonar su buen empleo en el emporio para ir en busca de René; y su reloj perdido; y esta necesidad ahogadora de evadirse de su propia sombra para rozar siquiera desde lejos las cosas buenas de la vida, esas cosas que los habitantes de la casa que veía en la acera del frente debían tener a manos llenas; todo eso culpable, no él (p.204).

However, the element of social protest in Coronación is undermined by the thematic implications of other aspects of the novel. For example, Donoso attempts to broaden his picture of reality by presenting the poorer classes also in a negative light. Rosario, for instance, demonstrates the same sense of hierarchy and snobbery as upper class characters like misía Elisa. She prefers Ángel to the other boys from the local shop, the Emporio Fornino,

por ser el único que se mostraba consciente del vínculo que la unía al Emporio. A pesar de su larga viudez nada halagaba tanto a Rosario como que se la considerara unida aún a tan prestigiosa institución, ya que Fructuoso Arenas (her late husband) había sido empleado de Fornino antes de casarse con ella y pasar a ser jardinero de misía Elisa Grey de Abalos (p.11).

Andrés says of Rosario that "ese vínculo con el mundo exterior y con su pasado conyugal cimentaba cada día más el convencimiento de su propia importancia" (p.15). Segundo, the new shopkeeper, is also part of this hierarchical system: since the modernization of the shop "se sentía con derecho a mirar en menos a todo el mundo" (p.26) but the indignant Rosario "no iba a permitir que ese sinvergüenza de Segundo, que le debía su puesto en el Emporio a Fructuoso, despidiera inju-

stamente al pobre Angel con el único propósito de hacer sentir su autoridad"(p.25).

Similarly, while presenting Mario and René as victims Donoso also shows them to be in many ways just as unattractive as the upper classes. Mario's behaviour is dominated by the need to appear "macho", and his treatment of Estela is often deplorable. René's character is even more ugly: he gives Dora a life of misery and is willing to take advantage of anybody. So, while on the one hand, Donoso presents the lower class characters as innocent victims of an unjust hierarchical system, at the same time he highlights their prejudice, selfishness and violent tendencies. It seems that, in Coronación, Donoso was attempting to renovate the novel of social protest by including some of the negative aspects of the poor, but falling between two stools because of his inability to strike an adequate balance between ideology and detachment. This brings us back to the transitional nature of Coronación: one explanation for its unresolved unity seems to lie in the fact that Donoso wanted to write a more modern, objective novel but was still embroiled in the conventions of the novel of social protest.

Basically Donoso was trying to do too many things at once, and his problems were further exacerbated by his attempt to approach the story from three angles at the same time: the social, the psychological and the existential. The element of psychological analysis is quite a striking feature of Coronación. In a general article on the Latin American novel Thomas E. Lyon points out that an analysis of the differences between the traditional novel and the new novel will indicate that "a change from external to internal structure is obvious; the mass social problems... have evolved into more individual, mental concerns"²⁹. However, in Coronación both of these elements are present. On the one hand we have detailed descriptions of the external reality of

the poorer classes (for example the accounts of the hardships of Dora and the cold, miserable condition of her house or the description of the ramshackle houses of the working classes of Valparaíso) ; on the other hand we are given a quite detailed analysis of the psychology of Andrés, Mario and René. If we share Lyon's view that the traditional novel is characterized by external reality while the modern novel is characterized by internal reality, then we must again conclude that the old and the new co-exist in Coronación. Once again, we see that Donoso was struggling to express himself in a new and original way but was at this stage unable to liberate himself fully from the conventions of traditional realism which were still dominant in the Chile of the 1950s.

Linked with the psychological aspect of Donoso's work is the author's concern about the conflict between the demands of convention and man's natural instincts, something which many critics have chosen to emphasise as a major theme both of Coronación and Donoso's other novels. Promis Ojeda has written:

La novela... es mucho más que la simple crónica de una decadencia. Es, por el contrario, el relato de la agonía y muerte del mundo de la cultura, de la civilización que ha enajenado al ser humano con un sistema de normas cuyo único efecto ha sido desangrarlo de su potencia, de su vitalidad, de su razón de existir como ser viviente. La caída se produce cuando este mundo, así ordenado, sufre la aparición sorpresiva de aquellas fuerzas primarias que la racionalidad de la cultura ha pretendido soterrar bajo una capa inconsistente y frágil que llamamos civilización.³⁰

Similarly Vidal states:

En su temática, la novela de José Donoso se presenta a nuestros ojos como la exposición de los efectos que tiene una norma de valores sociales inflexiblemente represivos sobre la base instintiva de la personalidad humana, entendiendo por instintivo aquel impulso vital que busca la manifestación más amplia de las potencialidades naturales del individuo, en un balance armonioso con el canon cultural imperante.³¹

Coronación constitutes then an attack on a whole cultural system which undermines man's natural and instinctive spontaneity by forcing him to conform to alienating norms of behaviour which merely stifle the more positive, vital side of his personality. By extension the novel also brings out the Surrealists' idea that man can only find spiritual fulfilment when he succeeds in liberating the more imaginative, irrational side of his nature from the restrictions imposed on him by reason. In fact, Vidal thinks that Coronación shows a strong "filiación surrealista"³²; but, as we shall see, Donoso's faith in the possibility of finding true liberation is open to discussion.

The conflict between conventional and natural, rational and irrational behaviour is a fundamental theme of Donoso's work and any full analysis of Coronación would have to take account of this aspect of the novel. But as this issue has been frequently discussed, my intention is to offer only a brief discussion of it here.

The ordered, rational, conventional life-style of the Abalos family effectively eliminates any vitality they might have, and this is reflected by the atmosphere of monotony and decay which the novel builds up in its presentation of a crumbling old mansion and its moribund inhabitants. Into this static, sterile world comes a charming, spontaneous country girl Estela. According to Promis Ojeda she reveals "la precariedad del orden establecido y anticipa su destrucción"³³. In his view, "la mujer aporta con su vitalidad campesina un aliento pánico, una fuerza que surge de lo más profundo de la naturaleza humana y de cuya atracción no puede escapar ni siquiera la conciencia intelectualista"³⁴. Her relationship with Mario is practically the only one in the novel with any element of genuine warmth and love (though Quinteros is perhaps rather over-categorical in her assertion that "no hay duda que los amores de Mario y Estela son verdaderamente amor")³⁵.

Almost every other relationship in the novel stands in contrast: two obvious examples are those of René and Dora, and Carlos Gros and Adriana. However, it is Andrés, representing contemporary man, who forms the most striking contrast with Estela (and, to a certain extent, Mario). He suppresses his instincts until it is too late; his collection of walking-sticks is a symbol of a sterile life in which he has shirked involvement.³⁶

Goic thinks that the "personajes de la clase más alta sorben ansiosamente la vida, que les falta, de la clase baja que ofrece generosamente su condición vital".³⁷ He feels that the two social classes depicted in Coronación "son sectores humanos los que aparecen como proyección de una realidad muriente y de una realidad vivificante".³⁸ This is of course true up to a point, but Goic's assertion needs to be qualified, for the lower class characters often show themselves to be equally tied to the forces of convention and reason. Promis Ojeda deals with the case of René. He compares him to Andrés, saying that:

como seres humanos son absolutamente iguales: dos existencias inauténticas que evitan el riesgo y el compromiso a costa de su comodidad personal, carentes en absoluto de voluntad para asumir una decisión frente a las opciones.³⁹

He goes on to say that "en ambos casos están ausentes los valores que fundan la existencia auténtica".⁴⁰ There is room for disagreement with some aspects of Promis's treatment of the character of René, but he does raise the interesting point of the similarities that exist between the classes. Even Mario, despite his apparent vitality and independent mind, often behaves according to the demands of his environment. With his friends from El Cóndor de Chile he has to conform to the standards of "machismo", suppressing his natural instincts for the sake of appearances, just like Alberto and Jaguar in Mario Vargas Llosa's La ciudad y los perros. This problem remains throughout his relationship with Estela:

his natural, warm, tender inclinations towards her are constantly endangered by his socially-induced vision of women and family life as a threat. However, it seems (to some critics at least) that his better side triumphs at the end of the novel as he leads Estela off to safety.

But even a brief consideration of this theme raises questions. Surely the view that the lower classes (Mario and Estela) represent a more positive, meaningful way of life and that the upper classes (Andrés and misiá Elisa) lead a life of emptiness and sterility, is contradicted by the simultaneously expressed idea that the lower classes are the ever-suffering victims of the rich and comfortable upper classes? Yet again we see the unresolved unity of Coronación.

Mario's behavior (particularly near the end of the novel) also raises the whole question of Donoso's attitude to the idea that man can achieve some kind of fulfilment if he can liberate the natural or irrational side of his personality from the restrictions imposed on it by convention and reason. Vidal, although always emphasising the ambiguity of Coronación, is on the whole fairly optimistic. He claims that:

En Donoso existe una confianza en que el instinto es fuente de armonía de amor para la convivencia de los hombres... 41

Despite this he later states that:

la ambigüedad y lo grotesco indican que el mundo de Coronación está lleno de escepticismo sobre la posible superación de las limitaciones de la personalidad.⁴²

But he then seems to change his mind:

el mundo de José Donoso es el de la rebelión más fundamental del hombre, la de los instintos. Donoso muestra una esperanza potencial para los jóvenes y, quizá, para las clases bajas, porque en ellos el primitivismo de su energía instintiva, en sus aspectos valiosos, no ha sido aplastado por los refinamientos y compromisos que encontramos en la burguesía. Aunque no hay total conciencia de ello en Andrés, Mario y Estela, su lucha por romper los moldes de sus vidas es la confrontación del instinto vital

y liberador contra la muerte a manos de una norma colectiva insana y anestesiadora.⁴³

He concludes his section on Coronación by saying:

Los personajes, portadores de la perspectiva de la instintividad redentora, parecen haber vencido las incitaciones degradantes de su espacio.⁴⁴

However, he then asks:

Mario y Estela ¿han quedado atrapados?⁴⁵

Clearly Vidal is confused: on the one hand he sees Coronación as being about the liberation of our instincts, yet on the other he seems to think that Donoso feels such a liberation is impossible. Achugar, however, does not share Vidal's scepticism. He feels certain that Donoso is putting forward the Surrealist idea of the liberation of the imagination and the irrational:

Andrés Abalos se refugia en la locura y trastoca el orden vigente; otros - Mario y Estela - se escapan no se sabe adónde y Coronación parece terminar proponiendo que la concreción de los sueños o de la imaginación es la única solución posible.⁴⁶

Critical confusion on this matter is understandable given Coronación's transitional nature and Donoso's state of philosophical indecision at this stage. There are both optimistic and pessimistic elements in the treatment of Mario and Estela's relationship. One possible explanation is that Donoso wanted to use a contrast to emphasise the sterility of Andrés's life and his mental deterioration once his natural instincts are awakened. The triumph of Mario and Estela in a sense merely emphasises the failure of Andrés.

This, however, would contradict Achugar's idea that Andrés also finds some form of liberation in madness. Andrés's madness certainly is an escape, though not quite, I feel, in the way Achugar sees it. His madness has metaphysical implications which Achugar does not fully develop. Furthermore, it is hard to believe, as Achugar seems to do, that Donoso really feels that man can fulfil himself by fusing the realms of dream and reality. Madness for Andrés may be an escape, but we should hard-

ly see it as some kind of spiritual fulfilment.

Perhaps Goidé comes nearer to an explanation when he refers to "la pulsión vital e instintiva la que de ordinario arroja a los hombres - y a las mujeres - al desorden bajo la seducción de lo extraño"⁴⁷ Coronación describes the mental collapse of Andrés following the sudden emergence of the irrational, instinctive forces his reason has for so long suppressed. I do not think Donoso believes that the liberation of the imagination can bring man fulfilment in the way the Surrealists felt that it could. He does, however, seem to advocate a more sensible balance of emphasis between our instinctive and rational sides. Man as he exists today is so dominated by the rational side of his nature that he finds it difficult to maintain any kind of mental stability when external events cause his long suppressed instinctive side to surface.

If we now go on to analyse the existential aspect of Coronación the problem of thematic complexity emerges once again. The novel presents a vision of an absurd life in a chaotic universe, a life rendered totally meaningless by the inevitability of death. In a sense this message of pessimism contradicts the hint of optimism implied in the theme of the liberation of our instincts. Even if Donoso does feel that man can achieve a harmonious existence on earth (which is doubtful), it seems that this existence must ultimately be absurd and pointless because any meaning it might have is undermined by the reality of death. The existential theme also contradicts the theme of social protest to a certain extent. Social protest implies a hope of change, yet the novel's existential message is one of hopelessness: what is the point of pressing for change if life is meaningless anyway? Donoso manages a more subtle integration of these themes in his later work; but in Coronación they strike one as contradictory. This is largely due to the cumbersome way in which the themes are pre-

sented, as we shall later see.

So far critics have not tended to emphasise the existential side of Coronación. Apart from general or vague comments there has been no detailed analysis of this theme. Thus Isaac Goldemberg, quoting Octavio Paz, thinks that Coronación demonstrates that isolation and solitude are "el fondo último de la condición humana"⁴⁸ and attempts to show three levels of isolation in the novel: physical, emotional and spiritual. Some critics, like Guerra-Cunningham, note that there is an existential side to the novel but see it only on the most obvious level, that is in the words of Andrés when he expresses his fears of death. P. Vansittart, meanwhile, denies any serious level in the novel: he sees Coronación as "rueful comedy, with moments of the macabre rather than the tragic"⁴⁹. However, one cannot seriously deny the deep pessimism of Donoso's work as a whole. We need only think of his suspicions about our ability to decipher reality and his lack of faith in the unity of the personality as reflected in the madness of Andrés and misiá Elisa. Cornejo Polar believes for one that Coronación "anuncia ya el germen del descreimiento frente a la realidad y del escepticismo ante la validez de los actos del hombre"⁵⁰. Donoso is for him "el implacable testigo del mundo que acaba"⁵¹. This is certainly true, but Donoso's pessimism about life goes even further than this. It has its roots not only in his lack of faith in man but also in his lack of faith in God. He has told Castillo-Feliú that "un tema básico en todo lo que he escrito es un terror a la muerte"⁵² and in an interview with McMurray he has said:

I really don't have any concept of God except that I'm convinced he doesn't exist. This doesn't deny the possibility of metaphysics but on the contrary, makes for another kind of metaphysics, which is the great protest against the fact that we are here on earth and given consciousness and can do nothing about it. We are not going to be granted another life and we know that nothing is going

to happen after this life. Nevertheless, we have been given... a spiritual awareness that makes us protest against this terrible hoax of having been placed by an enemy in this ridiculous, absurd situation.⁵³

He goes on to say that :

the whole problem of life, in my opinion, is non-communication with a non-existent God when we want to communicate.⁵⁴

Donoso's lack of faith in the traditional values and beliefs upon which our society is based produces a sense of metaphysical anguish and despair. This is why he introduces the idea of a lost paradise into Coronación (an idea which will find its fullest expression in El lugar sin límites). James Higgins, in an article on Cien años de soledad, explains the idea:

Este mito es en realidad la expresión de un anhelo que ha tomado la forma de nostalgia; así como el adulto suele traducir sus sueños de felicidad en una nostalgia de su infancia, el hombre, alienado en un mundo dominado por el mal y el dolor, proyecta hacia el pasado, hacia la infancia de la humanidad, su sueño de una existencia integrada y feliz.⁵⁵

Promis Ojeda sees this concept as underlying Coronación. He thinks that Andrés's fear of misia Elisa and Mario's fear of René show that:

desde el fondo del tiempo, el recuerdo del paraíso nunca recobrado hace más dolorosa la existencia presente, que se manifiesta amenazante y peligrosa...

Expulsados del paraíso por la degradación de los ángeles guardianes, los seres humanos se enfrentan, pues, peligrosamente, a la posibilidad de lo desconocido, al abismo de la caída final, al derrumbe del orden que hasta el momento todavía logra mantenerse a flote.⁵⁶

However, Promis fails to develop the potential of this theme.

Many of the characters feel some kind of nostalgia for an idealized but now vanished past. Gutiérrez Mouat has pointed out that "la voz colectiva de la burguesía... exalta el pasado y desvaloriza el presente porque aquél es el tiempo de la inmutabilidad y éste,

el de la transformación".⁵⁷ But this is not the same as what Axtmann incorrectly - in my view - describes as "la nostalgie qu'exprime le texte pour l'ordre traditionnel et les vieilles valeurs d'oligarchie associés à la douceur de l'enfance".⁵⁸ The central idea is that our loss of faith in God means the loss of any hope in a meaningful existence. We no longer live in a paradise of comfortable beliefs and traditional faith in God; the reality of life today is one of anguish and despair. This sense of hopelessness is brought out in the description of the Abalos household. The old house is run-down and decaying, so much so that "ya no valía la pena preocuparse" (p.14); this implies the idea of some kind of fall. Its inhabitants go through the same process of deterioration. Andrés, for example virtually ends up in a state of lifelessness. He tells Lourdes: "no quiero comer; los muertos no comen" (p.199). In fact the whole novel is shrouded in an atmosphere of death and decay. This can be seen in Donoso's presentation of Misiá Elisa's slow decline into old age, senility and eventually death.

Misiá Elisa's life represents the idea of a fall, of a transition from an ideal, ordered world to a chaotic one. The loss of her youth and sanity reflects man's loss of faith in a meaningful existence. She herself often laments the way times have changed. She cannot open her birthday present because "estos nudos modernos con tantas zarandajas no los entiendo" (p.50). She complains about modern music:

¡...y estas músicas de ahora; ¡Son infernales!
... ¡Vieras las músicas de antes! Esa sí que
era música linda. Y los bailes ... (p.39).

She looks back nostalgically on the good manners of the gentlemen she knew in her youth. Talking of one suitor, George Lang, she says:

Le había hablado a mi papá que quería casarse
conmigo, como se hacía antes y como debe ser (p.39).

Andrés's memories of his grand-mother underline

the extent of the change that has taken place in her. Thinking of misia Elisa as he saw her when she was a child, he exclaims :

¡Tan armoniosa entonces, tan diestra y callada!
Toda la casa había respirado serenidad en
aquella época, lo que tocaba iba adquiriendo
orden y sentido (p.19).

However, the order of the past soon gives way to chaos:

durante el año que siguió, aquello que se había
mantenido oculto por un tiempo bajo super-
ficies armoniosas, estalló con violencia. Ya
no existía paz en la casa (p.22).

As misia Elisa's madness develops,

la casa, que en otro tiempo estuvo llena de
voces tranquilas, de pasos que apenas se oían
por las alfombras espesas de las salas, de
puertas cerradas calladamente, resonó con los
gritos de misia Elisita (p.23).

These examples contain indications of the idea of a lost paradise and it is not surprising that Andrés attempts to placate his sense of existential unease with "la idea de volver a vivir en la casa de su abuela para gozar de esa paz, de la armonía"(p.41). His idealized vision of misia Elisa's youth represents a traditional, ordered perception of reality based on a faith in the meaningful nature of life. His attitude to her collapse into insanity and old age reflects modern man's loss of faith in a world in which we can see an order and in the God who has traditionally guaranteed that order.

The hopelessness and pessimism implied by such an interpretation can be seen in the numerous references to death and decay in relation to misia Elisa. Lourdes and Rosario (who herself, as we have seen, laments the loss of the good old days when her superiority was recognized at the local shop) comment on the ever decreasing number of visits the old lady receives. They conclude that the reason "es que tanta gente se muere"(p.37), and they long for the days when the parties used to be happy :

- ¿Se acuerda de antes?
- ¡Cómo no!
- ¡Qué lindas eran las fiestas de misía Elisita, con tanta gente y tanto regalo, y ella arreglada que parecía una reina! Si no le faltaba más que la corona ... (p.37).

Bearing these words in mind, it is possible to interpret the coronation scene at the end as a kind of ironic reflection on the meaninglessness of life following man's loss of faith in an ordered universe.

The finality of death is what really renders life void of meaning and misía Elisa is obsessed by the topic. Her comments :

Yo no sé por qué me habrán salido todos estos pelos. Antes nunca tenía. Ahora me estoy como los cadáveres, dicen que el pelo les sigue creciendo después que los entierran... (p.38),

and, when Andrés gives her a pink shawl:

Claro que para mí debía haber sido negro, una mortajita bien abrigadora (p.50).

are typical. Donoso's outlook is underlined by the way the novel obsessively focuses on misía Elisa's impending death. Carlos Gros puts this process of decay in chillingly cold terms:

Se aproxima un marasmo senil, el agotamiento de todas las funciones de su organismo. La materia, aburrida de estar viva, se prepara para el reposo de no ser más que sustancia. Es el ciclo que se cierra, simplemente (p.152).

Nobody comes to misía Elisa's final party and she dies later on that evening. Thus the final touch is added to a hopeless situation as she sinks into the nothingness of death.

However, it is with Andrés that Donoso's existential malaise finds its most obvious expression. This character has been dealt with by many critics and most of the books on Donoso examine the subject of Andrés's malaise. He has managed to repress his sense of metaphysical anguish (represented by his dream about plunging into an abyss at the end of a truncated bridge⁵) and replace it with a false sense of order, "ese orden que es la esencia misma de la vida" (p.41). The word

"orden" crops up again and again in Donoso's work: it represents man's need to believe in an ordered, harmonious universe. The falsity of such a belief is brought out in the famous Omsk episode in which Andrés takes refuge in the idea that his sense of unease is "un desconcierto que podía transformarse en orden si uno se conformaba con ser incapaz por naturaleza de llegar a la verdad, y no se martirizaba con responsabilidades y preguntas carentes de respuestas" (pp. 64-5). However, his eventual realization that he has never really lived, the failure of his attempt to find something to give his life meaning, and his failure with Estela lead him back to an awareness of the absurdity of life. The chaos of a universe with no God to guarantee an order is represented in the novel by the image of madness. The madness of misia Elisa undermines Andrés's sense of order just as it did his grandfather's, don Ramón. Andrés feels that "la locura de su abuela se había clavado firme en su mente, ... impidiéndole encontrar su orden" (p. 42). She becomes "la peor amenaza para la cordura de Andrés" (p. 43) and he no longer knows "dónde mirar, a quién acudir en busca de orden" (p. 51). His words to Carlos Gros underline the madness theme and also bring out a vitally important aspect of Donoso's philosophy:

¿No te das cuenta de que todo no es más que un desorden, una injusticia, un juego de locura del Cosmos? Si hay un Dios que vele por el destino de los hombres, no puede sino ser un Dios loco. ¿Qué locura más completa que haber dotado a los hombres de conciencia para darse cuenta del desorden y del terror, pero no haberlos dotado de algo para vencerlos? No, Carlos, no te ciegues, el único orden es la locura, porque los locos son los que se han dado cuenta del caos total, de la imposibilidad de explicar, de razonar, de aclarar, y como no pueden hacer nada ven que la única manera de llegar a la verdad es unirse a la locura total. A nosotros, los cuerdos, lo único que nos queda es el terror ... (p. 157).

Donoso seems to be asserting a totally nihilistic view of life. His pessimism is further underlined by Andrés's

terrifying reflection on his fate near the end of the novel:

Él ya no era un ser vivo, ya no era hombre. Estaba reducido a cosa, a materia que aguarda el momento de integrarse a la nada donde no hay tiempo ni extensión. Dentro de pocos años él iba a morir, y ese finalizar de su conciencia individual que lo separaba con una línea de claridad del resto de los objetos, era también el fin de eso que algunos saben llamar alma. Entonces, encerrado en el frío de su ataúd los gusanos iban a tardar un tiempo insignificante en reducir su cuerpo y todas las muestras materiales de su individualidad a polvo, dejando un pequeño montón de basura y unos huesos amarillentos. Años y siglos. Después, su ataúd cansado de mantener la unidad de esos pobres restos suyos, se pudriría, mezclando esa sustancia a la tierra indiferenciada. Años y siglos y milenios, muchos milenios. La ciudad donde sus restos reposaban sería arrasada de la faz de la tierra, y más tarde, cuando la familia humana no fuera siquiera una huella en la materia inanimada, el planeta quizás estallaría, uniéndose al polvo del caos (pp. 212-3).

At the end of the novel it appears that Andrés eventually goes mad. McMurray sees his madness in negative terms:

His denial of his absurd fate constitutes an escape from freedom and responsibility that typifies Donoso's characters but contrasts sharply with the revolt through action of the absurd heroes of existential literature.⁶⁰

Continuing this argument from the existentialists' point of view, he comments in a footnote that:

Andrés's willfull surrender to madness in order to evade reality makes him an example of bad faith.⁶¹

However, although madness may be an escape for Andrés, it is also in a sense a more authentic form of existence than that embodied by Carlos Gros, who represents, not, as Pamela R. Hill would have it, "the narrator's spokesman",⁶² but, to a certain extent, the existentialists' idea of taking a positive attitude to life despite its absurdity. If there is no God, no meaning in life, no structure to our universe, then insanity is the perfect image to express a vision of life based not on tra-

ditional concepts of a coherent, meaningful universe but on a totally nihilistic view of the absurdity of our existence.

The lower class characters in the novel also bring out the theme of existential anguish. Critics of Donoso have so far failed to notice that the positions of Mario, René and Dora do reflect on a symbolic level the same sort of crisis as that undergone by Andrés. They are constantly searching for something that will give their life meaning. However, it seems that they nearly always fail to reach their goal. Dora wants to have false teeth and live like a lady, but she never achieves her aims and continues to lead a life of misery. René wants a comfortable life and a bar in Iquique; but, like Dora's, his hopes are frustrated. This sort of situation parallels Andrés's search for meaning in life, a search that ultimately ends in failure because there is no meaning to be found.

As we have seen, Promis Ojeda sees definite similarities between the circumstances of Andrés and those of René. However, Promis sees their problem in terms of an inability to break out of the routine of their existences and take positive decisions that might change their lives. He says that both characters :

se aferran a un orden establecido, negándose infantilmente a la posibilidad de existencias diferentes, al riesgo de la ruptura de la normalidad aceptada y mantenida.¹³

He criticizes René for failing to become a criminal despite his reputation as a thief and for failing to abandon Dora despite his desire to do so. It is for these reasons that he condemns René as someone "que vive una existencia a medias tintas porque no tiene ni la decisión ni el coraje para afrontar los cambios que su voluntad anhela".¹⁴

While Promis is right to point out that a parallel exists between the circumstances of Andrés and René, his attempt to define the nature of the parallel

is unconvincing. It seems odd to attack somebody for not being a thief or for not leaving his wife and children. Furthermore, the events of the novel actually contradict Promis's argument: René does in fact try to change his situation by an act of robbery when he attempts to steal the Abalos family's silver. The emphasis should not be on René's unwillingness to take action but rather on the way fate seems to conspire against him.

Like Andrés, René is always searching for something to give his life value. On a concrete level this is simply a desire to transcend the social limits of his class, but on a symbolic level it reflects man's basic desire to find some kind of meaning and fulfillment in life. We are told that René has to deal with criminals "en su angustia por empinarse por sobre su suerte miserable" (p.92). He aspires to a more dignified level of existence and buys people drinks "con el fin de hacerse querer y respetar" (p.92). Furthermore, he wants to "irse al norte o cualquier parte, para huir de todo esto para siempre e instalar un pequeño bar" (p.91). He later tells Mario that his dream is to set up a bar in his home town of Iquique. An awareness of the symbolic importance of Iquique is vital for a full understanding of René's situation. It is a further symbol of a lost paradise. René recalls his childhood home in loving terms:

... vivíamos en Iquique. Tú no conoces Iquique. Es un puerto macanudo, relindo, lindo de veras. Mi papá tenía un despacho chiquito cerca del muelle. Ahora último me he estado acordando todo el tiempo de ese despachito, quizás por qué será. A la entrada siempre había unos sacos con porotos y garbanzos y lentejas, con la boca abierta, así. Vendíamos verdura también, la poca que conseguíamos porque allá no hay ... y unos rollos de cordeles que colgaban del techo, y cucharones, y ollas de fierro enlozado blanco, y a mí lo que más me gustaba era que me dejaran pintarles el precio con un lápiz de cera negra... (pp.178-9).

He develops this idealized description but then goes

on to give an account of how the business eventually declined. He now lives in Santiago but desperately wants his lost paradise back :

A veces, los sábados ... nos íbamos a bañar a la playa y a calentarnos al sol. ¡Nos bañábamos a pelolita! ¡Me gustaría ver el mar otra vez, pero mar de veras, no en Valparaíso! ¡Valparaíso es una mierda, una buena mierda! (p.179).

His desire to find his paradise again is reflected in his wish to set up the bar in Iquique :

Un bar chiquitito, no muy grande, más o menos no más, eso sí que bien bueno y con harta fama ... ¡Puchas que sería bonito! Así sí que se puede gozar de la vida. ¡Y yo quiero gozar! ¿Qué estoy haciendo aquí, pudriéndome? (p.180).

The potential robbery of the Abalos silver fills René with hope: "era como si recién ahora naciera su verdadero yo. El futuro era bello y preciso ..." (p.187). The money he will receive from the robbery will, he hopes, give him the chance to escape from the limitations of his present existence. However, his hopes and dreams are shattered when the robbery ends in failure. He beats Estela violently : "y lloraba castigando, destruyendo a ese ser que había osado derribar sus esperanzas" (p.211). On a concrete level, his chances of breaking free have been crushed; but on a more symbolic level, he can be seen, like Andrés, as representing the frustration of man in general when he realizes that there is no hope in life.

Dora's case offers significant similarities. She also sees her past as a kind of lost paradise :

¡Tan rebién que cantaba en la guitarra mi mamacita! Por eso es que yo aprendí. Pero ahora hace más tiempo que no canto... , al René antes le gustaba, pero ahora no. De todas las casas del barrio mandaban llamar a mi mamacita para que cantara en los bautismos y en los casamientos, y a nosotras nos llevaba y nos servíamos de todito. Era gorda mi mamá, bien gordita, como yo antes, y cuando cantaba se le ponían bien colorados los cachetes, y se reía para lucir sus dientes. Por eso es que nosotras éramos tan queridas en el barrio; las chiquillas de la cantora, nos

decían. Y cuando mi mamacita entonaba, le brillaba la tapadura de oro que tenía aquí, entre-medio de los dos dientes de adelante. Cuando yo era cabrita bien chica, lo que más quería era parecerme a ella, y como por ahí decían que tenía la misma boca que ella, con un palito no más me lo llevaba escarbando entre-medio de los dos dientes de adelante para que se me picaran y me pusieran una tapadurita de oro... (p.31).

However, Dora's desire to be as beautiful as her mother comes to nothing. Her own physical decline parallels the collapse of her hopes. She is now toothless and scrawny. We are told that:

Mario recordó que cuando la Dora se juntó con René tenía tan lindos dientes, que él, un mocoso, se había enamorado... de ella... De eso hacía ya muchos años; y la mujer de René, ahora, era un espectro. El escaso pelo grasiento le colgaba tieso detrás de las orejas. Su cara era como si alguien hubiera abandonado un trapo lacio encima de alambres torcidos en la forma de sus facciones de antes y el trapo se hubiera quedado allí, un remedo colgante de su antigua cara (p.30).

She looks back longingly to the past and remembers the "tan relindos dientes que tenía yo de chiquilla" (p.30). However, they are all gone now and René no longer desires her. She desperately hopes for a set of false teeth so that she can be attractive again and win back her husband:

Si tuviera un poquitito de plata, un poquitito no más, algo podría hacer... Me compraría uno de esos chalcitos largos que se usan ahora, uno colorado, con hartos flecos. Y me pondría los dientes. Estoy segura que si me pusiera los dientes yo le gustaría al René otra vez, segura, segura. ¡Pero así, cómo me va a estar queriendo el otro si parezco espantapájaros! (pp.33-4).

Dora's wish is more than what Quinteros calls "la ilusión del pobre"⁶⁵ or what Mary C. Axtmann describes as "l'aspiration de s'approcher... du modèle de la femme 'moderne'". It is not just a desire for a more financially comfortable existence. It also represents man's need to rediscover his faith in life, to find something that will make it worthwhile. It is signi-



ficant that Dora never gets her false teeth: man's hopes are constantly frustrated and he never finds anything to fill the vacuum that is the essence of his life. Dora's life is in fact just one long succession of frustrated hopes. She marries René, confident that they will soon move into a new house; but gradually her hopes fade:

-Ah, muy rebién lo íbamos a pasar dijo el René cuando nos juntamos, íbamos a vivir aquí por mientras no más, hasta que le entregaran la casita que le tenían prometida... ¡Corriendo le iba a creer yo ahora! Y yo la tonta que tenía mi buena pega de fabricana fui a dejarlo que me engatusara (p.32).

On the one occasion that René treats her well, Dora "era capaz de pasar las privaciones más extremas, alimentando una esperanza con el recuerdo de esa tarde" (p.93).

However, she soon realizes that her hopes are unfounded and it is now very rare that "por un momento lograba evadir la conciencia de su miseria" (p.122). Her situation is symbolized by the coloured cloth animals she makes. She hopes to sell them to earn a little money, and they come to represent her pathetic hopes:

Cosía con entusiasmo y destreza, como inspirada, como si en esa actividad de hacer juguetes de trapo para vender fuera a encontrar una solución maravillosa para todos los problemas de su vida (p.33).

However, the toys soon come to symbolize not hope but the foolishness of maintaining an illusion of hope:

Antes creía que estos monos de trapo me iban a dar algo, pero ahora no tengo ni tiempo para hacerlos de lo mal que me siento... (p.34)

The point is underlined a few pages later when Andrés and Rosario come across one of the toys and regard it as ugly and silly.

Mario is another character whose situation parallels that of Andrés. Most critics have ignored any similarities between the positions of these two characters and have tended to interpret Mario's personality either in class terms or in terms of a conflict between his natural spontaneity and the demands placed

on him by his environment. While such interpretations are perfectly valid, it is also fair to see the story of Mario as further developing the existential theme which is, in my view, central to the novel.

Mario's gold watch is a symbol of his desire to attain fulfilment. Estela "sabía perfectamente que lo que Mario más amaba en el mundo era esa pequeña máquina dorada que tanto tiempo había demorado en pagar" (p.123). The watch represents not only a desire to break down class barriers but also a desire to arrive at a more satisfying level of existence. Guerra-Cunningham has said that:

El anhelo de superar la miseria y poseer lo que 'los otros' tienen no es una mera ambición, sino el deseo trascendental de modificar una condición que afecta lo más profundo de la existencia. El reloj de Mario, símbolo visible de un status social, es la promesa implícita de una vida digna.⁶⁷

She is right to see the watch as a symbol of hope but we should also remember that Mario is forced to pawn the watch: his hopes are therefore seen to be dashed.

Mario, like the other characters, views the past as a kind of lost paradise. Near the end of the novel we see him sitting on the floor, groaning and weeping as he thinks of an ideal past that may never be regained:

¡La plácida maravilla de su época en el Emporio Fornino, cuando la felicidad dependía de cosas tan fáciles como el contacto del reloj en su muñeca, y de la perspectiva de hablar una o dos horas con Estela en la noche, cerca de un farol o en cualquier umbral que los cobijara! (p.207).

Those days are gone now and all hope is seemingly shattered.

Mario, nevertheless, wants to reach a new plane of existence, just as Andrés wants to find something that will give his life meaning. However, just as Andrés feels threatened by the darker side of life

(madness, chaos, absurdity and death), Mario too feels threatened. His fear of René and his fear of becoming a thief poses a constant threat to his hopes of achieving fulfilment. This fear comes out at the start of the novel when Rosario falsely accuses him of being a thief:

- Ladrón... - se dijo.

Al oír pronunciar esas sílabas apretó los ojos, los apretó hasta sus facciones jóvenes quedaron convertidas en un mapa de arrugas, como si con eso quisiera borrar el perjuicio causado por la palabra (p.29).

He is obsessed by the thought that he might become a thief, and when he defends his brother René against accusations of theft "era como si se castigara, como si él mismo se defendiera no tanto de la mala fama, sino de un peligro, de voces vagas y malignas, de un frío que lo quisiera envolver para hacerle imposible la existencia en el plano que la conocía y aceptaba" (pp.32-3). Later, when he sees René in the bar, "la presencia de René lo desquiciaba al hacerlo sentirse próximo a algo tan oscuro y peligroso como esas leyendas urdidas en torno a él" (pp.88-9). His fears are reflected in the nightmares he has:

René hacía su aparición en los sueños de Mario. Quizás no fuera René, quizás fuera otro ser, más hostil aún, pero que se le parecía con sus ojos de asmas. Llamaba a Mario, arrastrándolo consigo hacia algo aterrador... (p.135).

On the most obvious level Mario's fear is that he will be forced by his environment into becoming a criminal, but his sense of terror is expressed in such a way that it seems symbolic of man's fear that his ordered existence, an existence which he likes to think he has under control, will be undermined by some sinister threat. The threat to man's concept of order is the knowledge that there is no fundamental meaning to our absurd lives and no hidden structure to what is, in reality, a chaotic universe.

Mario's fate seems inescapable. René, who has disappeared to Valparaíso, eventually catches up with

him and sends him a letter telling him to join him: "era la mano de René que por fin se extendía para atraparlo" (p.136). Mario feels his fate is sealed: "sabía que el círculo de peligro que desde siempre vio formándose en torno suyo se cerraba, apresándolo" (p.139). He therefore decides to abandon Estela and team up with René. His relationship with Estela, as we have seen, had many positive elements. More than any other relationship in the novel it was based on natural, genuine love and tenderness. Yet Mario now gives this up in favour of a much more negative lifestyle: there is a shift from an optimistic view of life to a more pessimistic one.

When Mario arrives in Valparaíso he sees a ship bound for Oslo. McMurray and Promis Ojeda see what follows as echoing the Omsk episode, but without Mario's falling for the soft option like Andrés. Promis, for example, comments that:

Mario vive realmente la situación imaginada por Andrés cuando contempla un barco con la palabra Oslo. No obstante, y pese a que atraviesa un momento desesperado, rechaza violentamente la idea de huir, asumiendo responsablemente la elección de un destino...

I should offer a quite different interpretation of this episode. Like the lorry-drivers seen by Andrés, the ship and the men who work on it represent the chance to transcend limits. They are travelling men who "lanzaban al viento salado carcajadas que no eran las que Mario conocía, y gritos con la impaciencia de otras latitudes" (p.170). The thought of Oslo tempts him to "olvidarse de René y de ese destino ya elegido" (p.170). While the Omsk episode was a creation of Andrés's mind, these men are real; the description of their vitality suggests the possibility of a different, more valid form of existence. The idea of a journey to Oslo and new latitudes clearly implies the hope of a new, meaningful destiny. The theme is continued when Mario later sees some sailors in a bar. Sailors, men who travel in the open air to distant shores, are also symbols of transcendence, of breaking away from limitations

and reaching new goals. We are told that:

Mario se sintió acometido por la necesidad de ser uno de ellos, de alistarse en un barco en que fuera posible huir de su existencia aplastada. Irse. ¡Oslo!... Irse para siempre (p.171).

However, he still fears "el castigo y la desgracia de los cuales ya no era posible liberarse" (p.171). In other words his destiny (and by implication man's destiny) is not to find any hope or any ideal in his existence. This point is underlined on the next page when the ship disappears; but it is not only a ship that vanishes, for this scene also represents the disappearance of hope:

El mismo barco que había visto cargar iba saliendo de la rada. Arroz de Talca para Oslo. Su corazón desalentado siguió mucho rato al barco, hasta verlo caer detrás del horizonte... ¡Adiós, Oslo! (p.172).

Nevertheless, Mario continues to struggle against fate. We have already seen how his attitude to Estela is in a constant state of oscillation. The warm, tender side of his personality and his loving relationship with Estela represent elements of hope; but, as we have seen, this hope is constantly under threat. During the robbery scene Mario is in a state of total confusion. He makes Estela seduce Andrés but then "gemía en el suelo, confundido, aterrorizado, arrepentido" (p.207). He cannot "sentir la verdad en medio de la confusión" (p.208). When Estela betrays the robbers, "Mario luchaba, no sabía si para librar a Estela de las manos de René, o para castigarla él también" (p.211). He then decides that "era necesario escapar, rápido, lejos" (p.211) and then, in a gesture of kindness, "Mario limpió la cara de Estela con un trapo" (p.212). The couple's escape together introduces a note of hope amidst the novel's general atmosphere of despair.

This raises the whole question of whether the novel's ending is optimistic or pessimistic. Mario's relationship with Estela is, as we have seen, representative of positive, natural, vital forces and its sur-

vival does imply optimism. In fact Estela, herself an embodiment of goodness, senses a triumph despite her injuries:

Pero en el fondo de las tinieblas de su dolor físico había una chispa que podía transformarse en claridad, una certeza fiera de su triunfo (p.211).

Then we see another glimmer of hope:

La pareja se perdió en las calles para buscar refugio, juntos, sin saber donde, en alguna parte de la ciudad que pudiera proporcionarles amparo (p.212).

Even on the last page we read:

Quizás algunos - una pareja en busca de refugio, por ejemplo - recibieran también allí el regalo del cielo limpio (p.219).

All of this seems to justify an optimistic reading, and a majority of critics seem to agree. Jane Oyarzun believes that Estela "will never completely give up hope and will triumph in the end"⁶⁹. Moretic and Orellana, referring to Estela's refusal to seduce Andrés, say that "su rebeldía la redime y redime también a Mario"⁷⁰. Góic believes that "Mario, confusamente, desde el fondo de su instintividad sana e inocente, parece rescatar la natural espontaneidad de su amor llevando a Estela consigo"⁷¹; he goes on to say that:

Oscuramente, con secreta seguridad, el ciego instinto, alma y pasión, de la existencia inocente salva el momento de la caída y se abre en disponibilidad en los personajes que justamente se salvan en la novela: la joven pareja de Estela y Mario?⁷²

Quinteros has similar feelings about this couple:

más allá de su fracaso para asir una realidad inalcanzable, hay un impulso inocente sumergido en sus orígenes, que es fundamento de vida, y que en medio de dolores y miserias, posibilita en último término la salvación?⁷³

These are all fair comments, but they are based purely on an interpretation of the novel as presenting a conflict between natural, spontaneous behaviour and behaviour governed by reason, routine and the laws of convention. They do not take full enough account of the metaphysical anguish which underlies the novel and

which ultimately undermines any message of hope.

McMurray is more cautious. He sees Mario and Estela as representing "a possible though dubious regeneration".⁷⁴ This is probably a more accurate assessment of their relationship, whereas Promis Ojeda surely goes too far when he suggests that the two youngsters "adquieren los rasgos de una pareja adánica que vive la existencia antes del pecado, es decir, en ese paraíso de inocencia que para otros está irremediabilmente perdido".⁷⁵ Mario is certainly not in a state of total innocence and there are some ominous hints at what his future behaviour might be like. Granville Hicks says of Mario that "there is little doubt that he will come to a bad end" and reflects that "poor Estela... seems destined to live in squalor and misery with Mario if she lives at all".⁷⁶ Lagos feels that "la joven pareja sólo representa una etapa que antes vivieron René y Dora"⁷⁷ - although she bases this point of view on nothing more than her interpretation of Estela's name as meaning "virgen martirizada".⁷⁸ Shaw also supports a less optimistic interpretation:

A pesar del aparente vitalismo de Mario y Estela, que contrasta con la abulia y la locura de los demás, es difícil no creer que terminarán como René y Dora.⁷⁹

This may seem to be going beyond the information given to us in the text, but it is not an unfair assumption to make. Donoso's intentions probably demanded his confused presentation of Mario and Estela: he obviously did intend to show us the vitality of the young couple, but at the same time express his scepticism about the possibility of attaining fulfilment through the liberation of the irrational, instinctive side of the personality and his overall scepticism about the meaningfulness of life in existential terms. On the whole the pessimism by far outweighs the optimism.

The final chapters of the novel are, in fact, dominated by a pessimistic tone that eclipses the brief note of hope introduced by Estela's escape with Mario.

We see Andrés going mad and delivering an apocalyptic vision of a universe doomed to destruction, and just before the robbery scene we witness the coronation scene of the title. Critics were initially rather confused by this scene. Some have been dismissive. Hicks, referring to Rosario and Lourdes, says that "one can only be amused by their high jinks at the end"⁸⁰. Poblete Varas thinks that the scene "parece arbitraria, inconsecuente"⁸¹. Chacel meanwhile asserts that "no era necesario adornar la realidad cruda de este libro con florecitas de plata"⁸². Other critics have merely seen the coronation as a symbol of social decadence. Fernando Alegría thinks the scene is "un gran acierto descriptivo" but merely sees it as "un símbolo de la decadencia"⁸³. Guerra-Cunningham also seems to view the episode in social terms:

Significativamente, la corona que le confectio-
nan sus empleadas está hecha de despojos,
signo visible de un pasado que en el presente
es sólo una grotesca desfiguración.⁸⁴

However, such interpretations are far from satisfactory. Shaw's assessment is more accurate: "Esa coronación grotesca... simboliza el triunfo de la locura, del caos y del absurdo metafísico"⁸⁵. Similarly Quinteros suggests that:

la coronación de misiá Elisa por sus criadas
borrachas, es la coronación de la locura, la
única alternativa posible en un universo sin
sentido.⁸⁶

This is undoubtedly true. Indeed misiá Elisa's coronation seems to reflect Andrés's idea that if there is a God he must be mad. Rosario and Lourdes act as if they are paying homage to some kind of God. We are told that "como los mercaderes orientales de las leyendas, las sirvientas desplegaron a los pies de la reina los resplandores de sus presentes" (p. 201) and they crown misiá Elisa as a "santa". However, the old lady is insane and if she is associated here with God then it is a mad God. Furthermore it is a powerless God: misiá Elisa is on the point of death and "ya no era capaz de controlar sus movimientos... no parecía darse cuenta de lo

que estaba sucediendo" (p.201). In any case the whole ceremony is degraded by the servants' drunken squabble over the stole, the way they force the groaning old lady to drink punch, Rosario's crushing of Lourdes's glasses and their eventual collapse on the bed dead drunk. The whole scene shows the absurdity of maintaining any faith in God or in the idea of an ordered universe. The crowning of an old woman on the verge of death is a total denial of hope.

The final image of the novel merely underlines Donoso's pessimism. Quinteros, however, would disagree: she sees the ending as sublime. She feels that "doña Elisa vive bellamente su muerte" and asserts that:

la última página de la novela es una sublimación, a través de la muerte casi mística de la anciana, de todo ese mundo sombrío y doloroso que quedó atrás.⁷

It is true that misiá Elisa thinks the beads from her dress are stars guiding her on her way to heaven, but Quinteros fails to take account of the subtle effect of the last lines of the novel:

Estaba tan agostada que no se dio cuenta de que sólo en ese instante moría, y no antes, cuando creyó ver a todas las constelaciones rodeándola (p.219).

These words firmly underline the point that misiá Elisa's faith in salvation is totally unfounded. The clear implication is that there is no after-life and that therefore life itself, undermined by the inevitable finality of death, has no meaning at all. Whatever hints of optimism the novel might contain elsewhere, the final words of Coronación offer no hope at all: they merely emphasise the theme of metaphysical anguish and prepare us for the total nihilism of El obsceno pájaro de la noche.

Having examined the thematic aspects of Coronación and related them to an explanation of the novel's transitional nature, it is time to look more closely at the novel's structure and narrative technique. It

is proposed to demonstrate that Donoso was trapped between tradition and innovation on the literary as well as the philosophical level. Coronación is basically linear in structure. It is centred around three stories relating to three main characters: Andrés, Mario and misiá Elisa. There is a definite plot to the first two stories. We are given an account of Andrés's childhood, his anguished youth, his attempt to come to terms with his anguish, the shattering of his sense of order after the arrival of Estela, his attempts to regain it, and his failure to do so and his eventual collapse into insanity. In the case of Mario, we see his home life, the development of his relationship with Estela, his trip to Valparaíso to reach René, his involvement in the attempted robbery of the Abalos silver and his flight with Estela at the end. The story of misiá Elisa, on the other hand, contains little plot. Apart from the flashback in Chapter 1, she is merely presented as a senile, crazy old woman always in the background: yet it is her story which, to a degree, forms a structural backbone to the novel, for her constant, concomitant presence casts a shadow over the whole story reconfirming its message of absurdity and hopelessness.

The problem for Donoso was how to link these stories together. He employs more than one technique but the most obvious is his introduction of Estela who acts as a unifying link among all three characters. Promis Ojeda observes that "la mujer se plantea como la figura central de la novela, hacia la cual confluyen y de alguna manera emanar las existencias individuales de los personajes"⁸⁸. She is the servant of misiá Elisa and this brings her into contact with Andrés in whom she arouses frustrated passion. However, her relationship with Mario also allows Donoso to deal with the lower class world from which Mario comes. Thus she even forms a link with René, Mario's brother, for she represents the hope of financial salvation because of her

position within the wealthy Abalos household. She provides an important nexus between the two social sectors around which the novel is based. This not only allows Donoso to develop the plot; it is also a device to connect the novel's diverse themes. Estela's relationship with Mario and the contrast she forms with Andrés and misiá Elisa highlight the theme of the rebellion of the instincts. Her link with Andrés also throws into relief the existential anguish of this character who sees Estela as the last hope of giving his life meaning. Equally her association with Mario gives Donoso the opportunity for an incursion into the poorer parts of Santiago in order to express his social concern

However, Estela merely helps Donoso deal with various things at the same time. As we have seen in our discussion of the themes of Coronación this does not necessarily imply any overall cohesion in his presentation of theme. This problem is further revealed if we look at the other characters in the novel. There is a technique behind the introduction of these characters but it is often unduly obvious. Rosario and Lourdes, for example, serve as a kind of chorus. They are not central to the action but are introduced to set plot in motion, to give information or to re-inforce themes. Carlos Gros does not really form part of the main action; he is merely inserted to act as a foil for Andrés's thoughts. In fact the introduction of almost all of the other characters is determined merely by the requirements of plot or theme. Thus René, Donaldo and TENCHITA, Inés and María, and Adriana are not well-rounded characters, fully integrated into the framework of the story; rather they are simply pinned on to the framework whenever the plot needs to be advanced or an aspect of theme needs to be underlined.

This becomes clear when we make a detailed analysis of the plot and structure of the novel. It is basically chronological, beginning a short time before misiá Elisa's birthday and ending with her death on

her saint's day. There is also a clear pattern to the novel's overall structure. It has three parts: Part I is centred around misiá Elisa's birthday; Part III, paralleling the first part, is centred around her saint's day; Part II covers the more lengthy period of time between the two celebrations. This structure is reflected in the titles of the three parts. Parts I and III have the titles "El regalo" and "La coronación" : both refer to specific incidents. The middle part, however, carries the title "Ausencias", suggesting the idea of a greater length of time. Thus a classic pattern emerges. We have an introductory or expository section at the beginning and a climactic or dénouement section at the end, both framing a central section which expands at greater length upon the central themes of the novel. That is :

- Part I : Exposition
- Part II : Expansion (with a climax at the centre)
- Part III : Rapid plot development leading to dénouement and climaxes.

Part I of the novel is chiefly expository: it introduces the characters, conveys necessary information, announces the themes and attempts to capture our interest. In many ways the first chapter functions as a kind of microcosm of the first part as a whole. In this chapter almost all of the major characters are mentioned, some information is given about the Abalos household and the atmosphere is set. Donoso uses Rosario to introduce the characters in a subtle, indirect way. Angel visits her and introduces the character of Mario. As Angel is leaving he waves to Andrés and Donoso can now focus his attention on him. An atmosphere of decay and the absence of vitality is created right from the start as the author describes the sleepy, lifeless figure and the run-down nature of the house. Andrés then provides us with information about misiá Elisa's madness, thus capturing our interest and

introducing an important theme. Estela is also introduced and Andrés is struck by her pink palms: this prepares us for his sexual attraction towards her and the references to her innocence and spontaneity introduce the theme of the conflict between the vitality of our instincts and the sterility of convention.

In the next chapter Rosario meets Mario. This provides Donoso with the opportunity to dwell on Mario's psychology and on the dreadful social conditions in which he lives. The third and fourth chapters deal with Andrés and Mario respectively. We are given background information about the Abalos household and are told of Mario's relationship with Estela.

So far the novel has been following a symmetrical pattern, alternating chapter by chapter between Andrés and Mario. However, Donoso now needs to develop Andrés's existential crisis and bring out the sterility of his life-style: he therefore spends the next three chapters dealing with Andrés. These chapters all correspond to the time of misia Elisa's birthday and they do bring the first part to a head in that misia Elisa's insane accusations against Andrés dramatically bring out his true condition while the words of Carlos Gros on the matter make him realize he has never really lived. Thus Andrés's character problem has been announced and the second part can deal with his attempts to find a solution to it. Nevertheless, Donoso has been forced to abandon Mario for three whole chapters, even though he was presented in the first four chapters as the central character alongside Andrés. Clearly Donoso's attempts to integrate the two social classes and deal with three themes simultaneously does not square with the novel's relatively conventional structure. The novel already seems slightly imbalanced and our impression of Mario is not as strong as it should really be at the end of the expository section.

The same problem occurs the other way round in

Part II. There is little action in terms of plot development and instead the action concentrates on the internal anxieties and aspirations of the main characters. It is here, according to Lagos, that the first part's element of hope is eliminated and "el proceso de incipiente destrucción" begins: "la segunda parte está signada por la pérdida de toda ilusión, de toda esperanza".⁸⁹

This section consists of nine chapters with a central climax in the treatment of Andrés's anguish (chapters 11 and 12). This group of chapters is the crux of Andrés's story and is pivotal to the novel as a whole. Andrés realizes he needs Estela but then discovers he cannot have her: from then on he remains in the house having embarked upon the gradual path to insanity. However, this creates problems for Donoso. Having brought Andrés's story prematurely to a head he has little need to concentrate interest on him during the rest of the novel. Thus in the fifteenth chapter, for example, Donoso gives an account of Andrés's self-immersion in a series of pointless activities in his grand-mother's house. The intention of this chapter is to show how Andrés's life has now lost all meaning. But since Donoso has by now almost exhausted the potential for presenting Andrés's anguish internally he turns to a more conventional third person narratorial stance in order to describe Andrés's absurd activities. Andrés's central position in the narrative has begun to slip away.

Nevertheless, Donoso has to keep the existential theme alive, hence in the sixteenth chapter he focuses our attention on Carlos Gros who has so far been acting merely as a foil for Andrés's thoughts. The intention, presumably, is to show that Carlos's superficially positive attitude is merely a means of masking the true sense of existential despair he feels deep down. However, Donoso chooses a very late stage in the novel to focus so intensely on the internal psychology of

such a minor character. In fact the second part ends with the author concentrating on Adriana, Carlos's wife. While Donoso is using these characters to make an important point, such an obvious manipulation of characters for the sake of theme lacks subtlety.

The same problem occurs earlier in the section at another climactic moment. Just before Andrés becomes conscious of his attraction towards Estela, Donoso had been focusing most of his attention on two extremely minor characters, Donaldo Ramírez and his wife Tenchita. They are introduced mainly to provide a mechanism for making Andrés aware of his subconscious sexual feelings. The detailed account of the life-style of these two characters, which Donoso here provides, fails to conceal that he is introducing them for an artificial purpose; while in addition the switch of emphasis dilutes the impact of Andrés's climactic realization of his dilemma. Both at the centre point of the novel and at the end of a whole part Donoso unwisely shifts our attention from major to minor characters.

The second part also deals with Mario and Estela. As we have seen, Andrés dominates the last three sections of Part I and the central chapters of Part II. However, the first three chapters of Part II do not deal with him at all. Thus having involved the reader in the story of Andrés, Donoso leaves it all hanging in air for three whole chapters in order to tie two social groups together and introduce other themes. Thus incursions into the psychology of Mario and Estela in Chapters 8 and 9 allow us to contrast the spontaneity of this couple with the sterility of characters such as Andrés. Chapters 9 and 14 meanwhile give us a greater awareness of Mario's psychological and social problems. Basically these chapters develop the themes presented in Part I: Mario's personal problems and the nature of his relationship with Estela. Yet the sections dealing with Mario are only inserted here and there in the second part: in Chapter 14, and briefly in small sections

of Chapters 9,10 and 13. This points to an unresolved conflict of intention in Donoso. The emphasis on Andrés suggests that his major area of concern is individual psychology and metaphysical despair. However, the occasional switches of emphasis to Mario introduce an element of social contrast (even though Mario parallels Andrés at the same time). Because he is using a linear plan, Donoso's attempt to reconcile his various themes creates structural problems, which constantly force him to alter his patterning. While he wants to present more than one level of reality at the same time, he has not yet mastered the techniques of simultaneous presentation of reality that he will employ in his later work.

The same problem emerges when Donoso introduces René in the second chapter of Part II. René has to be brought in because he will be vital to the plot development of the third part. However, Donoso focuses on his internal psychology for half of Chapter 9 and then abandons him until Chapter 18. Once again Donoso's direct manipulation of characters forces the novel to progress in jerks rather than smoothly interlocking sections.

The third part contains rapid plot development leading to the dénouement and multiple climaxes, what Lagos calls "la síntesis de destrucción de todos los personajes".⁹⁰ It is in this section where we see perhaps most clearly the resulting complications of Donoso's attempt to reconcile disparate narrative material within a linear framework. The emphasis changes constantly. Andrés is in the background for most of this part of the novel. He is presented internally in Chapter 21 and briefly in a small part of Chapter 18. Mario dominates Chapter 17 whereas René is at the centre of Chapter 18. These two chapters deal with the plan to steal the Abalos silver. It is this plan which provides the mechanism to link all of the characters together at the end. The final four chapters, paralleling the

final three of Part I, are devoted to misiá Elisa's saint's day and provide a series of climaxes following one after the other. Chapter 19, presented via the dialogue of Rosario and Lourdes, and a traditional third person narrator, is the coronation scene. Chapter 20 deals with the robbery and a wavering point of view brings to an uncertain head the stories of René, Mario and Estela. Chapter 21 shows Andrés's final plunge into madness, and the last chapter describes misiá Elisa's death. Thus we have four important chapters representing climaxes in terms of theme and/or the treatment of characters. Rodríguez Monegal finds this plethora of climaxes rather absurd:

De ahí que Coronación abuse de las motivaciones exteriores del conflicto y caiga en lo grotesco, para culminar en una absurda y doble escena teatral... La crónica familiar degenera en melodrama social?

It is true to say that the ending of Coronación is in some ways unsatisfactory. The important thing to notice, however, is that Donoso's attempt to bring so many diverse elements together is at odds with the traditional structure of the novel. He achieves a far more subtle integration of form and content in his later work when he employs more innovative techniques which allow him to present various levels of reality at the same time and in a convincing manner.

The transitional nature of Coronación becomes more apparent when we take a closer look at Donoso's narrative technique. Here we can detect elements of innovation alongside more traditional narrative procedures. Despite the changes in patterning that occur throughout the novel, there are unifying elements in it. We have, for example, the central figure of Estela and the near-constant presence of misiá Elisa in the background, the only character not to be explored internally. More interestingly we have Donoso's use of symbolism. Donoso told McMurray that "symbols are probably the most important single element in my work".⁹²

Symbols take on more importance in his later work, but in Coronación they do provide structural unity and make for a more subtle expression of themes. We have symbols of sterility like the sticks; of suppressed sexuality like the colour pink of the shawls and Estela's palms; of vitality like the lorry-drivers; of hope like Mario's watch, the bar in Iquique, Dora's teeth and her cloth animals; of fear like the thief and robbery motifs; of evasion like Omsk; of death, despair and the absurd like the bridge, madness and misia Elisa's obsession with nobility and her eventual coronation. Already the use of symbols allows Donoso to suggest many themes at the same time: symbols like Mario's watch and Dora's teeth for example express man's frustrated existential hopes as well as the need for social change. As Donoso's work develops he will use symbolism even more systematically so that he can suggest themes simultaneously without having to resort to some of the laborious techniques we have noted in Coronación.

However, even in the case of Coronación, some critics have seen innovative elements in Donoso's narrative technique as a whole. Most notable among these is Cedomil Goić. Goić explains that Donoso shows us the characters' states of mind by using either dialogue or an indirect third person narrative technique which brings out their thought processes without resorting to the first person or some kind of interior monologue. The narrator in effect removes himself from the narrative. Goić claims that "la posición del narrador no podía ser más objetiva"⁷³. Donoso does not "interferir subjetivamente" and the characters are allowed to reveal themselves autonomously, thus leaving the reader free to make his own judgements about the novel. This whole technique gives us a much wider vision of reality, according to Goić, who also suggests that "esta condición transparente favorece la pluralidad de perspectivas"⁷⁴. He goes on to explain that :

El narrador opone al tradicional optimismo gnoseológico de la novela moderna un escepticismo que exhibe de qué manera una perspectiva exclusiva es incapaz de circunscribir la realidad y cómo ésta es abordable desde varias perspectivas complementarias cuya yuxtaposición no resuelta en síntesis concluye en una indeterminación de la realidad.⁵

Goić's theory has a few supporters. Castillo-Feliú agrees that Donoso's style "elimina la posible subjetividad de la omnisciencia editorial o el personalismo del yo narrador".⁶ Quinteros also sees Coronación as a highly contemporary novel:

Donoso revela su condición de escritor contemporáneo, al eliminar de la narración juicios teóricos universales o particulares que pudieran interponerse entre el discurso narrativo y el diálogo o monólogo de las figuras, con lo cual lo narrado fluye como imagen de mundo y no como imagen del narrador... La omnisciencia del narrador tiene así sus propios límites, y supone un constante cambio de perspectiva, condicionado por la presencia de cada personaje. Se usa de este modo un método indirecto, que supone la penetración en la interioridad de cada personaje, no como la ve el autor, sino como el personaje siente y piensa el mundo que lo rodea.

... No hay en Coronación una conciencia teórica que discierne y asevera. Se logra así una gran cercanía entre narrador, mundo representado y lector.⁷

There is a strong base of truth in such assessments. However, we must not forget that residual traditional elements remain in Coronación. There is a considerable amount of straightforward, traditional omniscient narration in the novel. This is the case in much of Chapter 15, for example, when we are given an account of Andrés's activities in his grand-mother's house and his investigation of the attic. This is also the narrative method used in the nineteenth chapter, which describes the coronation scene. In fact Donoso often intervenes to supply information as a traditional narrator would. One example comes during the conversation between María and Inés (itself introduced rather awkwardly into the text), when the narrator suddenly in-

serts himself into the dialogue to tell us that:

En otros tiempos los parientes se habían confabulado para casarla con Andrés, su primo en segundo grado, rico, caballero a toda prueba y soltero. Pero él logró evadirse a tiempo, dejando magulladuras casi imperceptibles (p.69).

In fact, the narratorial voice constantly shifts about from straight omniscient narration, to indirect third person narration, to dialogue, to philosophical discussion and so on. Furthermore, Donoso's use of an indirect third person often has unfortunate effects. We see this in his too obvious exploration of the psychology of Andrés and in his treatment of Mario, whose oscillations between love and hatred for Estela remain unconvincing. Goid, however, praises the author for using the indirect third person rather than interior monologues, claiming that Donoso deliberately gives the characters no depth in order to bring out their lack of any really authentic personality:

Por esto le está prohibido al narrador, si ha de entregar la cualidad propia de esas conciencias, emplear el método directo de la corriente de la conciencia o el monólogo interior u otras formas directas.⁷⁸

But this is open to question. After all, if it were true, why would Donoso bother to abandon this technique in favour of the use of interior monologue in the novels he wrote after Coronación? Equally unacceptable is Quinteros's unqualified assertion that Donoso is a totally objective narrator who does not introduce his own theories directly into the text.⁷⁹ The thoughts of Andrés, for example, are quite clearly intended to make a direct metaphysical point, while Mario's thoughts are often used for the purpose of social protest. Castillo-Feliú is therefore mistaken in his criticisms of Hicks for complaining that "the author relies so heavily on direct analysis of psychological states".⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Goid and his followers do make extremely important points about Coronación. It is clear that even at this stage in his career, Donoso was keen

to strike out in a new direction. Despite Coronación's overall linear structure there are a number of striking techniques which, although only occasionally employed here, will become standard features of his later work.

A close look at the novel will indicate that the period of time covered by the main, linearly presented action is relatively short. A considerable amount of information is actually furnished by flashbacks. There are two obvious examples. The first is in Chapter 2 when we are taken back to misiá Elis'a younger days and are given an account of the development of her madness. It is significant that Donoso presents reality in such an inverted order: by doing so he manages to suggest that the true nature of life is best represented by the ugliness of the present and not by the innocent idealism of the past. This sort of chronological inversion was to become a major feature of the new novel and it is interesting to note that Donoso is already experimenting with the technique here, albeit in a much less daring way than in his subsequent works.

There is another example of this in Chapter 6 when we are given an account of Andrés's childhood and the development of his attitude to life as an adult. Once again Donoso captures our interest by first presenting the contemporary, suffering, melancholic Andrés, and thereby contrasting the hopelessness of the present with the innocence of childhood and the existential calm he experienced as a young man. Furthermore, this device presents us with a fuller, more ambiguous picture of reality. The presentation of two points in time like this expands our range of understanding and makes us aware of the fact that our interpretation of reality is essentially subjective, depending on the amount of information available to us.

There are also many more small flashbacks within the novel. Near the end of the third chapter we are taken back to an incident in the past when the

noise of misia Elisa's insane ravings threatened Andrés's sense of calm and order: this introduces a timely note of foreboding and unease into the story, contrasting strongly with Andrés's renewed confidence and hope due to the apparently ameliorating effect of Estela's presence on his grand-mother. Once again a simple juxtaposition of two periods of time conveys the novel's sense of anguish, despair and hopelessness. In Chapter 2 Rosario gives us information about the good old days when Segundo used to visit the servant quarters and in the eighth chapter Estela recalls her innocent childhood relationships with Aurelio and Cara de Pescado. Sometimes, as in these two examples, the detail may seem unnecessary but it is nevertheless interesting to note that even in such an early work Donoso was using flashbacks functionally to expand theme or meaning.

It is also interesting to note that Donoso does not often present events in the present in a totally straightforward and linear way. In Chapter 8 Estela is at the Abalos house but then thinks back to her trip to the cinema. In Chapter 10 Estela and Mario have actually finished making love: it is only in their thoughts that we get an account of what actually happened. In Chapter 17 Mario is back in Santiago: the episode of his trip to Valparaíso in search of René is presented to us by his thinking back. What Donoso is doing is to abandon direct presentation of reality for an indirect presentation. This is perhaps the real significance of the indirect third person technique. Donoso uses an intermediary (the character) to act as a bridge between narrator and narrative. By allowing the character to tell the story Donoso effectively withdraws from the narration and the reader is thus brought closer to the fictional reality being portrayed. As we have seen, Donoso does not do this with the same skill as in his subsequent work but we can see that he is interested in new methods of presenting reality,

although at this stage he still has one foot in the traditional camp whilst timidly dipping his other into the modern one.

We can also see the genesis of autonomous narrative in Coronación. In novels like Mario Vargas Llosa's Pantaleón y las visitadoras the action is virtually self-propelled because the narrator does not intervene to announce directly the time or the circumstances of the dialogue. Donoso's later work incorporates this technique to some extent and even in Coronación we can detect such hints of the narrator's desire to withdraw from the foreground. A striking example comes in the sixth chapter when Donoso changes the emphasis from Andrés's childhood to his life as a young man with admirable economy:

- ¿Cuántash veshesh, hiho? - le preguntaría el padre Damián, si contaba.

Y eso jamás podría confesarlo.

- ¿Cuántash veshesh, hiho?

Andrés despertó, incorporándose en la cama. Eran las tres y media. Muy temprano. Buscó a tientas un vaso de agua en el velador, sin encontrarlo. Volvió a dormirse.

- Porque sí ... - respondía tercamente a la amiga de su abuela, que le preguntaba con qué fin se proponía a estudiar leyes (p. 59).

Related to this is Donoso's penchant for switching from a stream of general thought to a specific dialogue or piece of action, a technique he was to perfect in the marvellous stream of consciousness passages of Este domingo. Again the change is made without any cumbersome explanation from the omniscient narrator. Sometimes Donoso includes an illustrative dialogue from the past to enhance the meaning of a character's thoughts. Thus we see a conversation between Andrés and his doctor, Carlos Gros, included in the middle of Andrés's attempts to assuage his fear of death by taking refuge in the knowledge of his good health:

Cincuenta y tres años no eran tantos, sobre todo tomando en cuenta su salud ejemplar. Por lo menos cuatro veces al año se hacía examinar de pies a cabeza por Carlos Gros.

- ¿Cómo me encuentras?
 - Como un chiquillo.
 - ¿Y estas acideces tan raras, entonces?
 - Pero si comes como un animal, qué quieres. Debes fijarte.
 - Ah, entonces no estoy tan bien ...
 - Hombre, no tienes nada, no seas solterón maniático.
- Y la satisfacción de su salud admirable lograba ahogar la porfiada llamita de terror ... (p.39).

The thing to note here is that Donoso makes an oblique reference to Andrés's visits to Carlos Gros and then inserts one of his conversations with the doctor into the narrative without any further explanation. This allows the narrator to withdraw from the narrative thus making it more autonomous and consequently bringing the reader closer to the reality being described. Coronación abounds with examples of this technique. In the sixth chapter, for example, Andrés is looking back on his youth and reminiscing about the hopes don Ramón had for his grand-son's academic career; in the middle of this a conversation between Andrés and Carlos Gros about the former's academic intentions is introduced in order to reflect upon Andrés's thought processes. We later see Mario thinking of Estela. Towards the end of the passage describing his thoughts we read:

- La veía rara vez, porque el patrón la vigilaba continuamente, impidiéndole salir.
- ¿Y qué más te hace ese viejo desgraciado?
 - Nada ...
 - ¿Y para qué te quejais tanto, entonces?
- Estai poniéndote igual que la Dora ... (p.136).

Again a dialogue is introduced to illustrate the ideas expressed in the passage describing thought processes, but without any overt intervention of the narrator. This technique is used to great effect in Chapter 8 when Estela's thoughts about misía Elisa's ideas on men are juxtaposed with the old woman's actual words. Her thoughts are jolted by the sound of misía Elisa's snoring:

En el cuarto vecino oía los ronquidos tenues de la nonagenaria.

- vas a ver. Primero te convida al teatro, haciéndose el tonto. Después te emborracha y te lleva por ahí. Y después, qué sé yo, pues, hijita..., y a los nueve meses una guagua, un huacho, porque no te hagas ilusiones, a él no lo volverás a ver (p.82).

This passage already portends Este domingo and El lugar sin límites. Donoso's awareness of the way the human mind functions and his attempt to express that functioning artistically is already apparent. The thought process is interrupted by a sound from the physical world: snoring. This sound is associated with misiá Elisa and the thought of the old woman provokes the memory of a conversation with her. The beginnings of a modern stream of consciousness technique are already present in Coronación.

Almost all of the above examples also demonstrate Donoso's tendency towards juxtaposition. The novel is full of contrasts: the author constantly opposes different times, characters and situations. Sometimes this is with the intention of inducing the reader to make a parallel or contrast. In Chapter 8 Estela's memories of her past amours are juxtaposed with her thoughts on her relationship with Mario: the significance of the first episode inevitably effects our interpretation of the second and we are prompted into seeing the innocence of Estela's childhood boyfriends as a pointer towards the natural, innocent, tender side of Mario. Chapter 9, meanwhile, ends with the repulsive sight of René and Dora's loveless sexual activities whereas Chapter 10 shows us the carefree, natural spontaneity of Estela and Mario's love-making. This juxtaposition is intended to jolt the reader into glimpsing the differences between sterility and vitality, between negative and spontaneous behaviour. Donoso's attachment to the traditional novel though is still evident from the very obvious way he presents the contrast: instead of a simple, unannounced juxtaposition he uses the device of making the bird that was circling above René and Dora fly

across the city and then circle above Mario and Estela. Nevertheless, at the same time as we see Donoso's traditionalism we also see his desire to expand our vision of his fictional reality via the use of juxtaposition: when two episodes are presented together like this our understanding of the one inevitably effects our interpretation of the other, thus giving us a greater awareness of their significance.

Juxtaposition and contrast are, then, of vital importance in the novel. Achugar refers to "la condición dicotómica de la estructura de la novela"¹⁰¹, seeing the novel as presenting "un sistema binario de la realidad"¹⁰². The novel is structured around an obvious class contrast: we have masters and servants, rich and poor, the Abalos house and the "población". Tatum refers to Donoso's "contrapuntal structure which allows him to compare and contrast the respective worlds of Chile's aristocracy and its lower classes" and comments, perhaps rather over-generously, that "structurally, it is Coronación that best succeeds in presenting the similarities and differences"¹⁰³. Goic thinks that the two classes "aparecen como proyección de una realidad muriente y de una realidad vivificante"¹⁰⁴. This in turn creates an opposition on a thematic level: as Vidal says, "el relato encuentra... su eje estructural en la contradicción norma social frente a naturaleza individual"¹⁰⁵. We have but to think, for example, of the obvious contrasts between the sterility of Andrés and the vitality of Mario and Estela; and the range of contrasts is even wider: as we have seen, Donoso constantly opposes appearance and reality, madness and sanity, order and chaos, the past and the present.

Furthermore, there are oppositions within oppositions. We have seen that the lower class characters parallel the upper classes as well as contrasting with them. McMurray feels that "Donoso's characters often reveal contrasts and parallels which create tension, balance and compositional unity"¹⁰⁶. Achugar writes of :

Mundos contrastados pero no independientes, ya que Coronación resulta proponer una especie de red o de vasos comunicantes que interrelacionan ambos universos a la vez que, por momentos, los enfrenta, como en un juego de positivo-negativo al que es tan adicto el hablante básico de la novela,¹⁰⁷

while Vidal sees Coronación as forming "una interacción de sistema de espejos".¹⁰⁸

There are also contrasts within the classes. The aforementioned contrast between René and Dora and Mario and Estela demonstrates that the contrast between sterility and vitality is not simply presented in class terms as Goic's words above suggest. In fact, there are contrasts within each individual character. Andrés leads an empty, sterile life on the one hand; yet he is the only person in the novel with the courage to actually face the reality that life is absurd and meaningless. Mario represents the refreshing forces of natural spontaneity; yet at the same time his behaviour is determined by the conventions of "machismo". René is a foolish idealist and the victim of his environment; yet equally he is a scheming villain willing to use anybody for personal advantage. Misiá Elisa is a madwoman on the one hand; yet she sometimes sees the truth when others do not. Carlos Gros puts forward the existentialist argument that we should take a positive attitude to life despite its absurdity; yet at the same time Donoso presents him as a man who simply avoids facing reality. His wife, Adriana has two identities but she hides her true self behind "la máscara trivial" of a social persona (p.162). Rosario is a servant yet, as we have seen, she adopts the haughty characteristics of a master. Rosario's case is, in fact, very interesting because she is in a sense a prototype for an idea to be fully developed in Donoso's subsequent novels. Talking of Inés and Peta Ponce from El obscuro pájaro de la noche Donoso told Rodríguez Monegal that "la sirvienta es otra parte, otra encarnación, a otro nivel, de la patrona... Es patrona y es sirvienta... esta confusión

existe"¹⁰⁹. We are reminded of the work of Antonio Cornejo Polar on El obsceno pájaro, of Raúl Bueno Chávez on Este domingo and of Fernando Moreno Turner on El lugar sin límites in which they discuss the notions of inversion and reversability which they see as forming the structural basis of Donoso's later work.¹¹⁰ If we look closely at Coronación we see that the same rules can be applied here. The characters contrast with each other, reflect each other and form contrasts within themselves. We have the beginnings of a complex system of interrelations which will be more fully developed by Donoso in his subsequent novels. Once again, Coronación's transitional nature is revealed as we see early signs of Donoso's immersion in the world of El obsceno pájaro.

As well as providing structural unity these oppositions and parallels also reflect Donoso's interest in the ambiguity of reality. The traditional novel (with its linear plot, its chronological time sequences, its emphasis on external detail and its consistent characters) implied faith in an ordered vision of the world, in the belief that reality could be grasped and therefore expressed in writing. However, the inconsistencies of character in Coronación already suggest that Donoso cannot accept such a simplistic notion. Furthermore, there are a number of episodes in the novel which bring out the ambiguity within reality. Rosario completely misinterprets Mario's character, thinking he is a thief when in reality the thief is her one-time favourite Angel; the old servant is thus forced to reconsider her opinions and is left to reflect upon "los desengaños que se llevaba una" (p.28). Lourdes meanwhile, speaking to Andrés, refers to "la vida licenciosa que un soltero de su fortuna e independencia sin duda llevaba" (p.15): but she is completely wrong in her assessment of Andrés's character. The two servants are also wrong to see don Ramón as "la causa de la enfermedad de la pobre misia Elisa" (p.24). It is not surprising that Achugar sees Coronación as demonstrating that "las categorías

de falso y verdadero, de real y potencial...son relativas y arbitrarias".¹¹

The theme of madness is closely related to the idea that reality is ambiguous. Misiá Elisa, although mad, can often point out the truth. Her revelation of Andrés's sexual desire towards Estela lead the grandson to believe that "toda la inmundicia que llenaba la cabeza de la inválida no era locura, sino realidad" (p. 199). The balance between reality and insanity is further blurred when Estela actually does steal money from Misiá Elisa: is Misiá Elisa's accusation a genuinely held belief or just another of her insane utterances?

Achugar sees Misiá Elisa as a "Sibila que a ratos profética, a ratos lúcida, describe la esencia verdadera del mundo y sus habitantes".¹² However, Achugar makes the subtle point that Misiá Elisa is often wrong in her general assertions that all men are lascivious and that all servants are thieves and whores; he therefore concludes that:

la distinción existe, uno y otro polo de la dicotomía existen, máscara y enmascarado son dos realidades, pero lo que permite distinguirlos es cuestionado y anulado.¹³

Furthermore, he points to the ambiguity of the ending of the novel. He notes that Andrés requires Carlos Gros's acknowledgement of his madness and therefore concludes that "Andrés Abalos no enloquece, sino que impone la realidad de su convención a los otros".¹⁴ He also points out the equivocal nature of the silver robbery: for Carlos Gros and the reader it did not take place but for Andrés it did. Reality therefore is subjectively interpreted and we cannot necessarily presume to understand it fully. This element of ambiguity is for Achugar the most striking feature of Coronación:

Pero aun cuando dentro de un código todavía mayoritariamente realista, el texto proponga la distinción entre realidad y apariencia, a la vez se ha producido un 'salto' con respecto a la producción anterior y el hablante básico y la estructura del texto, parecen indicar la posibilidad de la fórmula lógica 'esto y aquello'.

Es decir, el desajuste final, la indeterminación sugerida supone un 'salto' no tanto porque se obvian etapas, ni siquiera porque se transformen violentamente las estructuras narrativas e ideológicas del texto, sino porque se empiezan a abandonar los cauces del realismo vigente, lo que implica un abandono de concepciones estrictamente racionales donde el equívoco o la ambigüedad puede ser motivo, tema, pero no estructura configuradora del propio texto".⁵

At this stage Donoso is aware of the pervasive ambiguity of reality (although this concept is not yet fully developed: there are, for example, several instances of old-fashioned social realism, as we have seen). Nevertheless, Donoso presents an ambiguous picture of reality within a largely traditional, linear framework. In a sense he was attempting to put new wine into old bottles: he had not yet managed to create the perfect artistic form within which to express his ideas. However, we can go further than Achugar, who sees the ambiguity of reality as merely a theme of Coronación. As we have seen, we can detect signs of the beginning of a narrative technique which will use juxtaposition and intermediaries to allow the narrator to withdraw and thus give the reader a fuller, more ambiguous and more detached vision of fictional reality.

Coronación's position within the development of Donoso's fiction as a whole is highly significant. The novel is neither solely traditional, as some critics would have it, and nor is it completely true to describe it as a striking example of the innovation of the new novel as other critics do. What we have is a novel in which the traditional and the innovative exist side by side, with Donoso's sense of innovation struggling to liberate itself from the shackles of conventional realism. We have traditional social themes in an uneasy alliance with new ideas on the relationship between the classes, and with the psychological and existential emphasis of modern literature. We have a conventional structure, clumsy manipulation of characters and episodes, and a sometimes uncomfortable psychological

style on the one hand , and experiments in the use of flashback, juxtaposition, autonomous narrative, indirect expression and the presentation of an ambiguous picture of reality on the other. It seems that Donoso's philosophical and literary outlook was still clouded at this stage by the ascendancy in Chile of the traditional novel, but his own desire to break out of this mould is evident from the numerous examples of his attempts to forge a different approach to fiction. It is significant in this respect that Donoso tells us that he actually re-wrote the final chapters of Coronación after reading Alejo Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos: this experience helped him realize he could free himself from the demands of the realist novel and hence write "aquella última escena esperpéntica"¹⁶, the marvellous coronation scene in which the break with traditional realism is really strongly in evidence for the first time. Coronación is an interesting novel primarily because it shows us the struggle between the old and the new: it was the latter trend which was to triumph and set Donoso on the path towards his masterpiece, El obsceno pájaro de la noche.

P A R T II

CHAPTER ONE

1966-1970 : THE GROWTH OF MALAISE

The negative outlook of Coronación is developed progressively in Donoso's subsequent three novels. Este domingo is a study of frustration and decline in a more-or-less realistic urban setting; El lugar sin límites intensifies the metaphysical theme by moving it on to a more abstract plane of grotesque, symbolic distortion; finally El obscuro pájaro de la noche's nightmarish, hallucinatory vision of chaos represents the climactic point in the author's deepening sense of terror and despair. It is proposed here to examine these three novels in terms of that expression of ontological unease. Particular emphasis will be placed on Este domingo and El lugar sin límites. The existential aspect of the former novel has been so far largely ignored: my discussion of its underlying pattern of symbolism is intended to redress the balance. Equally, there are important features of El lugar sin límites's symbolism which have yet to be sufficiently highlighted: a situation which it is also hoped this chapter will rectify. A thorough analysis of such elements in these two novels reduces the necessity of a similarly detailed consideration of El obscuro pájaro. Furthermore, the perfect fusion of form and content in this last-mentioned novel means that Donoso's existential viewpoint is implicitly examined in the chapter dealing with its narrative technique.

In Este domingo a story about marital failure and frustration becomes a symbol of the existential anguish of modern man, alone in a world without meaning. As Donoso himself has explained to McMurray:

The lack of communication between my characters is a metaphor for my feeling of incommunication with God, that is, there is no possibility of communicating with a non-existent God. The whole problem of life, in my opinion, is non-communication with a non-existent God when we want to communicate. And so we seek communication with man but that, too, seems impossible!

Indeed Este domingo does contain a great deal of emphasis

on solitude and incommunication. The picture of the near deaf Álvaro as an old man engaged in a pathetic struggle to play The Harmonious Blacksmith on the piano is but one example: the narrator of the italicized sections now realizes "la soledad de su esfuerzo por impedir que sus dedos enredaran hasta lo irreconocible las notas de la pieza más simple"². Chepa also suffers from solitude: her sexual and emotional frustration leads her to devote herself to her grand-children, the poor people of the "población", and later Maya. Her marriage with Álvaro is a complete failure. The closeness of their cars forms an ironic contrast with the reality of their situation, for they have not slept together for years (p.33). Instead they live out a hollow pretence in which "todo continuó igual" (p.78). However, their deep-rooted incompatibilities are always near the surface: Álvaro wants to use his cancer as "una venganza elegante" (p.30) to shame Chepa, while she hopes her relationship with Maya will lead to "algo terrible, algo que...le presentara a Álvaro el caos" (p.122). Their total inability to communicate comes out at the end of the first section: Álvaro is not interested in Chepa's obsession with Maya, nor does Chepa care about Álvaro's fear of his impending death.

This sense of emptiness and frustration is underlined by the atmosphere of death and decay that Donoso builds up. The pavement outside the house is in a bad state of repair because "nadie lo cuidaba", and "la línea de árboles se fue poniendo cada vez más irregular y más rala" (p.13): the house is later left uninhabited, "el jardín enmalezado, las paredes descoloridas" (p.190). Time seems to be marching implacably on. The children come across all sorts of symbols of decay and the passing of time as they play in the house. They find "dormitorios terriblemente inhabitados" in which they see the "arañas de los techos" and yellowing pictures which depict a scene that is "increíblemente pretérito" (p.23).

Most striking is the impression we get of the ageing of the characters. The servants cannot do their

work properly because "las pobres están demasiado viejas" (p.34). The young, vigorous Violeta of Álvaro's youth contrasts strongly with the overweight old woman of later life. She has "las piernas...llenas de várices" (p. 50) and "el trasero verdaderamente enorme" (p.52). She may even be senile, "guardando cosas en paquetitos" (p.131), like the old women of El obscuro pájaro de la noche. Álvaro concludes that "ya no servía para nada la pobre Violeta" (p.131) and that "ya no le puede pasar nada más que morir" (p.52).

Chepa was once for Álvaro "la más linda,...la mejor en todos los sentidos" (p.73), the very epitome of "todas las cualidades que él deseaba" (p.72). However, he is now forced to contemplate "la decadencia de ese cuerpo", "la terrible destrucción de sus nalgas maltratadas por la celulitis" (p.76). By the end of the novel she has been reduced to "una ancianita que apenas balbuceaba" (p.188).

Álvaro also goes through the same process of decay. He was once young, carefree, happily engaged in an adolescent affair with Violeta and courting various young women. Now, in the eyes of the children, he is relegated to the level of "un personaje de farsa que en nuestros juegos llamábamos 'la Muñeca' porque era muy blanco, muy blanco, como de porcelana envejecida" (p.16). He has to wear long-johns to "proteger la fragilidad de su cuerpo" (p.19). The narrator used to feel that eventually Álvaro "se secaría, se astillaría, y finalmente el aire aventaría lo que de él quedara como polvo de escombros" (p.20). Álvaro himself is painfully aware that he is passing through old age towards the terrifying finality of death. Looking at his reflection in the mirror he thinks:

tus ojos son demasiado chicos y juntos, lo más débil de tu rostro, y no los quieres porque en los ojos es donde más se te notan los años que no pasan en vano, mi viejo, que no pasan en vano, el iris descolorido, el perfil de los párpados apenas enrojecido, escasez de pestañas que nunca fueron abundantes..., mira tus ojos que pueden

estar muriéndose. Hoy tienen menos fuerza que nunca. Como si las metástasis ya sembradas en tu hígado, en tu próstata, en tu cerebro, en tu rodilla, en tu vejiga hubieran chupado todo el vigor de tu organismo (p.30).

The motif of decay is, to paraphrase Bueno Chávez, the organizational basis of Este domingo. However, although Bueno Chávez is right to identify the emphasis placed on "el envejecimiento y la ruina de cosas y personas"³, he fails to develop fully the connotative implications of this motif. The novel's insistence on deterioration does not merely reflect "la ruina de una organización social"⁴ but also brings out Donoso's pessimistic view of the human condition. In particular, the contrasts between youth and old age mentioned above suggest the idea of a lost paradise: the exhilaration of youth is soon replaced by the despair of old age. This idea is further highlighted by the additional contrast provided by the grand-children of Álvaro and Chepa. Many critics have dealt with Donoso's opposition of the childhood and adult worlds, but have generally tended to see it in terms of the children's representing the realm of spontaneity and instinct that is repressed by reason and convention as embodied in the adult characters. While such an interpretation is perfectly acceptable, we can also put forward the view that the child-adult contrast reflects Donoso's nostalgia for a world of harmony and innocence, a world which he now knows cannot exist because he has achieved consciousness of the absurdity of our existence and the meaninglessness of life. Significantly, in Este domingo, the children are eventually absorbed into the adult world of frustration and loneliness and their faith in life is lost in its turn.

The adults in the novel constantly intervene to curtail the innocent enjoyment of the children. One example comes when Álvaro reproaches Chepa for encouraging the children in the mock funeral of Mariola Roncafort. The reason he does this is that the funeral march re-

minds him of his own approaching death. Thus the worries and fears of adult life are used functionally to disrupt the blissful innocence of childhood, portending the day when the children themselves will be forced to face up to the sombre implications of an empty existence. In fact, the children are already approaching that state. The way they make fun of Álvaro recalls the contrived jocularity of the young boys in Donoso's story "El charleston", suggesting that their games and jokes are merely a *défense* mechanism against the fear produced in them by the sight of an old man approaching death.

These ideas are underlined by the "redoma" image. On the one hand "esta redoma de tibieza donde se fracturan las luces que borronen lo que hay afuera" (p.12) is a symbol of innocence and protection: the child in the warmth of the car is safe from the threat of the real world outside. At the same time, though, the idea of the fishbowl with its imprisoned inhabitant reflects the stifling trap of the adult world: only in his grandmother's house could the narrator "quebrar la redoma sin que fuera delito, era por fin fluir, derramarse" (pp. 14-5). Finally the children see themselves outside of the fishbowl watching their grand-father looking at them from the inside where he is caught like a goldfish (p.20). The children clearly represent freedom from the rules of reason and convention, but they also represent freedom from the worries of the world. Álvaro, on the other hand, as an adult, reflects the anguished condition of modern man.

This theme of the loss of innocence comes out again in the last part of the novel when we see the narrator of the childhood passages as a grown-up. Tatum comments on the negative aspects of adulthood, going on to say that :

In Donoso's fiction as the individual matures he becomes increasingly aware of the sham of the superficially comfortable world he inhabited at an early age, and subsequent to this awareness comes the realization his fate will be the same.⁵

Tatum makes this point largely in relation to the ideas of social decadence and man's repression of his instincts; equally, however, the narrator's transition to adulthood can be seen as a reflection of his assumption of a disillusioned attitude towards the meaning of life. The narrator is now quite aware that he has lost the innocent paradise of youth. The last section describes a series of his childhood fads which once seemed eternal but are now gone forever :

Pero entonces era lo nuevo. Otra región mía se puso en movimiento, y para darle lugar era necesario matar otras cosas para dejar lugar a mamá Colibrí y a ese cerro y a esos bosques y a ese río dentro de mi vida. Pero ahora mamá Colibrí y Fernando tampoco existen. Otras cosas han tomado el lugar de lo que en ese momento me parecía eterno. Y después otras. Ahora es un mundo tan sepultado como el de Mariola Roncafort (p.187).

Achugar chooses to see this passage as indicative of the narrator's susceptibility to "un modelo ideológico de aprehensión de la realidad a pesar de que cada modelo evidencia, a su tiempo, su raíz histórica y transitoria", concluding that Este domingo therefore demonstrates "el fracaso de la fantasía, de la voluntad ideológica de mitificar la realidad"⁶. At the same time we can view the passage as an indication of the narrator's induction into the sombre world of the adult. Pessimism is now the only realistic option as the carefree innocence of the past has gone, a point underlined by the finality of the phrase "no hubo domingo siguiente" (p.187). He has now woken up to reality as is shown by his revision of his attitude to the house he used to idealize: "Me parece imposible que sea tan pequeña. Y tan ridícula..." (p.190). He knows that "las cosas ya no eran como antes" (p.188). However, this new awareness about the nature of life does not necessarily make the grand-son a "renovador de su clase" as Vidal suggests he is: Vidal himself is forced to admit the narrator seems to be "un viejo solterón sin descendencia"⁷. The narrator is presented not so much as regenerated by having achieved

consciousness of the sterility of his class's mode of existence, but rather as a man finally facing the melancholy reality that life is empty and meaningless. Thus Eyzaguirre and Quinteros seem to be missing the point when they see the childhood scenes as introducing a note of optimism into the novel: the former critic thinks these scenes "comunican a la novela un tono de tierna ironía que aligera las tintas del cuadro negativo general"⁸, while the latter feels that they introduce into the text "una corriente de optimismo"⁹. The last section shows that the childhood days are gone, the paradise is lost forever. The childhood passages are not, in my view, meant to create an air of optimism but, on the contrary, to sharpen the novel's sense of pessimism by reminding us that there is no going back to the days of carefree happiness.

Indeed, the tone of Este domingo is predominantly negative. As Shaw has suggested:

Si hay una evolución en lo temático entre Coronación y Este domingo hay que verla en la intensificación del aislamiento individual y en la eliminación de la nota de esperanza que suena todavía en la primera novela al unirse y ampararse mutuamente Mario y Estela.¹⁰

The title of the novel is therefore ironic: for Christians Sunday is a day of hope but here it is a day on which the characters lose all hope. The novel's pessimism is further brought out by Donoso's symbolic presentation of the theme of metaphysical anguish which underlies the main narrative. As in Coronación, we are presented with a series of characters who either suffer consciously from a sense of existential despair or whose individual stories reflect such a crisis on a symbolic level.

The most obvious case is Álvaro. As we have seen, his life rapidly becomes one of emptiness and frustration. His problems are exacerbated by his fear of death. This fear comes to be symbolized by the cancerous "lunar" which he constantly and obsessively feels is growing on his chest, a mark "que indica que las cosas comienzan a deteriorarse: el principio del fin" (p. 28). He is terrified

of having a biopsy because the results might lead him to "la caída al fondo del terror y no dormir nunca más hasta dormirse definitivamente"(p.29). Even his grandson is aware of "ese terror suyo, mudo, ineficaz, ante la sordera y la vejez que avanzaban"(p.19).

As a young man, however, things were rather different. Alone in the house, he turned to Violeta for sexual relief. This points to something more than the upper-class man's desire to absorb the instinctive nature of the lower classes or than the sexual perversion and fetishism Vidal chooses to see in the relationship." It is indicative of man's need to break away from the humdrum sterility of life and reach out for something more transcendental that will make life more fulfilling and meaningful. As in Coronación, there is a symbolic pattern underlying the structure of Este domingo which brings out Donoso's sense of metaphysical anguish via the individual stories of his characters.

Unfortunately for Álvaro there is no hope and he becomes increasingly associated with the notions of age, decay and death. His vain efforts to play the piano despite his old age and deafness represent his useless attempt to defy the inevitable encroachment of senility and death. His pathetic vanity also demonstrates his desperation to cling to life by artificially recreating a world of perfection and order along with the lost paradise of youth. However, the reality of his condition clashes with his foolish hopes, as Chepa's words suggest:

Él, que vivía pendiente de su ropa. Sus trajes debían ser absolutamente perfectos. Camisas a las que sólo la Violeta sabía pegarles un botón o bordarles una pequeñísima inicial como a él le gustaba. La docena de trajes colgados con ese esmero obsesivo. Sus piernas flacas, blancas, ya sin vello; parado junto al ropero con sólo los calzoncillos y la camisa puestos, se concentraba totalmente en la tarea de hacer coincidir en forma maniática las rayas planchadas como cuculillos de los pantalones que se acababa de sacar (p.137).

But "el ritual de Lux y Odorono y Colgate y Listerine y Yardley"(p.32) and the shine of "el esmalte de sus

dientes postizos"(p.127) is not enough to stave off the advancement of old age. He eventually dies in a state of abject terror, in a way that reflects Donoso's own sense of horror at the absurdity of a life rendered meaningless by the dreadful reality of death:

la Antonia me contó que la Muñeca lloraba y lloraba, y gritaba que no quería morir y pedía auxilio porque tenía miedo. Trataron de engañarlo. Pero jamás lo creyó, ni en la etapa final, con el cuerpo lleno de metástasis: siempre supo que su muerte se aproximaba paso a paso, y con su meticulosidad de siempre contaba esos pasos y gemía de terror al contarlos (p.188).

As we have seen, the process of ageing and decay is also sadly evident in Chepa and her life is essentially one of loneliness and emptiness. Unlike Álvaro she is not consciously obsessed by death, but Donoso presents her life-style as a symbolic reflection of man's need to escape the frustrations of life and find something that will give his existence meaning. Her activities with her grand-children, her charitable works and finally her attempts to secure Maya's freedom are all means of escape. This is the significance of the recurring image of Chepa as a bitch who needs offspring to suck at her breasts. However, critics have so far tended to examine this aspect of Chepa's personality in purely psychological terms, seeing the root of her problem as a need to replace the sterility of her life with something more vital. We can go beyond such a literal reading of the text to postulate the notion that on a wider, symbolic level Chepa's attempts to escape the limitations of her environment correspond to man's basic desire to find some kind of fulfilment that will renew his faith in life.

Gutiérrez Mouat sees Chepa in terms of the narrative's process of self-exhaustion: "el personaje que intenta a través del relato producir diferentes tipos de discursos y figurar en ellos mediante la sustitución de roles... termina produciendo un silencio sin significaciones posibles"¹². But as with the cases of Andrés, Mario, René and Dora in Coronación, Chepa's story represents the

search for something that will give life meaning. Her charitable works give her something to do but also allow her to purge herself to some extent of her anguish. She admits that she does it in order to escape the reality of her failed marriage: "uno inventa cosas que toman el lugar de la pasión, y es posible ser feliz así también" (p.110). It is clear that she does this work not so much out of social concern but of a desire for personal fulfillment. This is why she abandons the "población" as soon as the new attraction of Maya comes along.

Her attitude to Maya is equally selfish but her feelings are much stronger. Maya rightly comments that Chepa "no tiene nada que hacer, por eso se entretiene con uno como si fuera un muñeco" (p.123). One of her daughters points out that "mi mamá tiene esclavizado al pobre Maya. Lo vigila igual como nos vigilaba a nosotros" (p.148). But Chepa feels a desperate need for Maya. She is terrified that "va a ser como las niñas que me dejaron, y como mis nietos que pronto comenzarán a dejarme, y como Álvaro que jamás..." (p.125). She feels afraid that "se le iba a perder" (p.129) and wants to keep him for herself so that he will depend on her, feeling "esa angustia que yo calmaré, sólo yo" (p.125).

Her attraction to Maya is more than just an escape, though, for the attraction is irresistible. The relationship constitutes an ironic parody of the Romantic notion of love as a source of existential support. She says that "nadie nunca me ha interesado tanto como Maya" (p.82) and even tells Álvaro that "ni aunque te estuvieras muriendo, este domingo, dejaría de ir a buscar a Maya" (p.83). When he is not there she is only "existiendo a medias" (p.156). She envies Marujita Bueras, who has had a sexual relationship with Maya: she wants to go to her and "quitárselo para siempre" (p.141). She also envies Violèta: "siento envidia por tus magulladuras. Maya te viene a ver a ti, en la noche mientras yo me seco esperando junto al teléfono" (p.158). The sheer extent of her obsession with Maya does seem to suggest that her

relationship with him represents more than just the need for an antidote to an unsuccessful marriage. Chepa is looking for something to give purpose and direction to her life and in this respect her quest is symbolic of modern man's quest.

However, Chepa's attempt is doomed to failure: the implication is that there is no hope in life and all attempts to find any are illusory (a point underlined by Maya's name, that of a goddess of illusion). The novel is full of foreboding references that hint at the tragic outcome. Maya is constantly shown up as being unworthy of the faith and trust Chepa puts in him. When she first sees him he behaves like a "bruto" (p.106) and on visiting him the following week she reflects that he was "tan violento la semana pasada" (p.108). Furthermore, he has been given a long prison sentence for a callous murder he committed with a younger friend: "fue el que tramó el asesinato y corrompió al más chicó" (p.112). There are also many indications of Maya's likely unreliability with money: the references to his desires for material goods and his pretensions to grandeur portend his squandering of the money Chepa arranges for him to borrow. On a symbolic plane the fact that Chepa misplaces her faith in Maya carries the implication that all transcendental faith is similarly misplaced.

This idea comes sharply into the open at the climax of the novel when Chepa enters the shanty town in search of Maya. She shakes off her loyalties to Álvaro and Violeta and faces the elemental nature of her desire for this man: "Puedo ir a buscarlo. No a salvarlo. Nada más que a buscarlo" (p.168). But the symbolic value of her search is indicated by the comparison Chepa makes between herself and Violeta: "ella no tiene esta angustia mía por andar, por buscar" (p.175).

The scene in the "población" has been interpreted in various ways. Quinteros sees Chepa's confrontation with the poor urchins as a demonstration of "la esencial contradicción existente entre los dos mundos sociales

contrapuestos"¹³, seeing the passage at the same time as a commentary upon Chepa's "caída moral"¹⁴. Vidal thinks it represents "el retrasado enfrentamiento de Chepa con el lado animal de su personalidad"¹⁵, while McMurray sees it as an account of "her descent into the labyrinthian maelstrom of her unconscious" and a reflection upon "the conflicts and monstrous passions engendered by bad faith between individuals, as well as by generations of social injustice"¹⁶. Shaw meanwhile views the episode as "un simbólico descenso al infierno"¹⁷.

There is little doubt that Chepa's entry into the shanty town shows up the hypocrisy of her charitable attitude to the lower classes and also brings her face to face with her now uncontrollable subconscious passions thus provoking a mental collapse. Equally the episode underlines the novel's wider existential themes. As she enters the "población" in search of Maya (reaching the climax of her symbolic quest for meaning in life) she actually commences a descent into hell (indicating the hopelessness and failure of that quest). The hellish atmosphere is created by references to the labyrinthine nature of the settlement which give the impression that she is lost in a formless inferno. At the same time the menacing presence of the ever increasing number of dogs and children led by the dwarf symbolize the approach of the point at which Chepa's hopes will finally be destroyed.

Chepa's sense of order now begins to desert her, the image of the labyrinth underlining her confusion. She holds on tight to her martens despite the children's attempts to snatch them. This represents her last grip on an ordered world. The martens are a symbol of the civilized middle-class world, a world of order and stability. However, the children represent the lower-class world of chaos and despair. When she eventually loses her martens to the children she collapses symbolically into the world of madness and chaos. Realizing all hope is lost she lashes out at the children violently (thus

abandoning the charitable attitude she once saw as a means of personal salvation). Her total fall into chaos and despair is indicated by the image of the mouths biting at her bleeding nipples and by the image of the children heaped together like a monstrous, many-legged animal.¹⁸ She sinks into the muddy soil and becomes almost integrated with the rubbish of the tip as "un niño con su perro salta encima de ella como si no fuera más que otra basura" (p.182). This reduction of a human being to mere matter reminds us of the ending of El obsceno pájaro; it reflects Chepa's complete disintegration and shows Donoso's almost nihilistic vision of the emptiness and futility of life.

Chepa's fate draws our attention to interesting parallels between Este domingo and Donoso's other novels, especially Coronación and El obsceno pájaro. Both of these novels use madness (and, in the case of El obsceno pájaro, a labyrinthine structure and an hallucinatory style) as an image of a chaotic universe. The labyrinth in which Chepa finds herself at the end of Part II is not just a representation of her own mental collapse but also an *image* of a chaotic universe with no God to guarantee an order: any order we choose to glimpse in life is wishful thinking, for the reality is one of disorder - as with Borges, reality is seen as a comfortable construct we build out of the mere flux of existence. It is significant that Chepa only breaks up completely later on in the evening when she hears that Maya has murdered Violeta and gone back to prison (p.189). All hope of finding Maya has now gone and she therefore sinks into a state of shock and premature senility. This reflects the ideas of Andrés in Coronación: when man realizes there is no room for hope he withdraws from life and gives himself over to insanity because it is the nearest state to the chaos in which we really live. The story of Chepa is a symbolic dramatization of that existential plight.

Maya's story also reflects Donoso's anguished vision of the human condition. As with René in Coronación, Maya's

desire to transcend the limits of his environment represents man's quest for fulfillment and meaning in life. Once again we have to look beyond the surface of the narrative and perceive the novel's underlying symbolic pattern in order to appreciate fully its thematic implications. An interesting symbol in this respect is Maya's desire to get out of prison and his fascination with life beyond the prison walls. He eagerly asks Chepa to describe busy streets, trees, houses, the latest consumer goods and so on. His thirst for knowledge about the outside world is insatiable :

Las tiendas. Cómo son, quiero saber, que le cuente todo. Que le cuente más, para saciar su sed de esas luces imaginadas, de esas vitrinas brillantes de muebles dorados, con espejos, llenos de cristales, de trajes, de zapatos, de relojes, de refrigeradores - imaginarse, uno puede abrir la puerta y tomar agua helada cuando se le antoje, yo nunca he tomado agua helada en toda mi vida y lo primero que voy a hacer es comprarme un refrigerador... Y las calles con árboles. Maya ha visto muy pocos, unos cuantos achaparrados por el viento de Tocopilla. No conoce los de acá, los del sur, con sus ramas que se unen por encima de las calzadas y por debajo, en la sombra, circulan los autos y los camiones: camiones, miren no más, cómo va a ser, tan grandes, usted se está riendo de mí. Era, a veces, como hablarle a un ciego (p.124).

He wants to be part of this strange new world outside the gaol, hence his fascination with consumer goods. Chepa says that houses and clothes are "las dos preocupaciones de Maya" (p.136). When he gets out of prison he buys flashy clothes, brand new furniture, good wine: he even wants to buy a car. Furthermore, he wants to transcend barriers of social class. This is reflected in his obsessive desire to be on equal terms with Álvaro: he wants to sit at his table with him and insists on having his suits made by Luigi Botti, Álvaro's tailor.

But, of course, Maya's symbolic quest ends in failure, for in Donoso modern man's hopes to impose a meaningful pattern on life tend to end in despair. Maya cannot keep the consumer goods he wanted because he loses all his money. He realizes he will never be Álvaro's equal: Chepa knows that "la ilusión de Maya no se cum-

plirá jamás" (p.155) and even he is forced to admit that:

ahora, ya nunca me va a poder sentar en su mesa, misia Chepa, nunca. Antes sí. Podía ser... , un tiempo creí con mi fábrica. Después con el Tani. Pero no... (p.153).

He has clearly lost all hope, a point underlined by the fact that at the end of the novel he begs to be returned to the prison from which he once longed to be free.

Added point is given to the prison image by two other important symbols. The first is the recurring illness from which he suffers, "la mano negra". He is in the grip of this disease when Chepa visits him at the infirmary :

Está en la enfermería con la mano negra y ella se queda las tres horas de la visita escudriñando ese rostro en el que no hay más que desesperanza... Y él no sabe lo que es la mano negra y le da miedo que le pase otra vez, ni sabe por qué le viene (p.123).

It represents^a dark and arbitrary adverse destiny: it carries the implication that there is no harmonious order behind our existence and its validity will eventually be totally undermined by the black reality of its absurdity. This idea is given extra force by a second symbol: that of Maya's home town as a kind of lost paradise. He returns to his village as his last hope; its effacement represents the destruction of man's dreams, his sense of order in life, and his very reason for being:

Pero me dijeron que ese pueblo ya no existía, señora Chepa. Fíjese. Ya no existe. Puro polvo. Sí... El pueblo no era más que una pila de escombros, secos, secos como todo lo del norte, casi blanco, y no se reconocía nada, ni siquiera la sombra de un pájaro de rapiña circulando. Se había terminado todo. De puro pobre. La mina estaba en otra parte. Y ni siquiera pude reconocer los escombros del almacén de chino que maté, ni la casa donde vivía. Y me fui. Después anduve por otros lados y era como si una parte de mi cerebro se hubiera acabado, también, como ese pueblo donde no pude encontrar ni un rastro de nada que yo entendiera... ¡Cómo quiere que vuelva a comenzar entonces, no puedo, porque no sé desde donde! (p.161).

Yet another layer of symbolism further expands the meaning of Maya's relationship with Chepa. There are

several indications that at one level it can be taken to represent that between man and God (or, more accurately, between man and the God-figure he invents for himself). It soon becomes clear that Chepa wants to rule Maya's life; she will not, for example, let him spend his money the way he wants:

Ella estaría con él para impedirselo. Le cuidaría su platita. No lo dejaría comprar cosas en tiendas del centro... (p.140).

Maya realizes that Chepa is trying to force him to behave the way she wants him to :

-¿Usted cree que soy empleado suyo? ¿Quiere que me pase la vida yendo a su casa para comer con sus sirvientas? ¿Usted cree que porque me ayudó a salir de la cárcel es mi dueña? ¿Usted cree que cuando me viene a aguaritar desde la galería yo no me doy cuenta? (p.150).

He insists that "yo no soy como usted quiere" (p.150). He feels that Chepa amuses herself with him "como si fuera un muñeco" (p.123), but asserts that: "no soy un juego" (p.124). This has echoes of the mad God theme of Coronación or the motif of the weak, evil God of El lugar sin límites. Chepa is like a God who creates man out of a personal whim, expecting her creation to have faith in him and behave in a certain way despite not having given him the ability to live up to those demands or the ability to comprehend the universe in which he finds himself. By producing a being too weak to fulfil the obligations placed on its shoulders, God can be seen as playing some kind of bizarre, pointless game with his creatures.

The parallel for creation in Este Domingo is Chepa's arrangement for Maya's liberation from prison. Thus she symbolically gives him life. At first she also gives him some protection. Just as men depend upon the security of religion and the church, so Maya too feels secure with Chepa: "dentro de la redoma del auto... se sentía fuera de peligro junto a la Chepa" (p.144). However, it soon becomes clear that this new life she has forced on to Maya does not live up to his expectations. As we have seen, all his hopes are crushed. He wants to sit with Álvaro,

but Chepa only receives him "en el repostero, con las sirvientas" (p.161) and we are told that "la ilusión de Maya no se cumplirá jamás" (p.155). Maya makes his position clear:

Para qué me fue a sacar de la Peni. Para qué. Voy a embarrarla, va a ver. Tanta cosa linda que he visto por ahí y que no puedo..., y usted recibíéndome en el repostero de su casa, nunca en el salón, y nunca me ha presentado a don Álvaro (p.151).

This reminds us of an image from César Vallejo's poem "Un pilar soportando consuelos..." in which the poet sees life as a "vidriera", a shop-window: just as the goods in the shop-window are out of our reach but tantalizingly visible, so man is taunted by religion which dangles before his mind a promise of fulfilment which in reality he will never achieve.

Maya loses faith in Chepa as a guiding, Providential figure: he is therefore forced to give up his idealized vision of life and return to an existence of misery. For this reason he insists:

Voy a ser un obrero, un pobre diablo al que cualquiera puede gritarle y mandarlo... Ahora voy a tener que irme de aquí. No quiero que usted me siga vigilando (p.153).

He is irritated by the fact that he has to answer to Chepa, to confess his sins and be pardoned as if she were a God:

Me da una rabia tener que esconderle las cosas para que no se enoje, una rabia. Y a mí me gusta que le dé rabia a usted para ver si me quiere de veras y es capaz de perdonarme... ¿Qué mierda tiene que perdonarme usted? (p.153).

He longs to be free of the restrictions Chepa puts on him. When she asks him where he is going to live, he replies angrily:

¿Qué mierda le importa a usted? ¿Por qué no me deja tranquilo? Voy a irme a vivir donde me dé la real gana. Y usted no va a saber. No le pienso decir. No va a saber nunca nada más de mí. Nada más que lo que yo quiera decirle. Y me va a ver nada más que cuando yo quiera verla a usted. ¿Entiende? ¿Entiende? (p.154).

In fact, the more he feels he has to answer to this God,

the more he wants to rebel against it. As Violeta tells Chepa, in Maya's words:

todas son iguales a usted, a la tal Chepa, eso dijo, maldita sea, eso también lo dijo, perdona-vidas, cada vez me perdona algo quiero hacer más y más cosas malas, eso dijo... (p.158).

He suggests to Chepa that she should not have let him out of prison if she had no confidence in him:

Tanto perdón y tanta ayuda, pero no tiene confianza en mí... Nunca ha dejado de creer que soy un criminal. ¿Para qué me sacó de la Penitenciaría si no estaba segura? (p.162).

The significance of it all is indicated by Marujita Bueras's words to Chepa in the shanty town: Maya is now in the grip of "la mano negra que va a durar para siempre" and he blames Chepa "por haberlo sacado de la cárcel. Estaba tan bien allá adentro" (p.172). Remembering that Maya's release from gaol may be taken as a symbolic birth, these words suggest that he would have preferred never to have been granted life. The point is underlined by his desire to return to prison. He turns to drink because "el hospital de los borrachos le gusta porque es parecido a la Peni" (p.172). After he kills Violeta:

No huyó. Esperó a la Mirella. Cuando llegó le mostró lo que había hecho y le rogó que llamara a la policía para que lo volvieran a meter a la Penitenciaría (p.189).

Maya represents the human condition as Donoso sees it: once we lose confidence in God only despair remains; we are forced to accept the meaningless absurdity of existence.

The same point of view is expressed in El lugar sin límites. The symbolic pattern of this novel is based upon mythical models drawn from Dr. Faustus and the Bible, and upon the notion of inversion. Many critics have drawn attention to these points. Sarduy points out that "the central inversion, Manuel's, provokes a chain reaction of inversions, and these make up the novel's basic structure"; but his suggestion, like that of Gutiérrez Mouat, that Manuela's transvestism is a metaphor for writing, a mask that has no hidden significance, constitutes, in my view, a misinterpretation. Moreno Turner pro-

vides a much more systematic account of the motif of inversion, demonstrating its presence in all of the main characters. Manuela is biologically a man but behaves like a woman; when he makes love as a man with Japonesa Grande he does so in a passive manner; he feels attracted to Pancho Vega yet fears him; he is old and weak but likes to behave as if he were young; he longs to leave Estación el Olivo but at the same time he feels tied to it. Japonesita, who is "pura ambigüedad", wants to be a mother but has not even begun to menstruate; she would like to be a prostitute but feels unable to; she feels both affection and hatred towards Manuela; she desperately wants Pancho but fears him too; she also wants to leave the village but always decides to stay; she wastes her life saving money that she refuses to spend. Pancho himself is both "macho" and latent homosexual. Don Alejo, meanwhile, is seen as both good and evil, powerful and weak.

The connection between the novel and Marlowe's Dr. Faustus is evident from the epigraph. Manuela's situation can be seen to parallel that of Faustus. Faustus makes a pact with the Devil in return for earthly pleasures but goes through life torn between God and the Devil, turning to God too late as he dies. Similarly, Manuela makes a pact with Japonesa Grande in return for a share in the house; he is constantly torn between the attractions of Pancho (the Devil) and the protection of don Alejo (God), but only when his relationship with Pancho goes wrong does he seek assistance from don Alejo. It is too late and Manuela dies without don Alejo's interceding on his behalf.

There is a further parallel with the biblical myth of the Fall. Don Alejo, the all powerful landowner, is a God figure, while the rebellious Pancho is akin to the fallen angel, Lucifer. However, the good-versus-evil distinction is blurred by the ambiguous presentation of both characters. Don Alejo is, in fact, an evil God who exploits and destroys the townsfolk.

Moreno Turner is content merely to point out the presence of myth and inversion in El lugar sin límites. Nigro thinks that the inversion of the characters and the collapse of the order represented by don Alejo is indicative of Donoso's lack of faith in the unity of the personality: "all order falls to pieces because it is a reflection of a false myth, of the mistaken concept that man possesses an internal symmetry"²². These words are echoed by Quinteros who, writing of inversion, states that "lo importante en la realización literaria de este problema en El lugar sin límites es cómo él se relaciona con uno de los temas recurrentes en la obra narrativa de Donoso, el de la no-unidad de la personalidad humana"²³.

Other critics have emphasised the social implications of myth and inversion. Moreno Turner himself thinks that the God figure, don Alejo "es la concreción de un poder esclavizador, que entrega una seguridad relativa, lo que no impide que, indudablemente, sea la encarnación de un sistema social represivo"²⁴. Vidal takes the argument further: he sees the novel as an ironic comment on "criollismo" and an attack on the system of latifundia, its main themes being the conflict of the "individuo versus norma social transpersonal" and the "voluntad racional versus irracionalismo"²⁵. The presentation of don Alejo as a God and the other characters' subservience to him is explained by Vidal in Jungian terms: the archetypal collective unconscious of the servile Chilean peasantry leads them to respect passively the patriarchal landowner as if he were a deity, when in reality they should be rejecting this "pasado divinizado"²⁶. Achugar's interpretation is also closely related to the question of social organization. For him, the relationship of the characters to the godly don Alejo reflects the decline of a feudal system into a society with an emergent urban middle class: don Céspedes, who is totally dependent on don Alejo, represents the old order while Octavio, who scorns the landowner's power, represents the new order. Pancho's uncertain rebellion demonstrates "el

proceso de desestructuración de un antiguo orden y de una antigua conciencia".²⁷ For Achugar the presence of inversion and mythical references merely reinforces the idea that the characters accept the social order, accept their position of dependence, and accept a false (inverted) vision of reality just as people accept the falsity of religious myths. Relating don Alejo's deeds to "el sistema político de 'patronazgo'", he writes:

los movimientos enajenadores de Alejo Cruz pueden ser vividos por los restantes miembros del sistema social como actos míticos de creación y destrucción. Sucede, en realidad, que la acción enajenante del sistema, genera a su vez un condicionamiento ideológico. Ese condicionamiento es, en definitiva, el que presenta como realidad natural el mítico poder de Alejo Cruz. Ello lleva a que la conciencia psicológica de las figuras, vivan ese estilo mítico de relación social como algo real impidiéndose su acceso a una conciencia no psicológica sino social adecuada de la realidad.²⁸

In his view, the religious elements of the novel merely help to demonstrate "el proceso...constitutivo de la conciencia falsa con que buena parte de los hombres conciben la realidad social".²⁹

The critical reactions mentioned above illustrate with particular clarity one of the prevailing features of literary criticism as practiced by Latin American critics: that is, an excessive insistence on the specificity of the context, the Latin American referent itself. This emphasis on the concrete (usually social) background can distract attention from the universality of the texts under discussion. El lugar sin límites is a case in point. The interpretation which is here proposed differs from the views discussed above precisely in that it rests in a radical shift of emphasis. The novel will be discussed primarily as a comment on the Human Condition rather than as a comment on Chilean society, the importance of the pattern of inversions being seen not in a social context but as an indication of the inversion and collapse of traditional beliefs.

Let us begin with the symbolic rôle of don Alejo.

Nigro suggests that "Don Alejandro represents a powerful but human force"³⁰. But don Alejo's God-like status does not make him merely the archetypal guarantor of a social order. The symbolic value of the relationships in El lugar sin límites can be seen as representing man's relationship with a non-existent God. Critics of Donoso have on the whole neglected this idea: Victorio G. Aguera has stated his belief that the fate of the inhabitants of El Olivo corresponds to "la pérdida de Dios"³¹. Shaw has suggested that "homosexuality...symbolizes (negatively) the inversion of all values"³² and has elsewhere indicated his belief that don Alejo is "hasta cierto punto, una parodia de la idea de un Dios benévolo"³³. The only other critic to state such a view firmly is McMurray: he thinks that El lugar sin límites shows Donoso "perilously close to nihilism"³⁴ but also finds traces of French existentialist thought in the novel.

The motif of inversion suggests the idea of an upside down world, a hell on earth. As can be seen in Donoso's other novels, man's lack of faith in a God to guarantee an order leaves him disorientated and alone in a chaotic, nightmarish world of darkness. This reminds us of the atmosphere of Asturias's El señor presidente where the President who presides over an infernal kingdom like a mad, evil deity is faced with a rebellion from another Lucifer figure, Cara de Ángel. However, Asturias's novel has clear political implications: whereas in El lugar sin límites the idea of a weak or evil God implicitly constitutes an arraignment of faith in divine benevolence.

There are numerous references that suggest that don Alejo is seen as a God in the eyes of the townspeople.³⁵ The symmetry of his vineyards (his kingdom) forms a striking contrast with the chaos of the village: like heaven and earth they are kept well apart. He has great power because "había creado este pueblo" (p. 59). In fact, "aquí en el pueblo es como Dios" (p. 74). His saintly appearance, his china-blue eyes and his snow-white hair

all reinforce the impression of godliness in this man who is "el alma del pueblo"(p.77). The townsfolk treat him like God too: they hold "una fiesta en honor del señor"(p.64) and during the election campaign they meet "para avivar su fe en don Alejo y concertar citas y excursiones por los campos y pueblos cercanos para propagar esa fe"(p.66).

However, the references go far beyond indications of the villagers' reactions to don Alejo and include hints of his omnipotence and omnipresence. He tells Pancho that "él lo sabe todo"(p.97). When he sees Pancho outside Church he tells him he knows he has been in these parts because he has been seen at Octavio's petrol station (p.36). He knows how much money Japonesita has in her bank (p.56) and is even aware of the terms of Japonesa Grande's will (p.57). He always turns up out of the blue. He arrives to save Manuela and Japonesita from Pancho "como por milagro, como si lo hubiera invocado"(p.11). He catches Pancho spying as a child (p.97) and also discovers him outside the church (p.33). We are told that "durante la vendimia el olor a vino invadía al pueblo entero"(p.120): since don Alejo owns the vineyards this can be seen as another indication of his omnipresence.

But, this is a mad or evil God. There are many examples of his greed, his lasciviousness and the way he exploits the townspeople for his own ends. Furthermore, he is a "heretic"(p.27). We are told that he intends to destroy the town he once created - "todo para algún propósito incomprendible"(p.60): in other words there seems to be no logic in this God's activities. It is significant that he is "tan aficionado a las bromas"(p.53) and that Manuela and Japonesa Grande are said to make love "porque él nos manda para que lo divirtiéramos"(p.108). This raises questions already suggested in Coronación and Este domingo. We see a mad God playing some sort of cosmic game with man for his own amusement.

Moreover, he is a God who fails to keep his promises. He raises the expectations of his people only to frus-

trate them. He promises Japonesa Grande that El Olivo will be a boom town, but its true destiny is one of decline and ruin. When the men at his party remind him of his promises he yawns in their faces (pp. 77-8). His assurance of the arrival of electricity to the town equally proves to be an illusion. Japonesa Grande sums up his personality: "usted no cumple sus promesas. Que da mucha esperanza y después, nada..." (p. 83). An ironic (or sarcastic) image of the relationship between man and God comes when don Alejo is walking with Japonesita before a supposed appointment with the "Intendente" to discuss the installation of electricity: "él le compró un paquete de maní caliente, de regalo, dijo, pero mientras conversaban se lo comió casi todo él" (p. 41).

The reason don Alejo does not keep his promises is that in reality he is weak and powerless, a God without the appropriate attributes. He is a frail, old man under regular medical supervision. He himself admits that "estoy viejo y me voy a morir" (p. 39). Eventually he dies: God is dead; hope turns into despair. This point is underlined by the unleashing of his dogs. The black dogs are an obvious symbol of evil, as their Moorish, anti-Christian, names imply.³⁶ Also, the fact that they are bred in such a way that there are always only four ferocious beasts whose names never change suggests the eternal, never-ending cycle of damnation man is forced to suffer on earth.

Lack of response to faith in God is indicated by several instances near the end of the novel. Manuela's flight to the vineyards in search of don Alejo's protection ends with his bloody and brutal murder: the God he calls upon is unable to help him in his hour of need.³⁷ Meanwhile the dogs are left to howl at the moon in the final chapter:

después de la lluvia el cielo se había despejado sobre la luna redonda y los perros le aullaban interminablemente, como si le hablaran o le pidieran algo o le cantaran, y como la luna no los oía porque quedaba demasiado lejos los perros de don Alejo seguían aullándole (p. 134).

The moon suggests the idea of madness and evil: the dogs represent the evil and chaos into which the earth is plunged now its faith in God is gone. It is significant too that the moon is too far away to hear them. The dogs are howling for their master but the moon does not answer them: it symbolizes the unattainable and the absence of God. The fragility of religious hope is highlighted even further by something Japonesita says back at the brothel. Don Céspedes examines his glass of wine:

Estaba casi vacía. Apenas un par de dedos colorados, en el fondo, donde se multiplicaba la llama del chonchón.

- Parece de esas cuestiones que hay en las iglesias.

- ¿Qué cuestiones, hija?

- Esas cosas coloradas con luz adentro.

Mejor volver al fundo. Don Céspedes se tomó esa gota (p.135).

The flame represents religious faith and a glimmer of hope, but Don Céspedes's swallowing down of the last drop of red wine suggests that it has finally been extinguished.

Pancho Vega has been seen as a Lucifer figure who rebels against God. However, his mythical connections do not merely highlight his importance as a representative of the ex-peasant mentality or of a specific moment in social history. Pancho's relationship with don Alejo is, at one level, that of a man struggling to free himself from a position of social and financial dependence; but on a wider level he represents a view of the existential dilemma of modern man: the integrity of his outlook has always been undermined by a religious conscience, but once he abandons religion, despair supervenes.

His condition is hinted at by the now familiar theme of a lost paradise. His idealistic vision of life as a child on don Alejo's estate reflects man's nostalgic yearning to return to a state of innocence and happiness. However, his infecting of Moniquita with typhus and her subsequent death represent expulsion from this mythical paradise. The guilt he subsequently feels suggests the idea of the curse of original sin, punishment incurred

for a crime we did not commit, rendering us incapable of realizing our highest aspirations. Indeed Pancho is condemned to a life of despair, for all his illusions fail. He wants a pink house for himself and his family, but his hopes gradually fade away: "Ya no quedan casas rosadas..." (p.37).

Pancho lives in terror of don Alejo. He is always afraid that the landowner will set his dogs on to him; in the same way man fears punishment from God if he does not obey his laws. Don Alejo calls him a "malagradecido" (p.34): God grants man life without him having asked for it but then demands his respect without doing anything to command that respect. It is interesting that don Alejo gives Pancho a loan without asking him to sign for it: Pancho is therefore granted the appearance of freedom. But this freedom is relative: God makes man an apparent free agent, but expects him to conform to his arbitrary rules. When Pancho insists that "yo no firmé ningún documento" (p.35), don Alejo's furious reaction is to set his dogs growling. As the words of Andrés in Coronación suggest, if there is a God he must be playing some kind of insane game with man; it is significant in this respect that don Alejo tells Pancho that "si te di libertad fue para ver cómo reaccionabas" (p.36).

Any belief in a benevolent God is therefore by implication misplaced: Pancho attempts to rebel against the authority of don Alejo as Lucifer rebelled against God: "No tenía que darle cuentas a nadie, menos a este futre que creía que porque había nacido en su fundo..." (p.37). He refuses to "reconocer el vínculo, amarrarse otra vez" (p.36), but insists that "yo no le debo nada" (p.38), expressing his wish for "la libertad, él sólo, sin tener que rendirle cuentas a nadie" (p.38).

However, it is very difficult for man to reject the security religion represents. This is reflected in Pancho's inability to stand up to don Alejo, something which, in McMurray's view, illustrates the Sartrean concept of "man's desire to achieve omnipotence both as a

free subject and a permanent object"³⁸ - that is, the desire for both the free choice of consciousness and the surety of belief in God. Octavio, though, shows the landowner to be the corrupt exploiter of others which he is. He demonstrates his disregard for don Alejo's authority and insists:

el futre cree que todo es suyo, y no, señor.
A usted no le manda, ni a mí tampoco y si queremos vamos donde se nos antoja (p.90).

Octavio is something more than "el campesino emigrado que ha accedido a otro medio social y que ha roto con la situación pasada", the "pequeño comerciante... en una sociedad capitalista", the social "subvertidor del orden"³⁹ that Achugar sees (indeed, even in social terms, Octavio can be seen in a negative light: he represents the code of "machismo" that forces Pancho to repress his natural instincts and leads to the novel's bloody climax). He also represents symbolically the freedom of a man who has rejected religious constraints and refuses to be dominated by them.

However, for Pancho, denial of divine authority leads only to another crisis of despair. The loss of don Alejo is not just, as Vidal suggests, the loss of the "respaldo de un sistema de referencias sociales"⁴⁰, it is the loss of all hope in the meaning of life:

Me gustaría tener donde volver no para volver sino para tenerlo, nada más, y ahora no voy a tener. Porque don Alejo se va a morir. La certidumbre de la muerte de don Alejo vació la noche y Pancho tuvo que aferrarse de su manubrio para no caer en ese abismo (p.101).

At the brothel he is tormented by thoughts of don Alejo's impending death. A glimmer of hope is offered in the form of a momentary liberation through sex. Pancho therefore turns to Manuela, for whom he feels a certain suppressed attraction, in order to block out his terror:

Que venga. Me quiero reír. No puede ser todo así tan triste, este pueblo que don Alejo va a echar abajo y que va a arar, rodeado de las viñas que van a tragárselo, y esta noche voy a tener que ir a dormir a mi casa con mi mujer y no quiero, quiero divertirme, esa loca de la Manuela que venga a salvarnos, tiene que ser posible algo

que no sea esto, que venga (p.123).

But Pancho's hopes are dashed when Octavio forces him to turn against Manuela. He will not find fulfilment in life despite his abandonment of religion, and in this respect he represents the anguish of modern man in a post-Christian world.

The other two major characters of El lugar sin límites also take their place within the novel's symbolic pattern. In Coronación we see how Donoso seemed to view Andrés's attitude as more honest than the evasive pseudo-existentialism of Carlos Gros. There is a similar conflict of attitude here between Japonesita and Manuela: the former accepting the absurdity of life, the latter struggling against it. The grotesque sexual inversion of Manuela coupled with his aged and decaying appearance acts as an image of the hellish world of the title: a world without order or meaning. Nevertheless, many critics have seen positive, hopeful elements in this character. There is some evidence to support this claim. He is at least true to his inner feelings, facing up to the jibes and beatings his homosexuality brings upon him and asserting his femininity despite the reality of his masculine identity. His attitude to life is largely optimistic, as is reflected in his comment: "vieja estaría pero se iba a morir cantando y con las plumas puestas" (p.14). He is identified with light, while Japonesita is associated with darkness. He is often heard singing and encourages his daughter to adopt a positive outlook about her appearance and relationships with men. The numerous references to his dancing and his Spanish dress reinforce this impression of him, for they are both symbols of his artistry and his aspirations to femininity and beauty, despite his age and sex.

Vidal suggests that:

A pesar de todo...su potencialidad artística ha mostrado el camino de la libertad. La Manuela es el frustrado héroe cultural que en su experiencia íntima propone nuevas formas de vida, nuevos valores para entregar a sus semejantes.⁴¹

McMurray, writing from the standpoint of the French exis-

tentialists, thinks that Manuela's contradictions "evoke the absurd man's quest for order and unity in the unreasonable world",⁴² and praises "her heroic efforts to give meaning to her existence by creating her own set of values".⁴³ He also states that Manuela embodies "the eternal value of art",⁴⁴ but goes beyond the text in my view when he suggests that the moon represents Elysium through which Manuela will pass on his way to the illuminated kingdom of the gods, where he will be "preserved for eternity in the realm of poetic myth".⁴⁵

While Manuela's values may be seen as positive in human terms, their validity is questioned by the author's general view of man's existential plight. In one interview Donoso agreed with McMurray that "there appears to be almost nothing of the positive elements of existentialism in your work such as man's freedom and commitment to ideals".⁴⁶ Manuela's desire to be a woman, "sin ambigüedades" (p. 24) is necessarily doomed to failure because, quite simply, he is a man. His illusions are unfounded: he is merely "una mentira grotesca" (p. 53). He wants to be "la reina de la fiesta" (p. 72), but when he steps into the brothel to dance in the hope of seducing Pancho disaster ensues. As we have seen, he is shown to be foolish for putting his faith in don Alejo (God): he rushes to his estate for help which is not forthcoming. As with so many of Donoso's characters his personal quest is symbolic of man's frustrated search for a harmonious interpretation of life.

The point is underlined by the fact that the novel ends not with Manuela but the more pessimistic Japonesita. Vidal criticizes Japonesita for behaving like "un objeto inanimado",⁴⁷ while McMurray, again writing in Sartrean terms, accuses her of "bad faith".⁴⁸ However, despite the fact that she cannot liberate her instincts like Manuela, her attitude seems to reflect more accurately Donoso's vision of the human condition.

Japonesita, like Pancho, feels a nostalgia for a lost paradise: that is, the warmth represented by her dead

mother, a woman whose dreams were also shattered. But Japonésita knows that "ella ya no volvería a sentir nunca más ese calor" (p.121). She does, nevertheless, hope to regain that feeling of warmth to some extent when electricity comes to the town as promised by don Alejo. However, the God-figure once more is used to crush out hope:

el Wurlitzer se hizo añicos detrás de los ojos fruncidos de la Japonésita. Ella y el pueblo entero quedaron en tinieblas. Qué importaba que todo se viniera abajo, daba lo mismo con tal que ella no tuviera necesidad de moverse ni de cambiar. No. Aquí se quedaría rodeada de esta oscuridad donde nada podía suceder que no fuera una muerte imperceptible, rodeada de las cosas de siempre. No. La electricidad y el Wurlitzer no fueron más que espejismos que durante un instante, por suerte muy corto, la indujeron a creer que era posible otra cosa. Ahora no. No quedaba ni una esperanza que pudiera dolerle, eliminando también el miedo. Todo iba a continuar así como ahora, como antes, como siempre (p.59).

A fresh glimmer of hope surfaces in the form of the possibility of sexual fulfilment with Pancho, something she thinks might help her "vencer el frío del invierno" (p.51). But she fails to awaken his desire and once again her dreams are frustrated. She therefore sinks into a state of total despair. This is reflected in her attitude to don Céspedes:

cerrado como alguien al que ya nada puede sucederle, la Japonésita lo vio envidiable en su inmundicia (p.116).

She now has only one wish: "ser como don Céspedes que no fantaseaba con nada" (p.136). She realizes that "lo terrible es la esperanza" (p.137). She decides to go on enduring. She does not feel terror like Pancho; her story is a sombre representation of man's acceptance of the absurdity and sterility of life.

The characters of El obscuro pájaro de la noche, however, do not simply persevere with life as does Japonésita: their fate is more agonising. The mood of this novel is more akin to that of the monstrous scene where Manuela is beaten to death: a mood of sheer terror. El obscuro pájaro represents Donoso's most pessimistic expression

of his vision of life. In it, all of the protagonists struggle to create an artificial construct to give meaning and order to their life: but in almost every case the construct is shown to be lacking in real value and the characters succumb to chaos and despair. The stories of all the central character groupings - Humberto Peña-loza, don Jerónimo de Azcoitia, Inés, Boy, the freaks and the "viejas" - dramatize the conflict between order and chaos, what Solotarevsky calls "el mundo luminoso y el mundo oscuro": any perceived harmony is shown to be false and the ascendancy of negative forces is seen to be beyond question.

The importance of the theme of existential angst is made evident by references running throughout the novel. God is seen as "un Dios mezquino".⁵⁰ The irrational basis of his will undermines the validity of maintaining faith in him, as is demonstrated to the reader by the fate of Brígida's children: "Claro que todas sus guaguitas le nacieron muertas, así es la vida, Dios lo quiso así" (p. 134). Madre Benita underlines the point when she tells Padre Azócar, God's representative on earth, that "me pide calma y no me da con qué calmarme" (p. 321). The idea is given extra force by the presentation of don Jerónimo as a kind of weak or insane God-figure, harking back to the themes of Donoso's earlier work. His creation of la Rinconada parallels God's supposed creation of the universe. But his creatures (the inhabitants of the estate) are aware of the absurdity of their situation:

Ellos no estaban dispuestos a ser sus instrumentos ni a formar parte de un mundo que a él se le antojaba desbaratar porque sí, ... porque ya se había aburrido con sus demás juegos, como un dios un poco inferior que nunca sobrepasó una frívola y antojadiza niñez en que sus juguetes viejos tienen siempre que ser reemplazados por nuevos juguetes que su aburrimiento envejecerá y destruirá... como una deidad arteriosclerótica que cometió la estupidez, al crear el mundo, de no ponerse al resguardo de los peligros que podían gestarse en su propia creación... (pp. 492-3).

Ironically, the mission of Boy (a parody of the son of

God saviour figure) is to liberate the freaks from the tyranny of this God:

Serían sus peones si él (Boy) les prometía defenderlos contra ese padre infernal que iba a destruirlos si el hijo no los defendía de ese señor que se creía dueño del mundo porque sólo lo inventó (p.493).

Having lost his faith in God, man now realizes that the apparent order of the universe is merely a human construct and that the reality is one of total chaos. In this sense the Casa, like the library in Borges's "La biblioteca de Babel", demonstrates that "lo que superficialmente podría parecer unidad no^{es} más que un total descuido" (p.350).

The behaviour of the characters (or character groupings) mentioned earlier constitutes a symbolic attempt to invent their own alternative order so that they might come to terms with this chaos. Thus, although we can establish relationships between the characters with regard to plot, the real significance of those relationships can only be fully appreciated when we consider them in terms of a wider interpenetration of symbolically insinuated meanings. On an allegorical level each character's actions may be seen as representing the invention of a construct or what Scott, in an article which closely follows the theories of Ernest Becker, calls "heroic illusions or immortality myths"⁵¹. Alienation, then, is not simply seen, as Erich Fromm would define it, as the result of an inability to relate to the values, symbols or patterns of a particular culture (although this element is present in Donoso's work); it is also conceived in wider, existential terms. However, significantly in El obscuro pájaro, the constructs established by the characters are either shattered or revealed to the reader as lacking in substance.

Don Jerónimo's ordered vision of the world is contradicted by the birth of his monstrously deformed child: "era la confusión, el desorden, una forma distinta pero peor de la muerte" (p.161). Just as his friends cannot "reconocer que un hombre tan dotado de armonía como

Jerónimo, que representaba con tanta altura lo mejor de todos ellos, puede contener la semilla de lo monstruoso" (p.162), Jerónimo himself refuses to "ceder, incorporarse al caos, ser víctima de él" (p.161). He therefore establishes an artificial order for Boy at la Rinconada. However, this merely postpones the moment of his confrontation with chaos: his visit to the estate ends with his absorption into the world of the monsters. He contemplates the reflection of his "proporciones clásicas" (p.504) in a pool, but somebody throws a stone into the water, distorting the representation of his features and shattering his sense of harmony. Horrified by this transformation, Jerónimo drowns while attempting to tear away his own face: "sacaron del agua a un ser retorcido, horripilante, monstruoso" (p.506). This symbolic metamorphosis marks the transition from an ordered vision of the universe to an awareness of its truly chaotic and therefore terrifying nature. It is significant that la Rinconada also serves as a construct for Boy and the freaks who inhabit it. It represents a refuge from "ese vacío infinito y sin respuesta que Boy debía ignorar" (p.243).

The other characters have similar experiences. Inés's construct is the myth of the "niña-beata": her immersion into the beatification project reflects her withdrawal from the chaos of reality (represented by her inability to conceive a child - something which in itself has already undermined the validity of a previous human construct, namely that of love). The failure of the enterprise provokes her gradual absorption into the world of chaos: she undergoes a hysterectomy and retires to the Casa in order to "envejecer definitivamente" (p.428), to escape the fate of an "esclava de un orden" and achieve "una anarquía que todo lo permite" (p.399). She eventually reaches a state of complete integration with the chaos of the world when she sinks into madness, recalling the fate of Andrés of Coronación and Chepa of Este domingo.

Humberto Peñaloza's identity crisis is symbolic of man's hopeless quest for fulfilment in life. His desire to be somebody, to acquire a fixed identity, a "máscara

definitiva" - a desire inflamed by his father and the sight of the vastly superior don Jerónimo - is doomed to failure from the start: "yo jamás iba a ser alguien" (p.100). Madness is his only form of escape - a means of fighting, in Pujals's words, "el miedo a la extinción"⁵² - and he therefore assumes a bewildering series of fluctuating identities or "disfraces" in order to ward off the encroaching sense of terror which an admission of despair would provoke. A common construct adopted by Humberto is that of sexual potency and the achievement of satisfaction through the sexual act. Many novelists, such as Manuel Puig, see sex as a form of liberation or self-expression. However, with Donoso, sexual activity merely reflects the absurdity of the human condition. For Frances Wyers Weber it is no more than "una lucha destructiva y devoradora para controlar a los demás".⁵³ It is ritualistic, divorced from love and unable to bring immortality through procreation: this is evident from the emotionally and physically sterile relationship of Jerónimo and Inés. Furthermore, the quest for sexual pleasure parallels man's frustrated search for transcendence. Humberto-Mudito wants to "dejar de ser testigo de la belleza para participar en ella" (p.223) but realizes that "mi destino... es permanecer afuera del reconocimiento del amor" (p.224). His dream of making love with Inés will never be fulfilled: when he attempts to seduce her at the Casa she denies his identity by addressing him as Jerónimo before running away in terror; later he imagines he sees her again, but instead of caressing what he sees as his potent penis this chimerical figure rips it off, thus underlining the symbolic elimination of faith in life. The eventual destruction of Mudito by fire, his reduction to nothingness, dramatizes the destructive vision of life which holds sway at the end of the novel.

The only group who manages to maintain their faith in life are the "viejas". The construct they cling to is the idea of Iris Mateluna's miraculous child whom they believe will be their saviour: indeed when they are moved

to their new home they are convinced that they are on their way to a heavenly paradise. On one level, the old women's behaviour parallels the way people use religion as a defence against terror and despair. Donoso himself has commented that "la religión es lo que las salva a las viejas",⁵⁴ asserting in the same interview that for some people "la Iglesia tiene un valor. Hay gente para quien constituye una salvación".⁵⁵ However, it is made plain to the reader that the old women's escape is an illusion: we know the fallacy of the "niño-milagro" myth and we know they are not on their way to heaven. In fact the novel's entire atmosphere of decay and pessimism contradicts the hopeful mood of the "viejas": Donoso does not allow his readership to share in the luxury of the religious construct.

The negation of hope in El obsceno pájaro is the culmination of the first main phase in Donoso's writing. From Coronación onwards the sense of anguish becomes more and more acute: in Este domingo the possible note of optimism implied in the relationship of Mario and Estela is gone; in El lugar sin límites the grotesque symbolism sharpens the impression of the absurd; and in El obsceno pájaro the atmosphere of monstrosity and insanity leaves no doubt about the totality of Donoso's disenchantment with life. 1970 - the peak of Donoso's literary career - is also the peak of his existential malaise. Celeste Kostopulos has remarked that Donoso's characters are "figures who are tormented by a desire to search for a new order of existence which will allow them to exercise their freedom and consequently achieve, a more existentially fulfilling and authentic life".⁵⁶ But they all fail: Mudio's destruction by fire, his reduction to ashes blown away by the wind, marks the final point in this pattern of failure and defeat.

CHAPTER TWO

ESTE DOMINGO AND EL LUGAR SIN LÍMITES : TECHNICAL EVOLUTION

Este domingo and El lugar sin límites, written within a year of each other, exemplify the middle stage of Donoso's technical evolution between the writing of Coronación and El obscuro pájaro de la noche. Although El lugar sin límites was written first, Este domingo is often treated as if it were the author's second novel because of its close thematic connections with Coronación. The similarities are, indeed, striking: both novels are set in a decaying Santiago mansion; both show the upper-classes' abortive attempts to absorb the vitality of the lower classes; both have a central character reacting with terror at the approach of death. Nevertheless, Este domingo is more than just a revamped version of Coronación: it marks a new stage in Donoso's literary career. As Shaw has pointed out:

En cuanto a su contenido se adelanta poco a la novela anterior...La verdadera novedad de Este domingo reside en su estructuración!

a judgement supported by McMurray and Quinteros among others.

As we saw in relation to Coronación, Donoso's novels bring together several themes of a diverse nature. The interesting thing about Este domingo is that they are more subtly expressed and integrated. John Cruickshank, writing about Albert Camus, states that "metaphysical questioning is constantly implied in his novels, but it is conveyed in terms of human testimony and experience ...Description replaces analysis."² The same is true of Donoso. He does not introduce his ideas obtrusively into the text but makes use of what Raúl Bueno Chávez - borrowing from the terminology of the New Critics - calls a "nivel denotativo" and a "nivel conotativo". He notes that Donoso does not simply expound the theme of social decadence but rather suggests that theme indirectly by presenting us with a series of references to the physical decay of surroundings and individuals: the result

is that "nada deja de estar en función del deterioro"³ and that this sense of deterioration becomes "la ley general que rige el mundo novelado"⁴. Bueno Chávez touches on a key point here: the idea that symbolism allows the author to comment indirectly (though he is wrong, in my view, to stress the use of symbolism merely to emphasise "la ruina de una organización social"⁵). My earlier consideration of the metaphysical aspect of Este domingo was intended to bring out Donoso's functional use of symbolic patterning: the individual stories of Álvaro, Chepa, Violeta and Maya were seen to stand as wider images of the human condition. The technique allows for the conscious organization of a multiplicity of elements into a single and harmoniously expressed narrative unity. Bueno Chávez, concentrating on the theme of deterioration, comments that:

Este domingo, de José Donoso, tiene la doble virtud de la autenticidad: por un lado representa un mundo totalmente coherente y motivado y, por otro, constituye metáfora que con su anécdota y sistema de significaciones echa esclarecida luz sobre la realidad.⁶

He goes on to say that:

Todas las formas del deterioro..., pese a sus diferencias de nivel, zona o grado de la 'realidad' novelada en que figuran y pese a los diferentes modos de significación en que aparecen, se coordinan e integran inextricablemente. Mantienen en la novela relaciones diversas, a veces muy estrechas y otras veces de extrema sutileza, englobándose en un complejo de relaciones tales como la dependencia y la motivación mutua. Ninguna de esas facetas del deterioro deja de influirse, coligarse o depender.⁷

In other words all of the descriptive references to deterioration (be they to people, relationships, places, objects or institutions) are intimately related to each other because on a symbolic, connotative level they reinforce the theme of social deterioration. As we have seen, this can be taken even further; a narrative about the relationships within one Santiago family can suggest a whole variety of themes simultaneously: social decadence, man's subjection to reason and convention, metaphysical

anguish and so on. As an example, the decline in the quality of the relationship of Álvaro and Chepa can be seen as paralleling the decline of an ascendant social class, or showing the effects of suppressing our instincts for the sake of a relationship that satisfies the demands of appearances, or even demonstrating man's loss of faith in life and his basic existential malaise. The same can be said of the children's games: they reflect the social stratification of the adult world; they bring out the gap between the spontaneity of the young and the ruination of the old who are ruled by reason and social convention; and they suggest a world of innocence, a lost paradise that the existentially alienated adult can no longer find. Thus Donoso achieves a tight narrative unity by reducing the range of action and allowing a relatively straightforward story to generate, by means of suggestion and symbolism, a whole range of ideas and emotions. This allows him to present several themes at once without having to intervene into the narrative directly, as was the tendency at times in Coronación.

There is, then, a general pattern of symbolism underlying the main narrative of Este domingo. At the same time Donoso uses a variety of specific symbols and foreshadowing devices to reinforce themes and create compositional unity. These recurring images help bind the novel together tightly; but sometimes Donoso introduces a twist into the normal pattern for purposes of emphasis or dramatization. This is the case with the image presenting Chepa as a kind of animal who allows those less fortunate than herself to suck at her teats. However, when she enters the shanty town the gentle sucking is replaced by a more violent image: she feels as if the children are biting and tearing at her breasts. This dramatic shift within a recurring pattern highlights the collapse of Chepa's hope in the possibility of finding fulfilment through charity work.

A similar change in emphasis occurs with the image of the "empanadas". McMurray sees the pies as an ironic symbol of "the regenerative power of the Eucharist",⁸

though in my view it would be more accurate to see the pies, which are delivered every Sunday like a "costumbre y ritual obligado" (p.42), as a symbol of order and stability (a view whose validity McMurray also accepts). However, there are two important breaks in the ritual: when Álvaro forgets to give Violeta the money "para las empanadas de la otra semana" (p.52) and when Maya fails to deliver the pies one Sunday:

un domingo en la mañana Maya no llegó a la casa de los Vives con el canasto de empanadas. La familia entera, anonadada con la interrupción del ritual, se quedó esperando sin poder explicar qué había sucedido (p.148).

These two breaks in routine not only highlight the monotony of the Vives family's sterile life-style; they also introduce a note of foreboding which suggests that their sense of order and harmony will be put under threat. As Cruickshank comments, referring to "the senseless repetitiveness of social existence" in Camus's Le mythe de Sisyphe : "if something occurs which causes us suddenly to query this existence, to utter the simple word 'why', a link in the chain of daily gesture is broken, meaninglessness breaks in upon us, the absurd becomes a reality".¹

The mole growing on Álvaro's chest is another important recurring symbol. McMurray thinks it "symbolizes the destructive influence of Chepa"¹⁰, though in my view its impact as a symbol comes from its materialization of Álvaro's fear of death: it is an indication of the advance of cancer. It is also significant that he associates the mark with the mole on Maya's lip. We see this, for example, at the beginning of Part I when the chip in the teapot reminds him of Maya's mole as well as the mark on his chest; we see it again when he is with Chepa near the end of the part:

Ahora se lo va a decir: ahora que ve su cara en el espejo. Le dirá lo del lunar. Cáncer. Que se va a morir. Ahora sí... Pero no se lo dice, y después del "fíjate" que abrió su frase, continuó con :

- ... vi a Maya esta mañana (p.78).

By relating Maya's mole to the threatening symbol of

Alvaro's mole Donoso skilfully manages to imply that Maya poses a threat to the stability of the Vives household; once again the author brings out an idea by subtly inter-relating symbols rather than intervening directly. He also hints at the tragic outcome of the novel by presenting Maya's negative aspects in a foreboding manner: the constant symbolic references to his mole and "la mano negra" suggest that he is a victim of external forces that will drive him to violence, and, as we have seen, the numerous references to his brutal, criminal nature and his social and material pretensions all imply that he will come to a sticky end.

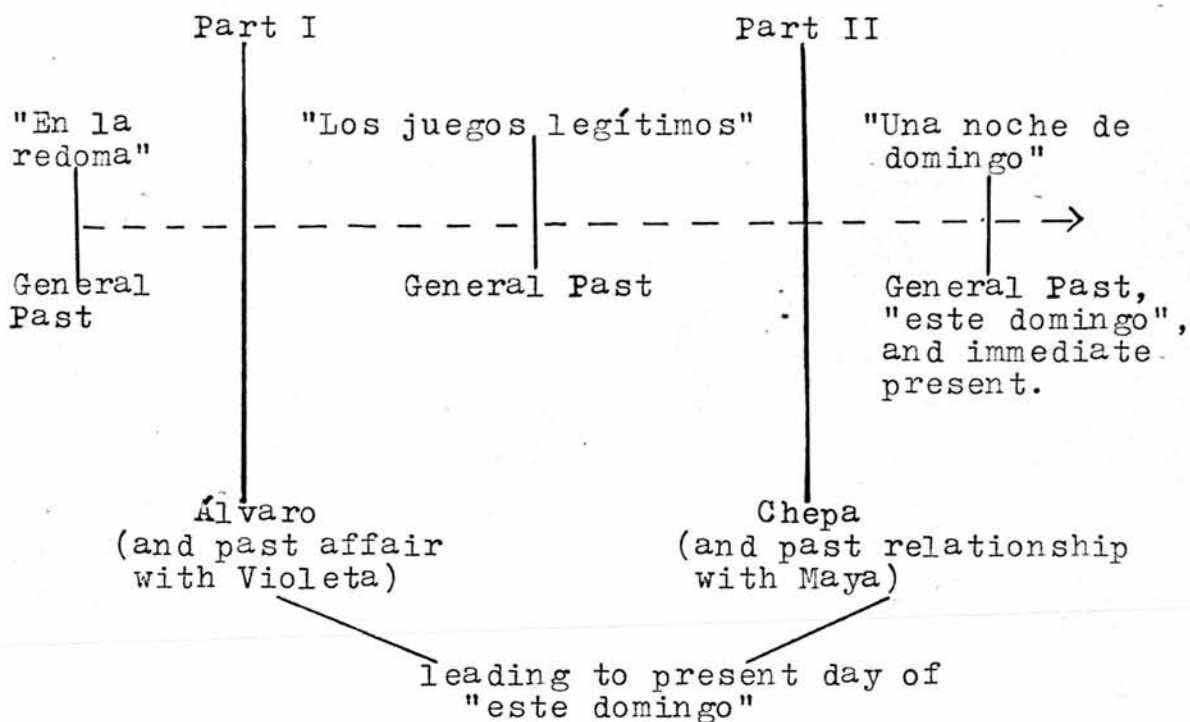
The novel's violent climax is also foreshadowed by the many references to "animitas" (candles lit for people who die suddenly due to accidents or murders). The narrator tells us that the children used to think that "mi abuela estaba destinada a ser animita milagrosa... y de alguna manera nos parecía propio que ella, más que nadie, muriera en un accidente o asesinada" (p.92). Significantly, the sight of "animitas" greets Chepa as she enters the labyrinthine shanty town (p.169) and her grand-son thinks it appropriate that the old house should go up in flames like "una animita gigantesca encendida en su memoria" (p.193). Chepa's tragic fate is also foreshadowed by the children's desire to be involved in a "tragedia realmente grande" like the one depicted in Puvis de Chavannes's painting, Funérailles (p.99). It is given even greater poignancy by the symbolic death of the children's fictitious creation Mariola Roncafort, which coincides with Chepa's immersion into a state of shock. For the children this marks the end of an era:

Fue tanta nuestra ansiedad por recuperarle que planeamos su resurrección para el domingo siguiente al de su funeral. Pero no hubo domingo siguiente. Los domingos en casa de mi abuela se suspendieron y la Mariola, como cualquier mujer de carne y hueso, quedó muerta para siempre (p.185).

The strict patterning of symbolism in Este domingo can also be perceived in the novel's overall structure,

in its presentation and arrangement of events and episodes. Donoso presents us with at least five distinct periods of time, involving the point of view of more than one character: first, the immediate present (that from which the narrator of the italicized sections is recalling the past); second, the present of the main action (that is, the Sunday of the title on which Maya returns and Chepa suffers a breakdown after her abortive attempt to find him); third, the childhood past of the grand-son (a sort of mythical, seemingly eternal time corresponding to the general era within which the events of the Sunday of the title take place); fourth, the past as recalled by Álvaro; and fifth, the events leading up to the Sunday of the title, as seen through the eyes of Chepa. However, unlike Coronación where Donoso attempted (with mixed results) to present a range of viewpoints within a linear framework, Este domingo contains an attempt to portray these different periods of time simultaneously. The result is a highly symmetrical construction in which the narrative is broken up into sections and sub-sections: chronology is fragmented and point of view varies, but the novel's various facets ultimately combine to form a harmonious whole.

The novel is organized around one axis: "este domingo", the Sunday of the title. Part I is devoted to Álvaro, developing via flashbacks the story of his youthful affair with Violeta and his frustrating marriage with Chepa, focusing upon his present state of anguish, and eventually taking us up to the main Sunday. Part II presents the development of Chepa's relationship with Maya bringing us, via a more or less linear process, similarly up to "this Sunday". These two parts are sandwiched between three italicized sections in which a middle-aged narrator (Álvaro and Chepa's grand-son) reflects upon the times he used to spend as a child at his grand-parents' house, once more bringing us up to the Sunday of the title and beyond to the immediate present:



The arrangement of the material in this way is remarkably precise. We can note for example the careful integration of the relationships of the characters. Álvaro and Chepa's marriage is seen in relation to Álvaro's affair with Violeta in Part I and Chepa's relationship with Maya in Part II; both turn to a third as a means of escape; thus both sections form an interesting parallel, tying all four characters together. Quinteros sees this in terms of two triangular relationships (Álvaro, Chepa and Violeta in Part I and Álvaro, Chepa and Maya in Part II) forming two semi-circles which come together as one complete circle:

El centro del círculo es la tensión planteada por el cruce de destinos de personajes que pertenecen a dos universos diametralmente opuestos, pero cuyo flujo vital incontenible quiebra el orden aparential de esos mundos y precipita la catástrofe."

Joan Rea Boorman also notes that:

el círculo se completa cuando Maya, el joven 'quien Chepa protege', va a vivir en la casa de Violeta... y realiza con ella una relación sexual que tiene como consecuencia la inextinguible unión psicológica de los cuatro personajes.¹²

However, the novel's complex pattern of inter-relationships does not stop there. As several critics have pointed

out there are clear parallels between the adults' world and the children's world. We have already seen how the children's fantasies in the italicized sections foreshadow and reflect Chepa's tragic fate in Part II. Similarly, their games reflect the social organization of their parents' world: their division of their make-believe characters into "ueks" and "cucos" parallels the stratification of society in Chile. It is interesting too that the children's games depend upon acting, upon "estilizaciones" (p. 94), upon adopting "disfraces" (p. 98). This reflects the falsity of the adult world where people merely rôle-play instead of showing us their authentic selves, an obsession of Donoso's which is more fully explored in his subsequent novels. Finally, there is an ironic contrast between the "juegos legítimos" of Chepa's grand-children and the destructive games of the urchins in the shanty town at the climax of Part II.

Thus we can clearly perceive links between Parts I and II, and between the italicized sections and the mainstream of the action; even the sections within Parts I and II are skilfully arranged for maximum effect. Each episode is a perfectly rounded unit in its own right, placed in a specific position for a specific purpose. Let us examine the disposition of the episodes within Part I for example. This section is made up of six small subsections each with its own internal unity and cohesion: the first gives us an expository account of Alvaro's troubled mental processes on the Sunday morning of the novel's title; the second gives us some background information on Violeta and the ritual of the pies, paving the way for the third sub-section in which Alvaro actually goes to Violeta's to collect the pies; the thought of Violeta and her pies provokes memories from Alvaro's youth and the next two sub-sections deal with Alvaro as a young man (the first concerns his initial sexual encounter with Violeta, while the second develops the story of his life from that point up to his marriage with Chepa); the final sub-section brings us back to the present and the reality of his sterile

relationship with Chepa. The positioning of the flashback is interesting. The sexual encounter with Violeta contrasts strongly with what has gone before: the fact that the carefreeness of youth is only presented after an exposition of the concerns of old age underlines the fact that the past is lost forever, thus emphasising the novel's pessimistic tone. The fifth sub-section shows us Álvaro's fascination with the sparkling Chepa and their eventual marriage. However, in the next sub-section we are brought brusquely back to reality: the failure of their marriage and the obscenity of Chepa's aged body reinforces our impression of Donoso's scepticism towards the naïve idealism of youth.

The first part functions effectively as an exposition. It introduces the main characters and the themes of anguish, decline and frustration. It conveys necessary information about the children, Álvaro's health, and his relationships with Chepa and Violeta. Furthermore it grasps the reader's interest by establishing a contrast between Álvaro's vision of himself and his grandchildren's impression of him as "la muñeca", and by stressing his secret past and the current tensions in his marriage. It is important to realize why the first part centres on Álvaro: he represents despair, while Chepa still has hope - by presenting his story first Donoso emphasises the futility of Chepa's aspirations.

The narrative arrangement of Part II is effected with equal skill. This section is longer than Part I, mainly because it concentrates more on the development of plot and action than the first part, which was essentially a reflection upon a state of mind. Also Chepa's story lends itself to a more detailed treatment: Álvaro has long since given up any hope in life whereas Chepa's vain struggle to find fulfilment gives Donoso more room to explore her character. In the first sub-section Chepa makes a casual visit to the prison to buy leather-goods. Here she meets Maya and the next two sub-sections chart her growing interest in him, albeit at a subconscious level. The third sub-section reaches a climax with Maya's

request for help to get him released from prison. In the next sub-section we see Chepa refusing to help him; but it ends in a neat and effective manner as she decides to speak to Alvaro about the matter. Thus Donoso has skilfully suggested Chepa's fascination with Maya without having to dwell upon it. Although she has not so far consciously articulated her feelings towards him, the build-up of the narrative to Maya's request at the end of one sub-section followed by Chepa's sudden decision to help (after an initial refusal) at the end of the next sub-section dramatically demonstrates that she has a subconscious need to enter into some kind of relationship with him.

The next four sub-sections all revolve around one evening in which Chepa awaits news that will tell her if Maya is to be set free; this is used by Donoso as a starting point for an account of Chepa's efforts to free Maya, via Chepa's own internal thoughts. This allows the author to avoid cleverly a potentially tedious and drawn-out account of the details of Chepa's activities. It also means that he can concentrate the tension of one evening's waiting into a striking and, for the reader, more immediate image of the months of waiting that have been such a part of Chepa's crusade on Maya's behalf. The climax comes in the eighth sub-section when Chepa hears the news that Maya is to be set free. Significantly at this point Donoso shows us Maya's initial attitude to be one of ingratitude. Chepa, however, forgives him and the next sub-section deals with her excited preparations for his release. But when she goes to meet him coming out of gaol in the following sub-section, he is not there: once again he has let her down but she still forgives him. So on two occasions Donoso builds up Chepa's excitement only to bring her back down to earth in an ensuing sub-section: he is skilfully manipulating the arrangement of episodes in order to show the rise and fall in Chepa's mood and hint at the harsh reality that lies behind her misguided hopes.

The following sub-sections chart Maya's ruin and

reach a climax with Chepa's facing the simple, elemental nature of her attraction to him in the penultimate subsection and her disastrous attempt to find him in the final one. The switch from what is (apart from the direct presentation of mental processes and the fragmentation of the narrative) essentially conventional realism to the almost surreal tone of the final section underscores Chepa's mental collapse and her horrific fate.

It is interesting to note that all three narrative units (Parts I and II and the italicized sections) build up to this same point. Part I begins on the Sunday morning and ends up with Chepa leaving the house. The last two sub-sections of Part II continue from then on. The first italicized section ("En la redoma") ends with the start of the children's games; the story is taken up again from this point in the second italicized section ("Los juegos legítimos") which ends with the foreboding references to Mariola Roncafort's death and Puvis de Chavannes's Funérailles; the final italicized section ("Una noche de domingo") continues the story from this point, which is in fact the Sunday of the title, thus neatly tying the various elements of the novel together. This final section ties up the loose ends of the plot and, like a kind of commentary on what has gone before, reinforces the themes and atmosphere of the novel as a whole. The tightness of the organization is further underlined by the overall cyclical pattern: the novel ends with the narrator's adult existence paralleling to some extent the life-style of his grand-parents which was once so alien to him.

The careful planning of Este domingo often makes it seem highly symmetrical in nature. McMurray wonders if "the reader of This Sunday might question whether it, like Coronation, strives too hard for compositional pattern and unity".⁴⁴ But to present the novel's symmetry in a negative light is to ignore its considerable achievements on a formal level. Obviously some degree of internal coherence is necessary to make the plot intelligible to the reader; yet our initial impression of Este

domingo is one of confusion and ambiguity as the chronology and narrative voice both alter. Thus Donoso uses a fragmented structure to suggest the idea of a chaotic, ambiguous reality; but at the same time he provides the reader with an alternative narrative structure to help him make sense of the novel despite the feeling of disorientation. This implies a triumph of art over life - or at least a nostalgia for order amid chaos. It is interesting that the sense of structural harmony has broken down by the time El obsceno pájaro is written: the growing structural chaos is in tune with the growing outlook of despair - though, as we shall see, even El obsceno pájaro does enjoy a certain amount of hidden structural unity. Meanwhile the craftsmanship of Este domingo's artistically conceived narrative framework should not deflect us from an appreciation of the novel's formal concretion of a fluid and contradictory reality.

Este domingo does not boast the large scale temporal and spatial dislocations of novels like Mario Vargas Llosa's Conversación en la catedral; nor is it charged with the atmosphere of grotesque distortion that characterizes Donoso's 1970 novel. However, the linear pattern of the traditional novel has been abandoned here: point of view shifts from an omniscient narrator to the grand-son, to Álvaro and to Chepa; the narrative voice is constantly changing from third person to second and to first; and the plot does not develop chronologically but moves backwards and forwards in time according to the thoughts of the characters or the intentions of the author. This reflects Donoso's rejection of the traditional novel's assumption that man can observe reality objectively and portray that reality accurately in literature. The fragmented structure of Este domingo challenges the view that we can grasp reality and faithfully represent it with the written word. It brings out the epistemological scepticism of modern man, his confusion in a world whose meaning he is unable to decipher.

We, as readers, are made to share this sense of

disorientation and confusion. This is evident from the way Donoso furnishes us with scraps of information whose significance only becomes clear as the novel progresses. For example, there are several mysterious references to Maya in Part I; but it is not until much later that we begin fully to understand why Álvaro and Violeta feel he is a threat. Similarly there is a reference to the funeral of Mariola Roncafort in Part I (p.74); because we have not yet been fully immersed in the children's world we do not really understand the reference. Also, when the child enters his grand-mother's house in the first italicized section, "la Antonia me sonrió y me dijo que me veía muy 'ueks'" (p.15). The children's invented language cannot be understood by the reader at this stage in the novel; we have to wait until the middle section for clarification. Thus we are once again reminded that our vision of reality is essentially limited because our points of reference are limited too.

The characters, of course, are shown to suffer from the same limitations of knowledge. Indeed a pattern of systematic ironic commentary emerges as the plot unfolds. This is effected through a number of techniques: the revelation by an individual character of additional information not known to other characters; the depiction of the same character at different points in time; the exposition of contradictions within individual characters; contrasts and similarities in attitude and behaviour between two different characters or social groupings; direct juxtapositions of points of view. The effect of this irony is to eliminate sentimentality and to bring out the absence of absolute truths, to accentuate the complex, fluid, unstable nature of reality.

The constricted character of knowledge can be seen in the children. They cannot explain why "los muebles de peluche azul desaparecieron para siempre de su sitio" (p.21); but we later discover that they have been given to Violeta to furnish her house. Similarly, for them, the whole story of Chepa's involvement with Maya is brought

down to a passing reference to "un hombrecito que (mi abuela) visitaba en la cárcel"(p.97).At the same time though the adults do not know what the children get up to;they rummage through the old books they find in the house:"en esos libros leímos las primeras cosas prohibidas cuando todos creían que mis primas se extasiaban con la Princesita de los Brezos y nosotros con el Capitán Marryat"(p.23).Álvaro's knowledge is limited:he thinks Violeta avoids having her plumbing seen to because "se debe estar poniendo avara la pobre"(p.48);but a few pages later it is revealed that the real reason is that her money has gone to pay off Maya's debts.Chepa soon discovers how little she really knew about Maya.He tells her that:

No entiende nada porque yo no le he contado nada.
Usted no sabe...,hasta las orejas en deudas (p.152).

The visits of Marujita Bueras at the prison were not what they seemed:

¿Usted cree que la Marujita iba a la Peni a vender ropa?Cómo no...Si se hacía la que nos vendía ropa y tomaba las apuestas que nosotros le dábamos escritas,junto con la plata...en eso trabajaba,no de falte (p.152).

Chepa (and the reader) do not discover Maya is a drunk until Violeta reveals the truth:

el tal Maya era borrachazo.Sí,eso usted no lo sabía misiá Chepa porque me pidió que no le contara (p.157).

Chepa is soon forced to realize the limitations of her own knowledge:Violeta knew where Maya was all the time - "cuando yo no sabía dónde estaba"(p.158).

Furthermore,the novel's portrayal of characters at different points in time demonstrates how our attitudes change according to our age and circumstances,thus questioning the validity of all of our ideas.Chepa,for example,contrasts her present attitude to Álvaro with her attitude towards him as a young woman:

Cuando yo era joven no podía quitarle la vista del perfil.Cásate con Álvaro,no seas tonta que es regio,cásate con Álvaro Vives,le repetían sus amigas y sus padres,y si ella miraba ese perfil y pensaba en él siempre así,sí,sí,sin duda,era amor lo que sentía... ¿Qué fue lo que

la cegó, que le impidió ver a Álvaro de frente hasta después de casada?(p.121).

The attitude of the narrator of the italicized sections changes as he grows up too. His opinion of his grandfather is now quite different. He used to laugh at his efforts to play the piano, "pero ahora pienso también en la soledad de su esfuerzo por impedir que sus dedos enredaran hasta lo irreconocible las notas de la pieza más simple. Pienso en su vanidad, en ese terror suyo, mudo, ineficaz ante la sordera y la vejez que avanzaban"(p.19). He now knows that "nuestra risa era una manera de disfrazar nuestra extrañeza"(p.20). Similarly, the house that once seemed huge now looks ridiculously small, and the garden which "entonces nos parecía tan hondo y poblado" is now seen as "mezquino"(p.190). He looks back on his childhood reflecting that "a esta distancia es difícil darse cuenta del sitio exacto donde cae la línea que separaba lo fantástico de la realidad de entonces"(p.187). Thinking of his childhood fads he realizes that "otras cosas han tomado el lugar de lo que en ese momento me parecía eterno"(p.187) and concludes that "las cosas ya no eran como antes"(p.188).

The problem of ambiguity is reflected in the structure of the novel as a whole. It is essentially broken down so that we see events from the point of view of three different characters: the grand-son in the italicized sections, Álvaro in Part I and Chepa in Part II. The range of contradicting impressions is consequently very wide. Álvaro presents himself as an unwitting victim of the social pressures which forced him to marry someone like Chepa; she meanwhile sees him as cold and wicked; whereas his grand-children view him simply as a pathetic, ridiculous, vain old man. Álvaro, however, views Chepa as frigid and thoughtless; the children though see her as a kindly old woman; yet Chepa herself reveals that her pent-up frustration is a more complicated problem than anybody imagines. In the words of Promis Ojeda:

El contrapunto de los relatos produce, entonces, la ambivalencia de la realidad en cuanto sus

términos mutuan sus naturalezas de acuerdo a la perspectiva del observador.¹⁵

This leads Achugar to conclude that the novel is putting forward "la propuesta de que la realidad vivida por el hombre es antes que nada subjetividad, por lo que no hay una realidad sino tantas como sujetos".¹⁶

Donoso, then, suggests the complex, fluid nature of of reality by juxtapositioning different points of view. The technique of juxtaposition, the beginnings of which can be glimpsed in Coronación, is much more fully developed in Este domingo. It functions both on a general level throughout the novel and, more strikingly, in individual scenes. The purpose of the oppositions is to extend our vision of reality: our understanding of one episode is inevitably affected by our interpretation of the episode with which it forms a contrast.

This is a point made effectively by the Prague School critic Roman Jakobson in the comparison he makes between numerical symmetry in poetry and "the so-called 'dynamic cutting' in film montage, a type of cutting which ...uses the juxtaposition of contrasting shots or sequences to generate in the mind of the spectator ideas that these constituent shots or sequences by themselves do not carry".¹⁷ The general oppositions which run throughout the novel are manifold. An obvious one is that between masters and servants, the rich and the poor. Our attitude to the Vives family's comfortable life-style is modified when we see it in relation to the misfortunes of other characters. We cannot passively accept the Vives home for what it is: Álvaro's Chrysler car, his high-class tailor, the family's sumptuous meals and the house's luxurious furnishings form a poignant contrast with the grim conditions of Marujita Bueras's house, the squalor of the shanty town and the impoverished life-style of Fausto and the young but already almost toothless Mirella. The point is underlined by the scene in which Álvaro meets Fausto: the juxtaposition of the former's flashy Chrysler and the latter's dilapidated wreck of a car speaks

for itself. This class contrast extends even further: it relates to the novel's opposition of conventional and instinctive patterns of behaviour. Maya and Violeta represent the lower class vitality that Álvaro and Chepa seek to absorb (though this in turn is ambiguous for Chepa does demonstrate vitality herself while Maya, and even Violeta, are negative characters in many respects). The opposition of children and adults highlights a similar theme; as Tatum suggests:

By juxtapositioning the two ages directly through point of view he makes us aware of the glaring differences between the child's spontaneous unsocialized behaviour and the falseness and sham of the adult's attitudes and rigidly confined self-expression.¹⁹

At the same time these contrasts underscore the deeper implications indicated earlier by bringing out the gap between hope and hopelessness.

The opposition of the past and the present is particularly effective in Este domingo. We have already seen how Donoso juxtaposes scenes from Álvaro's youth with scenes depicting the present-day reality of his failed marriage with Chepa; we have also seen how the youthful Violeta of the past seems almost a different person to the fat old woman of the present, and how Álvaro contrasts the beauty of the young Chepa with the decadence of her body today.

Oppositions expressed within a single episode are equally striking. A common opposition is that of Álvaro and Maya. Our impression of one character is necessarily enhanced by its being developed in relation to another. Álvaro realizes that:

Maya siempre andaba desesperado. Deshecho. Por eso le interesa tanto a la Chepa. Y por eso me desprecia a mí. Por mi incapacidad de desesperarme y deshacerme (p.80).

Chepa confirms this impression. She contrasts the sense of emptiness and disintegration she feels when with Álvaro with the exhilaration produced in her by Maya:

con Álvaro era el medio desenchufe, el desenchufarse a veces, cuando quería, y con Maya, que venía, sí, oía sus pasos en el corredor, era estar

viva, electrificada (p.128).

She compares Maya's craftsmanship with Álvaro's inertia. She admires Maya's hands:

Eran sabias, eficientes, y lo contemplaba y escuchaba, muda de admiración ante la infalibilidad de su ciencia. Esto era ser hombre. A Álvaro jamás le interesó su profesión. Siguió en ella por inercia hasta jubilar lo más pronto posible (p.144).

She says of Álvaro that "le faltó la pasión que veía en Maya" (p.145). When she goes to bed that evening the two men are again juxtaposed in her thoughts:

Álvaro comienza a roncar como una máquina cansada, y entonces Maya de nuevo, volver a él, el buen talabartero, el hombre cuyas manos ya no harán más que cosas que ella admira (p.145).

On a later occasion Chepa, having been out all day, decides to stay with Maya rather than rush home:

la Chepa se da cuenta de que debe elegir - dejarlo en realidad tranquilo para irse esfumando cada vez más a partir de hoy, de la vida de Maya, o quedarse y afrontar los fantasmas. ¿Pero para qué se va a ir? ¿Para que Álvaro la riña por andar despeinada? (p.150).

By opposing Álvaro and Maya Donoso is not only demonstrating the difference between a man of reason and a man of instinct; he is also reminding us that our assessment of a given individual is commonly affected by our knowledge of other individuals, thus suggesting that the impressions we form of reality are often arbitrary. Characters are therefore used to comment on each other (either explicitly or through contrasts in situation); but the commentary itself is ironic and not necessarily reliable.

Some of the most effective forms of juxtaposition within the novel come when Donoso withdraws as a narrator, allowing two conflicting attitudes to be expressed simultaneously. This is sometimes done to demonstrate the gap between appearance and reality, underlining the point that we cannot always trust our ability to interpret what we see and hear. An example of this comes during Álvaro's encounter with Fausto. The former's private

mental processes form a complete contrast with the words he speaks:

Fausto abre la puerta.
- Buenos días, don Álvaro, pase...
- Quihubo, hombre. ¿Tu auto?
...- ¿No quiere pasar, don Álvaro?
- No, gracias, espero aquí.

Fausto se entiesa como un gallito. Pero si soy yo el que debo ofenderme, mocoso de mierda, convidarme a mí a pasar a la casa de Violeta como si él fuera el dueño... (p.46).

A similar passage can be found near the end of Part I. Álvaro's polite, formal exterior hides the frustration, fear and resentment he feels inside. He wants vengefully to tell Chepa of his cancer but instead he speaks of his visit to Violeta:

¿Cómo estaba la Violeta?
...Voy a decírselo. Voy a decírselo para que deje de sonreír como sonrío, como si todo fuera perfecto, como si este domingo fuera igual a cualquier otro domingo.
- Oye, Chepa...
- ¿Qué?
¿Y si no fuera fatal?... Carraspea.
- ¿Estás con tos, Álvaro?
- No. Me preguntabas por la Violeta.
- Sí.
- Está muy bien. Parece que Fausto y Mirella por último se van a vivir a la casa de Violeta. Yo me alegro, te diré, porque la pobre está muy sola... Conocí a la famosa Maruxa Jacqueline (p.77).

Sometimes Donoso juxtaposes more than one point of view on a given episode. This happens when the elderly Violeta tearfully relates the truth of her relationship with Maya:

Cuando se quedaba en la casa él la convidaba a ver la televisión a su pieza y se tomaban unas botellas - bastantes botellas, porque el tal Maya era borrachazo. Sí, eso usted no lo sabía misiá Chepa porque me pidió que no le contara, y ríete que te ríe, casi sin saber cómo una noche se fueron a la cama. Ella, una vieja. ¿Qué vergüenza! Pero qué le iba a hacer. Siempre había sido así. Así había nacido la Mirella. Cuando Marín no quiso casarse con ella y se casó con una que tenía tierras y vacas. Se fue con el primero, el dueño de la carnicería donde compraba la carne para la casa de misiá Elena. Pero la Chepa no escuchaba. Maya haciendo el amor con esta mujer que era cuatro años mayor que ella (p.157).

There is at least one switch from Violeta to Chepa in this passage near the end, and possibly another in the middle. These changes mean that we receive simultaneously two impressions of the affair: the sadness and tragedy of the episode is reflected in the words of the hapless Violeta, while Chepa's reaction brings out its pathetic, sordid side. The option to choose between these two views rests with the reader.

There is a similar passage a few pages later. Chepa's intimate thoughts form a striking contrast with the words of Violeta:

- Yo le dije que se quedara. Y entonces, señora, entonces sí que se puso furioso de veras, y dijo que todas son iguales a usted, a la tal Chepa, eso dijo, maldita sea, eso también lo dijo, perdonavidas, cada vez me perdona algo quiero hacer más y más cosas malas, eso dijo... Y que yo era igual a usted.

Igual pero envidiable, Violeta, tú que no entiendes, tú que no sabes, tú que te dejas arrastrar mientras yo miro desde la periferia sin confesar nada, pero que siento envidia por tus magulladuras. Maya te viene a ver a ti en la noche mientras yo me seco esperando junto al teléfono.

- ... igual a usted, que las dos queríamos comerlo, tragarlo, controlarlo, deshacerlo, y que él no se iba a dejar y entonces comenzó a pegarme, misiá Chepa, mire cómo me dejó este sinvergüenza ... (p.158).

There are two ways of looking at Maya's behaviour: for Violeta it is scandalous but for Chepa, desperate for Maya's vitality, it would constitute a dark, mysterious form of pleasure.

The range of oppositions in Este domingo does not stop at comparisons between characters. There are also many contradictions within individual characters, which lead to a good deal of irony of character^{and} situation. Álvaro is cold and impersonal; at the same time he too suffers from a sense of alienation. He is seen as taking advantage of Violeta's servant status; yet it is really she who seduces him. Rodríguez Monegal, however, surely goes too far when he suggests that Álvaro also feels a homosexual attraction towards Maya: it seems that the

obvious inversion of Manuela of El lugar sin límites has led Rodríguez Monegal to project it on to Donoso's other work. Violeta meanwhile is both innocent victim and unexpectedly licentious. Chepa's charitable works are motivated out of both kindness and selfishness. She is the cause of Álvaro's frustration; but he is equally the cause of hers. The grand-son/narrator seems to recognize the negative aspects of his heritage, yet appears to be adopting a similar kind of lifestyle himself.

Furthermore, the characters are seen as almost interchangeable. This reflects, in the words of María del C. Cerezo, "la idea de que una simetría...no crea dos cosas que se oponen, sino que es el otro lado de la misma cosa"²⁰. Violeta mentally substitutes Álvaro with her boyfriend Marín when they make love: "cuando usted me toca y me hace de todo pienso en él. Usted es él, el huaso Marín" (p.70). Álvaro meanwhile thinks of other respectable young girls when he makes love to Violeta:

entonces, de noche, lleno de deseo por la Alicia o la Pola, a quienes ha dado secretísimos besos, entra a la pieza de la Violeta que siempre lo acepta y rueda con ella por la cama, tratando de conjurar de ese cuerpo caliente y rollizo y lleno de deseo, la finura de los brazos de la Pola, el cuello largo y la cabeza pequeña de la Alicia, los senos jóvenes apenas insinuados de la Sofía, eres la Sofía, sí, eres la Sofía, y mañana serás la Alicia y otro día la Pola, todas, poseo a todas esas muchachas imposibles en tu carne rolliza y caliente (p.68).

He later repeats the experience:

la carne gorda de la Violeta se transformaba en la carne glacial de la Pola...Ella era todas. La Pola, la Laura, la Alicia, sus primas ..., todas.
También era la Chepa (p.72).

In fact, Álvaro makes a double substitution between Chepa and Violeta. Before he is married he replaces Violeta with Chepa in his mind:

Álvaro abrazó a la Violeta para sumergirse en esa carne sin adjetivo, carne pura, gozosa, para buscar allí el cuerpo delgado y fresco de la Chepa (p.74).

However, when he is married he finds himself compelled mentally to substitute Violeta for Chepa:

La respiración de la Chepa junto a la suya es inexistente. La Chepa es inexistente bajo el camión color crema. No es la dueña de esa piel que sus palmas fervorosas quieren remover para sacar de allí otra piel, otra carne abundante y sonriente y aceptante. La Violeta. No es la Chepa la que se estrema en sus brazos, esperando, es la Violeta. Acaricia una axila, sí, sí, es la axila de la Violeta y si es la axila de la Violeta es la Violeta entera, Violeta, mijita, Violeta, ponte así, tócame por acá, ahora aquí mijita. Y cerrando los ojos... sí, si puedo, y duro ahora y seguro hizo el amor con la Violeta en la carne ignorante de la Chepa (p.81).

Chepa herself realizes this:

él no la tenía a ella entre sus brazos al hacer el amor, sino que a cualquiera, que para él ella comenzaba a existir sólo cuando la tocaba y aún así era intercambiable. Yo no soy yo. Yo no existo (p.127).

The point is underlined by Violeta's sexual relationship with Maya: Chepa is forced to share him with Violeta. His murder of Violeta at the end really constitutes an attempt to do away with Chepa and the oppression she represents for him. Thus once again Violeta is substituted for Chepa, highlighting the "patrona-sirviente" opposition identified earlier in reference to Coronación. This is a demonstration of the law of substitution that Antonio Cornejo Polar sees as the structural base of El obscuro pájaro.²¹ Bueno Chávez has applied this law to Este domingo noting that here the substitutions represent "no la conversión en sí, sino la posibilidad o el ideal de conversión".²² Identifying with Cornejo Polar's emphasis on the motif of destruction, Bueno Chávez sees the law of substitution as indicating the deterioration of Álvaro and Chepa's relationship, consequently reinforcing the general theme of decadence. However, it primarily reflects the essential ambiguity of the world as Donoso sees it. As Quinteros rightly observes:

Es así como el universo novelístico de Donoso corresponde a su visión del quebrantamiento de la personalidad y de la existencia múltiple del ser humano, susceptible de infinitas transformaciones, y en la cual se interpolan imágenes

constantemente cambiantes de una realidad imposible de captar en su totalidad.²³

Donoso's concern to provide us with a wider, more convincing picture of reality than the traditional novel also leads him to develop new approaches to style and narrative technique in Este domingo. The beginnings of a new narrative method could be glimpsed in parts of Coronación; but here it is brought to fruition. The technique is similar to that identified by Patricia E. Mason in her study of Carpentier's "El derecho de asilo": the fragmentation of the rôle of the narrator breaks down any unity of perspective, creating a sense of "overall indetermination".²⁴ The basic tenet of Donoso's narrative strategy is to distance himself as narrator from the fictional world itself, thus infusing the novel with a greater degree of autonomy than was evident in Coronación. This not only brings the reader closer to the fictional reality of the text: the effective elimination of an omniscient narrator means that we are left to form our own impressions of that fictional reality.

One technique is the use of intermediaries in the presentation of information. As we have seen, the story as a whole is presented not through the eyes of a traditional narrator but via three main characters: Álvaro, Chepa and the grand-son. The grand-son is, in Boorman's words, an "agente-observador dramatizado": in other words he actually tells the story in the first person. Although the sections presenting Álvaro and Chepa basically employ the third person, the narrative voice constantly changes and the point of view is essentially that of these two main characters. The intermediary describes events on the narrator's behalf, thereby allowing him to withdraw into the background. So, in Part I, for example, background information about Violeta is provided by Álvaro as is our general impression of her. In fact, except for those moments when she reveals herself via dialogue, Violeta is consistently presented from the point of view of other characters. Similarly, Maya is

generally seen through the eyes of Chepa or presented via dialogues involving Violeta. This means there is no need for an omniscient narrator to intervene to provide descriptions or information and the reader is consequently left free to form his own opinions.

To get closer to the intermediary and to allow himself to withdraw even further Donoso develops in Este domingo a stream of consciousness technique in order to present his characters' mental processes directly. In McMurray's words:

these slices of interior life...interpret the characters' thoughts as they occur in their original raw stage prior to grammatical articulation and lend an additional dimension to the fictional portrait by blending interior with exterior experience.²⁶

The novel abounds with examples of Donoso's adroit manipulation of the technique of mental association. We have but to think of the links established in Álvaro's mind between the crack in the teapot, the cancerous mark on his chest and the mole of Maya; the superbly effected transition between sub-sections three and four of Part I when the smell of the pies brings to Álvaro's mind a memory from his youth, with Donoso using repetition and a subtle switch from third to first person in order to make the movement from the present to a memory of the past even more smooth; or the many scenes in which the passion of Chepa's thoughts can be seen simmering beneath the surface of her restrained dialogues with Maya. In this example the switches from third to first person bring us closer to Chepa's mind, revealing her inner emotions with an arresting intensity. The subtlety of the changes in person allows Donoso to show the reader Chepa's hidden emotions without having to supply the information directly as a traditional narrator would:

La Chepa, que estaba tragándose las lágrimas, no pudo hablar y sólo fue capaz de mover la cabeza asintiendo: perdonado, perdonado mil veces, todo el perdón que quiera, porque perdonar es ser capaz de darlo todo de nuevo. Estiró la mano para tomar la de Maya y se la tomó entre las dos tuyas que le ardían. Me arde no sólo la mano sino que la cara y todo el

cuerpo y la sangre cantándome en las venas.
Me lleva las manos a la boca y me las besa.
Tiene los ojos cerrados pero no importa porque
yo sé qué pasa detrás de sus párpados (p.143).

The sub-section concerning *Álvaro's* sexual initiation serves as a fine illustrative example of *Donoso's* craftsmanship in this area (pp.52-63). The movement of the prose actually parallels the growth of *Álvaro's* sexual desire. He feels the need to masturbate but thinks he ought to stop himself. We are therefore given a long, sexual passage in the first person evoking a languid, sensual atmosphere; but this is broken off with a sudden, single line exclamation of ";Violeta!". Two more long first person passages develop only to be interrupted on both occasions by a new single line paragraph and the cry, ";Violeta!". The movement of the text can thus be seen to follow the growing urge to masturbate which *Álvaro* tries to cut out with a short, sharp action. However, like the pattern of the prose, his desire inevitably grows again.

It is soon suggested that he feels a subconscious sexual attraction towards *Violeta* (p.56). A number of changes in person help bring out the confusion of a mind in a state of increasing sexual excitement. His thoughts on *Violeta* begin in the third person and are, apparently, non-sexual. But a sudden switch to the first person implies that deep down he does harbour sexual desires for her. In the first person he recalls an incident in which he entered her room. The sudden switch to the third person to describe how he ran off to masturbate after this incident reflects the abrupt and uncontrollable nature of this urge. His mind wanders off into feelings of guilt, the move to the second person suggests the idea of an accusing conscience. However, he quickly slips back into his thoughts of a sexual nature. But a sudden switch to the third person in which the possibility of a cold bath is raised, brings out his attempt to clamp down on his growing need for masturbation.

His augmenting desire for a possible sexual en-

counter with Violeta is indicated by the constant oscillation in Alvaro's thoughts between an imaginative and a concrete level, between internal and external reality. The paragraphs describing his sexual fantasies are interspersed with the words of Violeta who is by now actually standing at the other side of the door (pp. 57-8). This juxtaposition implies that Violeta is the real object of his desire; thus a change is effected from a desire to masturbate to a desire for a real woman, preparing us for the sexual adventure to follow. This process is continued when Violeta enters the bathroom: her voice cuts into the paragraphs evoking Alvaro's feverish sexual feelings (pp. 60-1), the interaction between internal and external reality again dramatizing their situation.

The build up of his internal desire is also suggested by a number of Freudian sexual images taken from external reality: the flies making love; Violeta's bare feet; the glimpse of her cleavage; the brilliantly established relationship between the warming of the pies in the oven and the growth of his feelings and the opening up of Violeta; the gentle, stroking movement of the bath water; "las caricias de las goteras derramándose sobre su piel como anticipo de algo cierto" (p. 61); the sensation of Violeta rubbing him with the towel "con mucha suavidad" (p. 61), getting closer and closer to his penis; and finally the climactic combination of these elements when they eventually make genital contact.

This lengthy passage is suddenly interrupted with a few short lines:

- No, con su mano no...
- ¿Cómo?
- Tú, tú... (p. 63).

The abrupt change in the movement of the prose brings out the awkwardness and confusion of a young man having his first sexual encounter. But then there is a change to the first person and the flow of the narrative is restored as Alvaro's sense of security returns:

Yo. Esto que te va penetrando soy yo. Todo yo.
Nada de mí yo queda afuera... (p. 63).

The switch to the first person highlights the pride and pleasure Álvaro feels in penetrating his first sexual "conquest". We can see how Donoso avoids a detailed description or catalogue of events by eliminating to a considerable extent the concept of a traditional narrator. Instead he uses imagery and switches in time, person and level of reality in order to bring the reader closer to the narrative itself by actually making the pattern of the prose reflect the patterns of thought and feeling in his characters.

The interesting point to be gleaned from the above examples is that, since Coronación, Donoso has gone a long way to developing a near-autonomous form of narrative. The author disappears from the action and the narrative seems to propel itself, thereby allowing the reader to enjoy a vision of reality apparently untarnished by the writer's opinions:— a vision of reality that is therefore essentially ambiguous. This autonomy of narrative can be perceived on various levels in Este domingo. There are, for example, numerous instances of the characters' thoughts being introduced into the narrative without any direct intervention from the author to explain the process. This is evident in the above-mentioned passages dealing with the thoughts of Álvaro and Chepa. Donoso constantly switches from third to first person without explanation, as in this randomly chosen example involving Chepa and Maya:

Comenzaron a hablar y se calló: iba a pedirle algo, ella lo vio venir. No quiero. No quiero que me pida nada y no quiero darle nada (p.113).

Similarly, dialogue is often introduced into the main flow of the narrative without any authorial intervention. In the following example Donoso launches into the telephone conversation without bothering to make a visible distinction between the third person and the second:

la Fanny llamó para decirle que la Victoria había llegado de repente del campo con uno de los niños enfermos y quería llevarlo donde el médico. Tú ves que lo maneada que es la pobre Victoria. No voy a poder ir a la Penitenciaría contigo... (p.106).

Sometimes the conversations of more than one person are introduced directly within a single narrative unit, as in this scene where the narrative voice switches from Maya to Chepa and back again without explanation:

y me quedo mirando el techo, varios días, una semana a veces, con esa pena que usted sabe, claro que sé Maya, claro, cómo no voy a saber. Acuérdense de esa vez en el hospital y que usted no me reconoció. Fui al norte. Me dieron ganas (p.160)

or in this scene involving Violeta and Chepa:

le debo tanta a misiá Elena y a ustedes que no sé cómo puedo ser así... bueno, mujer, no te agites, mira que te va a dar infarto y no vale la pena. Pero la Chepa se levanta y se pone los guantes (p.168).

On other occasions Donoso advances the action by inserting a dialogue into the narrative without going through the traditional novel's process of introduction. Such is the case in this example:

... Sin hacer caso a las protestas indignadas de su hija se fue a la Penitenciaría.
- Creí que no iba a venir...
- ¿Pero por qué?
- Creí que estaba enojada conmigo... (p.113).

Donoso simply tells us that Chepa is going to the prison and then plunges straight into a conversation with Maya that she has while she is there. A traditional novelist would have to describe her arrival and set the scene for the conversation. Donoso, however, chooses to minimize the rôle of the narrator so that there are fewer barriers between the reader and the narrative.

Even more interesting is the way Donoso introduces snippets of dialogue to illustrate the theme of the main narrative passages. A third person account of Mirella's wedding is highlighted by the sudden, unannounced introduction of a conversation between Violeta and Fausto:

... Las relaciones quedaron malas cuando Fausto se negó a invitar a los Vives, a don Álvaro y a misiá Chepa y a las "niñitas" con sus maridos a su casamiento.
- ¿Pero por qué, Fausto?
- No es familia. Usted es familia.
- No entiendo.
- La Mirella no es sirvienta (p.45).

The technique is later inverted to great effect in Part II when Donoso presents two scenes simultaneously: a third person account of Chepa's visit to Marujita Bueras's house is embedded in her conversation with Maya about the visit. A brief extract from the passage acts as an interesting example of Donoso's maturing technical artistry:

... Las puertas cerradas con luz detrás: olor a anafe, a plancha, a ajo dorándose en aceite ordinario, a ropa sucia, radios vociferantes, peleas de vecinas, envidias, pequeñas venganzas...

- No, no misiá Chepa, no quiero, si es igual que aquí.

Y sube al segundo piso por una escalera encienque pero de baranda tallada. Junto a la puerta de una de las piezas un pájaro salta en su jaula y ella siente crujir bajo su zapato el alpiste salpicado. Y los vidrios de la galería sucios, y el ruido de autobuses y trolleys porque la casa queda en el centro, metida entre las espaldas de edificios de departamentos, contando los días para el momento de la demolición. Y portadas del Para Ti destiñéndose entre el vidrio y el visillo...

- No, Maya, no puede...

- Peor que aquí...

Y la pieza de la Marujita... (p.134).

Such examples of Donoso's simultaneous presentation of different points in time and space serve as an apt illustration of the technical advances in his writing after Coronación. If in Coronación we saw the author's nascent struggle against the restrictions of traditional literature, in Este domingo we begin really to see the fruits of that struggle. Thematically the novels may be similar but in terms of style and structure the development is enormous. The form of Este domingo may lack the complexity and tortuousness of El obsceno pájaro, but nevertheless, its fragmented nature does reflect, not only Donoso's views on the instability of the human personality and the essentially chaotic nature of the universe, but also a new perception of reality based on an awareness of man's inability to interpret that reality accurately. The ultimately harmonious plan Donoso imposes upon this structure does not necessarily undermine the impact of the novel's fragmentation. Indeed, the network

of oppositions enhances the reader's impression of ambiguity, while the range of conscientiously evolved narrative techniques brings him closer to the narrative itself, reminding him of the complex nature of reality by forcing him to interpret it himself in the absence of authorial comment.

Este domingo is, then, essentially a formal re-working of Coronación. El lugar sin límites, though published shortly before Este domingo, takes Donoso even further beyond the restrictive dictates of traditional realism. If Este domingo marks the break with the dominant stylistic mode of Coronación, then El lugar sin límites marks the link with the hallucinatory world of El obscuro pájaro. The co-existence in Coronación of two antagonistic approaches to narrative gave way in Este domingo to a "great leap forward" in technical terms: following on from this it is El lugar sin límites which finally bridges the gap between the earlier work and the literary triumph of 1970.

Like Juan Rulfo's Pedro Páramo, El lugar sin límites paints a picture of down-trodden Latin-American underdogs exploited by a corrupt landowner; but, as in Rulfo's novel, this situation is merely the point of departure for the development of an issue of more universal impact. For this reason Donoso's work now becomes even more metaphorical in character. As Cornejo Polar has written:

Con El lugar sin límites Donoso, sin dejar de pulsar una vez más el tema de la destrucción, comienza a despegar el relato de sus atributos realistas; concretamente, y sobre todo a través del ingreso de connotaciones míticas, ensaya la proposición de un sistema semántico que no guarda paralelismo estrecho con el universo representado novelescamente. Los seres, objetos y sucesos que encarnan en el relato son siempre más que su representación específica; o si se quiere, corresponden a dimensiones universalizadas de la existencia humana. De esta suerte el discurso narrativo tiende a escapar de los límites de la verosimilitud factual para lograr, más bien, una muy subida coherencia interior. Se ampara ésta en el sentido de la existencia propuesto al lector en la imagen general del hombre y el

mundo que el texto realiza, mucho más que en la confirmación que podría derivar de algún consenso acerca de la realidad materia de representación.²⁷

While the underlying symbolism identified in Coronación and Este domingo (along with the latter novel's structural fragmentation and almost surreal ending) offers room to differ with Cornejo Polar's unqualified assertion that "ambos textos se inscriben sin dificultad dentro del canon genérico del realismo"²⁸, there are no objections to the suggestion that El lugar sin límites marks a change in the pattern of Donoso's literary production. Coronación and Este domingo were set very firmly in a concrete, urban reality and, although we could detect a symbolic value in the main characters' stories, the novels' more universal themes were often presented in a very direct manner: that is, in the form of Andrés and Álvaro's mentally and verbally expressed fears of death. However, in my view, the situation in El lugar sin límites is far more fundamentally symbolic. No character consciously articulates his existential attitude; rather, the fictional material world described by Donoso functions as a general image of the human condition as he sees it. It is significant therefore that Donoso does not, as in the previously mentioned novels, introduce an element of chaos into an apparently ordered world; in the words of Promis Ojeda:

Ya no se trata de mostrar la destrucción del orden por el apareamiento del caos, sino que, por el contrario, el mundo es presentado ya como caótico, en el sentido de que las cosas han perdido el lugar que les correspondía en el orden establecido.²⁹

The impact of this is that life is presented, as the title and epigraph from Marlowe suggest, as a hell on earth. We are not just susceptible to the dangers of despair: the very state of our life is one of total anguish.

In the earlier discussion of the metaphysical aspect of the novel, a clear symbolic pattern based upon models drawn from Dr. Faustus and the bible was seen to develop. There is no direct articulation of a sense of existential uncertainty by the narrator or any of the

characters: it is only through the symbolic value of their relationship with don Alejo (representing God) that this theme emerges. Thus Pancho's struggle with the unscrupulous landowner - presented, on a concrete level, in terms of social and financial dependence - represents man's attempts to come to terms with the absurd by escaping the burden of religious conscience. His fear of don Alejo's death brings out the terror of life with no God to guarantee its meaning. Manuela's futile attempt to secure the protection of the patriarchal overlord indicates the ineffectuality of religious faith. Japonesa's recognition of the falsity of don Alejo's promises points to a symbolic submission to existential despair. It is the underlying mythical pattern that gives the novel its meaning: not any form of overt expression by characters or narrator .

The significance of the main characters is reinforced by several further layers of symbolism including that surrounding the minor characters. They underline the pessimism of the novel's central message, their individual stories reaching fuller significance on a wider, representational level. Don Céspedes is one example. Hortensia R. Morell reworks the San Alejo legend to suggest that he represents another facet of his master's psyche - his rôle therefore being to question "the oneness of identity"³⁰. In my view, however, don Céspedes's function is to add to the general atmosphere of stagnation and death: he is totally impervious to what goes on about him, to the extent that "parece momia" (p.128); furthermore his symbolic function is closely related to death, for he evokes the figure of Charon who ferries the dead across the River Styx ("el canal de los palos") via routes "conocidos sólo por él" (p.114). Japonesa Grande's story lends force to that of the other characters: she used to have faith in don Alejo, "pero un buen día ya no pudo esperar más y comenzó a morirse" (p.45); heart-broken by his deceit, "murió de pena" (p.44). The frustration of the whores at the brothel also brings out the theme of exi-

stantial anguish on a symbolic level: Cloty is a "puta triste" because nobody wants to patronize her (p.13); we are told that "la Nelly siempre llora un poco antes de la madrugada" (p.140); Lucy's life is just a waste (she spends all her time in bed, "entre las sábanas inmundas, comiendo pan, durmiendo, engordando" (p.16)) and an unexpected sense of almost metaphysical unease is brought out by her reaction to the unknown horse-rider: "se enredó en la angustia de no saber quién era ese jinete ni de dónde venía ni para dónde iba" (p.117). Pecho de Palo, a rival brothel owner, represents age and decay: she was once beautiful but is now old and suffering from varicose veins (p.72). Ludo too is a "vieja bruta" with only "un terrón blando adentro de la cabeza" (p.23), and like the old women of El obscuro pájaro "ni siquiera se acordaba de qué cosas tenía guardadas en la multitud de cajas, paquetes, atados, rollos que escondía en sus cajones o debajo del catre o en los rincones..." (p.22). She is also nearly blind because when her husband died she almost went mad and threw her glasses into the coffin (p.21). Death undermines her faith in life so, when she loses her husband, she symbolically gives up the struggle by throwing away something which could allow her to live normally. Similarly, when Moniquita dies Misia Blanca, "desesperada, se cortó la trenza rubia que le llegaba hasta las corvas y la echó dentro del ataúd" (p.21). She is now a grey-haired old woman who eats in silence (p.95). She is another character who represents the abandonment of a positive attitude in life in the face of existential despair.

Donoso also makes extensive symbolic use of atmosphere in El lugar sin límites. McMurray has suggested that "the many somber descriptions illuminated by flashes of light evoke the tenebrous paintings of the masters of chiaroscuro such as Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Georges de la Tour".³¹ The whole tone of the novel is one of darkness and gloominess: there is no sun; darkness has set in

by the fourth chapter; the wind has been whistling and the rain lashing down all day. Manuela thinks the house is so dark that "parece velorio" (p.46); the candles "eran como las de un velorio" (p.53); Pancho later describes the scene in the brothel as a "velorio" (p.124). There is also a general atmosphere of decline: the brothel is cold and wet, its tiles have fallen off, and it is actually sinking into the ground; the town itself has declined, people have left, and what remains is in a state of decay.

It is significant too that - as in Juan Carlos Onetti's Juntacadáveres - a central symbol is that of a brothel. The brothel symbol implies a degraded reality, the opposite extreme from the patriarchal family home of the nineteenth century, the repository of stable values, the social nucleus, the example of hierarchy and cohesion. This is a world in which the love and human solidarity implicit in the family relationship are perverted: don Alejo, Octavio and (to some degree) Pancho all disregard their families by turning to institutionalised sexuality outside marriage. Furthermore, the images we are given of brothel-life are predominantly negative. We are told that "los hombres no se daban cuenta ni con qué se acostaban, perro, vieja, cualquier cosa" (p.13). As a child Japonesita used to play among their tables "oyendo improperios y oliendo sus vómitos en el patio" (p.121). Don Alejo's party offers us the sight of greedy men, greasy from their food, lasciviously squeezing the buttocks of the whores. The atmosphere of moral degeneracy reflects the novel's metaphysical implications by reinforcing the general feeling of decline and inversion of values. This is the point of the ambiguities and internal inversions within the characters noted in the previous chapter. The climax comes with the orgasm of Manuela in bed with Japonesa Grande: a woman acting as a man becoming pregnant by a man acting as a woman, without love, in a brothel, and for money. All values are overturned, rendered ambiguous, reduced to absurdity by this central act.

Besides the overall symbolic pattern of the novel and the supplementary use of minor characters and atmosphere, there is an entire network of subordinate but

highly functional symbolism at work in El lugar sin límites. Donoso uses these symbols to create foreboding, add cohesiveness and expand meaning by suggestion rather than statement. The recurring appearance of the dogs and the sound of their howling reinforces the novel's metaphysical aspects and creates tension. Tension and foreboding are also created by the repeated sound of the honking of Pancho's horn: this sound simultaneously represents both a hope and a threat for Manuela and Japonésita. An important related symbol is that of Pancho's bright red lorry, suggesting either sexuality as it penetrates the darkness with the driver's hand on the throbbing gear-stick or the possibility of transcending limits when he travels afar in it (though the symbol is ironic, for Pancho is, on the one hand, a latent homosexual and, on the other, unable to achieve fulfilment). Its redness may also reinforce the idea that Pancho represents Lucifer (the Devil); Nigro even believes that the lorry (which she calls a "little red car") symbolizes "sacrificial blood".³²

Many other symbols add poignancy to the characters' individual quests. One is Manuela's Spanish dress. Gutiérrez Mouat sees this as a simple image of the text. It is a form of disguise or game setting in motion a pattern of transformation: when Manuela recognises his masculinity this means "el fin de la ficción (lúdica y literaria)".³³ The fact that the dress is mended at the beginning and torn at the end is seen as an indication of the opening and closing of the narrative.³⁴ But this is to stretch the imagery too far. More importantly, the constant references to the dress bring out Manuela's desire for femininity. This relates to his identity crisis "porque cuando la Japonésita le decía papá, su vestido de española... se ponía más viejo" (p. 50). The dress stands in contrast to the fact that Japonésita never buys dresses and wears ugly jeans and an apron. Like Manuela himself, the garment is old and ragged: yet he continues to repair it in the vain hope that it will

help bring closer the moment of self-realization by sharpening his beauty and femininity. The dress - described as "incandescent" - is a symbol of life and triumph over time (because it makes Manuela feel young again). However, the dress is set against the sinister howling of don Alejo's dogs at night: this reverses the image symbolizing time's triumph via Manuela's death.

The references to the "chal rosado" are of particular interest for this is a symbol whose significance is expanded by its relationship to Donoso's other works: in the case of Manuela the shawl points to his desire for womanhood but with Japonesita it is an ironic reflection on her frigidity. Manuela is wearing the shawl at the beginning of the novel but Japonesita wraps herself in it at the end: an image of hope has degenerated into one of resignation and apathy.

Japonesita's personal hopes are represented by the references to electricity and the Wurlitzer. The eventual collapse of those hopes is symbolically presented via the breaking of the "victrola", while the threat to Pancho's hopes is represented by the painful reality of his incipient ulcer. It is indeed significant that neither Japonesita nor Pancho achieve anything, for these two characters represent youth in the novel. Donoso effects a symbolic inversion of the traditional youth age dichotomy. The two main older characters - don Alejo and Manuela - both appear to die in the penultimate chapter. Age and death are in fact heavily accentuated - but not in order to exalt youth and vitality. At the end of the novel Pancho is an alienated, anguished figure and Japonesita has relapsed into passive acceptance of a living death: the negative pole of the duality is seen to triumph.

An important aspect of the novel's symbolic patterning is the opposition between heat and cold, and between light and darkness. As in Lorca's tragedies light and heat have a positive connotation whereas coldness and darkness contain negative overtones. Japonesita

associates her mother with heat, but she is dead: the daughter now feels only cold because the innocence of childhood is gone forever. Sexual fulfilment might bring a possible liberation: looking for "el calor de su cuerpo pesado", she turns to Pancho in the hope that he might "encenderla" (p.121) - but in vain. Manuela also feels cold when his feminine identity is threatened: when Japonesita calls him "papá" he feels "la noche oscura y fría y larga extendiéndose por las viñas" (p.51). But Manuela is associated mainly with light which is identified with his illusion of hope and his quest for femininity. He says he wants to escape El Olivo in order to find "un poco de luz" (p.128). Japonesita meanwhile is associated with darkness, and the absence of hope. On several occasions we see Japonesita turning off lamps much to Manuela's chagrin. It is in fact darkness (despair) which eventually triumphs: the light is "sin fuerza para vencer a las tinieblas" (p.42) and the novel ends with Japonesita extinguishing the lamps and going to bed "sin siquiera encender una vela" (p.140). This is not, as Gutiérrez Mouat claims, a theatrical image (the dimming of the house lights pointing to the end of the fiction): it is a reflection of Donoso's sombre outlook on life.

One aspect of Donoso's use of symbolism is that it allows him to suggest themes without actually stating them directly in the narrative. As we have seen, the process begun in Coronación has come to a head in El lugar sin límites. By now individual characters are not expressing metaphysical anguish directly at all: the theme is brought out entirely on a symbolic plane. At the same time Donoso employs a variety of other techniques to distance himself from the narrative, thus bringing the reader closer to the fictional world and leaving him to interpret it for himself, thereby reminding him of the pervasive ambiguity of reality. As with Este domingo the basic tenets of this narrative technique are the use of intermediaries, interior monologues and the evolution of

an almost autonomous form of narrative.

There are three main intermediaries in El lugar sin límites: Manuela, Japonesita and Pancho Vega. Although there is some omniscient narration in the novel, the majority of events are presented through the eyes and minds of these characters. Sometimes even other intermediaries are used, as in the beginning of the sixth chapter when the arrival of Manuela is presented via a collective third person representing the women of the town. The thoughts of the intermediaries are generally presented in the third person, but the frequent switches to the first person create some striking effects. Manuela recalls Pancho's violence during his visit the previous year; the subtle movement to the first person dynamizes reality by bringing a past event sharply into focus, and at the same time draws our attention to Pancho's latent homosexuality:

Cuando Pancho quiso pegarle el año pasado tuvo la presencia de ánimo para palpar al bruto por todos lados; andaba sin nada. Idiota. Tanto hablar contra las pobres locas y nada que les hacemos... y cuando me sujetó con los otros hombres me dio sus buenos agarrones, bien intencionados... (pp.25-6).

In a later scene a switch in person dramatically highlights Pancho's deep sense of inner anguish:

Inclinado sobre el manubrio, Pancho escudriña la oscuridad porque tiene que escudriñarla si no quiere despeñarse en un canal o injertarse en la zarzamora. Cada piedra del camino hay que mirarla, cada bache, cada uno de estos árboles que yo iba a abandonar para siempre. Creí que quedaba aquí esto con mis huellas, para después pensar cuando quisiera en estas calles por donde voy entrando, que ya no van a existir y no voy a poder recordarlas porque ya no existen y yo ya no podré volver (pp.100-1).

A good, illustrative example of Donoso's masterly manipulation of his narrative material (especially with respect to the technique of mental association) comes in the eighth chapter when Pancho and Octavio visit don Alejo. Donoso skilfully takes us back to Pancho's childhood without intervening directly. Pancho is concentrating on

the road as he drives up to don Alejo's house; this leads him to recall his walks along the road as a child; this in turn brings him to childhood memories of his relationship with the Cruz family. Nevertheless, Donoso maintains a convincing situation by jerking Pancho's mind back at intervals on to the external reality of the road. This accurately reflects the thought patterns of a driver. But Pancho's concentration on the road then makes him think of how don Alejo used to make him memorize it, and this provokes thoughts of his schooldays. This in turn makes him think of how his wife (Ema) wants his daughter (Normita) to go to a convent school. The passage is given momentum, dynamism and immediacy by unannounced switches in speaker from wife to husband to daughter within a single narrative continuum, all of which brings the memory vividly to life:

Pero la Ema quiere que la Normita vaya a un colegio de monjas, no quiero que la niña sea una cualquiera, como una, que tuvo que casarse con el primero que la miró para no quedarse para vestir santos - mira cómo estaría una si hubiera estudiado un poco, para qué decís eso cuando sabís que te gusté apenas me viste y dejaste al chiquillo dueño de la carnicería porque te enamoraste de mí, pero estudiando hubiera sido distinto, qué es estudiar mamá y qué son las monjitas, yo quiero que la niña estudie una profesión corta como obstetricia, qué es obstetricia mamá, y a él no le gustaba que preguntara, tan chiquita y qué le va a explicar uno, mejor esperar que crezca... (p.92-3).

Then the thought of the money needed to pay the school fees brings his mind back to don Alejo, to whom he is in debt.

When they arrive at don Alejo's house Pancho sees Misia Blanca eating; the childhood memory provoked by this sight is achieved with great skill, economy and subtlety:

Misia Blanca elige en un platillo un terrón de azúcar tostada para su tisana. Uno para ella otro para la Moniquita y otro para ti, Panchito ... (p.96).

As his recollections develop Pancho recalls how don Alejo once caught him spying. The memory is brought to life by the use of the present tense and by an insertion

of dialogue into Pancho's stream of thought without any overt authorial intervention:

Hasta que un día don Alejo me encuentra espiando entre los ligustros. Te pillé chiquillo de mierda. Y su mano me toma de aquí, del cuello... (p.97).

Significantly, the stream of thought passage only comes to an end when the light is switched off: Pancho then becomes aware of Octavio's voice (p.98). The movement of the prose parallels exactly his mental processes: internal thoughts are only brought to a halt by the distraction of something from external reality.

A particularly impressive feature of Donoso's style is his presentation of more than one level within a single narrative continuum. This allows the narrative to develop almost autonomously, following the effective withdrawal of a conventional narrator. We see Octavio's supposed thoughts inserted into a third person passage concerning Pancho's fear of don Alejo:

Miró a Octavio que le guiñó un ojo, no se agite compadre, espérese, que vamos a arreglar este asunto entre nosotros (p.39).

Manuela's thoughts are at one stage interrupted by a verbal reply to a comment we have not heard:

Aquí en El Olivo, escondiéndonos... bueno, bueno, chiquilla de mierda, entonces no me digas papá (p.50).

At the party at least two speakers' voices are interjected into a third person narration:

Dos hombres que oyeron el diálogo comenzaron a reírse de la Manuela, tratando de tocarla para comprobar si tenía o no pechos. Mijita linda... qué será esto. Déjeme que la toquetee, ándate para allá roto borracho, que venís a toquetearme tú. Entonces ellos dijeron que era el colmo que trajeran maricones como éste... (p.72).

Perhaps the most striking examples come during the scene where Manuela and Japonesa Grande make love, with its constant switches from third person to first, from speaker to speaker, and from objective to subjective reality. In this short extract, for instance, we see Japonesa Grande speaking, Manuela speaking, and Manuela narrating in the third person - all fused into one continuum:

me gusta tu cuerpo aterrado y todos tus miedos

y quisiera romper tu miedo, no, no tengas miedo Manuela, no romperlo sino que suavemente quitarlo de donde está para llegar a una parte de mí que ella, la pobre Japonesa Grande, creía que existía pero que no existe y no ha existido nunca, y no ha existido nunca a pesar de que me toca y me acaricia y murmura... no existe, Japonesa bruta, entiende, no existe. No mijita, Manuela, como si fuéramos dos mujeres, mira, así ves... (p.108).

An especially interesting feature of El lugar sin límites is that Donoso often juxtaposes the mental processes of more than one character. In Este domingo each section was centred around a certain character's point of view; contrasts between internal perceptions of reality were consequently brought out by the overall structural juxtaposition of sections. However, in El lugar sin límites, internal point of view often oscillates directly between two characters within a single section. A striking example of this comes in the fourth chapter. The first part of the chapter concentrates on Japonesita's thoughts, but the second part fluctuates between her thoughts and Manuela's. An examination of the distribution of the prose in the latter part of the chapter shows it to consist of long passages of interior monologue interspersed with short snippets of dialogue. What emerges is a kind of ping-pong technique whereby the dialogue shifts the emphasis to the other character thus allowing him or her to develop his thoughts until another interjected dialogue switches the emphasis back again. For example, Japonesita's demand that Manuela should defend her from Pancho puts the onus for reflection onto the father; but Manuela's suggestion that Japonesita should sleep with Pancho provokes the daughter to fantasize about the possibility of sexual fulfilment.³⁵ At the same time Donoso changes internal points of view without separating them with dialogue: sometimes a switch to an external event (such as Manuela's completion of Japonesita's hair-do) is enough to shift the emphasis to the other character. The effect of this is to make the narrative more autonomous and to create an ambiguous picture of reality. The fact that we simultaneously receive two different

perceptions of events without the benefit of a traditional narrator to choose between them for us makes us more aware of the subjectivity of our own interpretations of reality.

The question of ambiguity is fundamental to Donoso's work. El lugar sin límites gives us, in Gutiérrez Mouat's words, "(una imagen invertida) del concepto cultural 'realidad'" (though he takes this too far, in my view, when he ignores the existential implications of the title, claiming it is simply a reference to "(un texto) sin límites"). At one stage, in a scene which gives us a foretaste of the confused narratorial stance of El obsceno pájaro, an apparently omniscient narrator seems actually to question his own ability to interpret the fictional reality of the text:

Es que hay luna, se dijo la Japonesita, o lo diría en voz alta, o tal vez don Céspedes inclinado sobre el brasero lo diría, o tal vez sólo lo pensara y ella lo sintió (p.136).

Similarly, the inversion of the characters underlines the novel's ambiguity, as does its overall structure. Although it is fundamentally linear and by no means as confusing as El obsceno pájaro, there are several aspects of the novel's organization which leave the reader disorientated. Manuela is at first presented as a woman: only later do we realize that he is a man. Some areas of doubt are only cleared up by the flashbacks that break down the novel's chronological sequence. It is some time before we understand how Manuela could possibly have fathered Japonesita. There are many references to the famous bet made between don Alejo and Japonesa Grande: the reader is confused by this, for it is only in the seventh chapter that the significance of the bet is established and only in the ninth that it is actually carried out. As in life, areas of reality remain outside our immediate perception and our reactions tend to be based on limited or selective information.

However, the structure of the novel is generally harmonious. Despite Donoso's abandonment of a simplistic

linear and chronologically developed plot and the increased ambiguity of the characters, the plan he imposes upon his narrative material provides the reader with an alternative structure forged, in Donoso's words, with "una buscada y elegante simplicidad"³⁷. Several critics, most notably Moreno Turner, have emphasised the novel's "simetría perfecta"³⁸. They point out that it is organized around a single day. The first five chapters stretch from Sunday morning to Sunday evening and are centred around Manuela and Japonesita's waiting for Pancho; the final five chapters take us from Sunday evening to just before dawn on the Monday morning and essentially revolve around their encounter with Pancho; these two blocks of five chapters are, it is pointed out, separated by a two-chapter flashback to the party that followed don Alejo's electoral triumph. Thus a highly symmetrical pattern of organization emerges.

However, this does not fully clarify the nature of Donoso's structural strategy in El lugar sin límites. McMurray has remarked that "the central action zigzags forward, postponing climactic events, accumulating emotional momentum, and heightening the impact of the final chapters"³⁹. There is in fact more to the novel's structure than an overall symmetrical plan; the chapters are arranged in such a way as to ensure maximum effect. It is significant that the novel is structured around waiting and hoping for Pancho Vega; the frustration of these hopes (Pancho rejects Japonesita and kills Manuela) underlines the central theme of existential disenchantment. It is appropriate therefore that Donoso opens the novel with two chapters taken from the point of view of Manuela but closes it with a chapter dealing with Manuela's death and one expressed from Japonesita's point of view; the central rôle of the hopeful, optimistic Manuela is deliberately replaced by the pessimistic figure of his daughter. The general development of the chapters follows this plan of building up illusions only to deny them: the first four chapters, for example, chart the rising aspi-

rations of Manuela, Pancho and Japonesita, while the fifth, which ends the novel's first movement, brings these hopes tumbling down as don Alejo reveals his true intentions and announces the abandonment of the plan to electrify the town. This feeling is reinforced by the two-chapter flashback that follows. It allows us to form a contrast between the dismal reality of the present and the heady, hopeful days of the past: the presentation of the past before the present underscores the foolishness of hope, while the flashback scene as a whole strengthens the impression of nostalgia for a mythical lost paradise.

The reader is made to share the characters' feelings by the way Donoso cuts off the chapters at dramatic moments. As we have seen, Chapter 5 shatters the hopes built up in the previous chapters. But at this moment of despair the chapter is brought to an end with Manuela and Japonesita freezing at the sound of Pancho's horn: thus the hope he represents for both of them is suddenly reborn. However, Donoso suspends the action for the duration of the flashback (two chapters), thereby inviting the reader to share the tension and anticipation of the characters. The sound of the horn is explained in Chapter 8, but only at the end of this chapter do they decide to go to the brothel: the action is again suspended by a break in chapters, for they only turn up there in the following chapter. At the beginning of Chapter 9 we see Manuela in the hen-house where he hears himself being called for; but it is only at the end of Chapter 10 that we actually see Pancho forcing Japonesita to call him. Manuela's decision to respond meanwhile was taken at the end of the previous chapter. This does not lead to a mere "digression", as Gutiérrez Mouat suggests: we have a series of dramatic chapter endings all preparing us for Manuela's entrance which takes place in Chapter 11 (paralleling the description of his performance for don Alejo in Chapter 7, itself suspended after being announced in the sixth chapter). However, the build-up in Manuela's hopes

is again crushed: the novel ends with his brutal murder and the deep pessimism of Japonesita. Significantly, these final two chapters contain no memories: there is no more yearning for the past, for now all hope has finally disappeared.

One of the most interesting examples of this aspect of Donoso's narrative technique is the way he suspends the description of the sexual activities of Manuela and Japonesa Grande until the ninth chapter, a scene which is basically a continuation of the mental flashback of chapters 6 and 7. Critics have so far failed to account for this major break in the novel's symmetry. Even Moreno Turner, who provides a diagram to demonstrate the novel's harmonious construction, includes no mention of this deliberate structural feature. Let us examine some possible explanations.

Firstly, it is an attempt to create suspense and maintain the reader's interest. There are several references to the bet and Japonesita's parenthood throughout the first movement of the novel. The agreement between Manuela and Japonesa Grande is concluded at the very end of Chapter 7: the suspension of its consummation for two chapters sharpens the reader's curiosity. It also increases his degree of involvement in the story: the cutting off of the action at such an agonizing moment forces us to share Manuela's sense of tension and apprehension.

There are other reasons for the suspension of this episode. By breaking it off from the main flashback Donoso obviously wants it to stand out so that the reader's attention will be more concentrated on it. This is so that it can reinforce our impression of Manuela's sexual identity crisis. His sexual activity with Japonesa Grande is the only time in his life that he has been forced to act like a man: this reminder of his innate manhood is consequently a threat to the feminine identity he wishes to assume. The cutting-off of the sexual episode from the flashback scene parallels therefore

Manuela's attempts to block out this memory from his mind. The reason the memory returns to him in the hen-house is that he feels his femininity is threatened and is therefore forced to remember the only time when he was compelled to be a man. The threat to his femininity comes from Japonésita: her cry of "papá" is the expression of a need to be defended from Pancho, a need for Manuela to adopt a paternal, protective, masculine rôle. Her cry immediately precedes the commencement of Manuela's recollection of his orgasm with Japonésa Grande and is clearly what provokes the memory:

Un grito de la Japonésita. Una silla cae. Algo le están haciendo. La mano de la Manuela metida de nuevo entre su piel y su camisa justo donde late el corazón, aprieta hasta hacerse doler, como quisiera hacerle doler el cuerpo a Pancho Vega, por qué grita de nuevo la Japonésita, ay, ay, papá que no me llame, que no me llame así otra vez porque no tengo puños para defenderla, sólo sé bailar, y tiritar aquí en el gallinero.

... Pero una vez no tirité. El cuerpo desnudo de la Japonésa Grande, caliente, ay, si tuviera ese calor ahora... (pp.105-6).

The final words of the flashback return to exactly the same theme. He realizes he cannot conjure up the masculine side of him that impregnated Japonésa Grande in order to protect his daughter; therefore, as we switch back to the present, he decides to save Japonésita by using his femininity (symbolized by his dress) to seduce Pancho:

Pero júrame que nunca más, Japonésa por Dios qué asco, júrame, socias, claro, pero esto no, nunca más porque ahora ya no existe ese tú, ese yo que ahora estoy necesitando tanto, y que quisiera llamar desde este rincón del gallinero, mientras los veo bailar allá en el salón...

... los puños que no tiene sólo le sirven para arrebujarse en la parcela desteñida de su vestido. Matar a Pancho con ese vestido. Ahorcarlo con él (pp.109-10).

Significantly, however, Manuela changes his mind and uses his femininity to try and seduce Pancho for his own personal sexual satisfaction. This points to another reason for Donoso's suspension of the episode concerning the effectuation of the bet. He juxtaposes two different types of sexual activity. Manuela's sexual experience

with Japonesa Grande was for him a negative one: he wants to efface the memory of it by substituting it with a homosexual affair with Pancho - that is, something which for him, a sexually inverted creature, will be positive. He wants to express forcefully his womanhood in an attempt to counteract his masculine identity as represented by the memory of his experience with Japonesa Grande. He says of the other whores:

Esas no son mujeres. Ella va a demostrarles
quién es mujer y cómo se es mujer (p.111).

He therefore puts on his dress and goes out to dance. There is another curiously inverted parallel with the flashback here. His sexual activity with Japonesa Grande was a kind of performance too: there was an audience (don Alejo and his cronies) watching through the window and Japonesa Grande's assertion that "te ganaste la casa como una reina" (p.109) echoes Manuela's oft-repeated desire to become, via his dancing, the "reina de la fiesta". But this time the performance will demonstrate the opposite - not his masculinity but his femininity. He crosses himself like a great artist and prepares to "salir a la luz" (p.113), to step out into the light associated with his quest for a truly feminine identity. The introduction of the flashback sequence in the ninth chapter is meant to remind Manuela of the threat posed by his masculinity; at the same time its introduction serves the purpose of demonstrating his rejection of that masculinity and his decision to stake everything on an attempt to achieve genuine femininity by means of a homosexual relationship with Pancho.

As we have seen, Manuela's quest is doomed to failure. The collapse of his illusions contradicts any positive elements that might exist in the novel - such as the desire for social change or the transformation of man by the liberation of his instincts. The final message is one of complete pessimism. However, the most striking feature of El lugar sin límites on an artistic level is that this message is not expressed directly but

is suggested on an abstract symbolic plane. At this stage of his work Donoso is moving ever further away from the traditional rôle of the narrator, something which is reflected in his narrative technique as a whole. As yet the structure of El lugar sin límites may not, unlike El obsceno pájaro, constitute a formal embodiment of chaos, but its suggestive symbolism, its grotesque inversions, its traces of narrative autonomy and its concentration on internal reality all combine to create a nightmarish world where faith in traditional perceptions of reality and the idea of an ordered universe is gone. From here to El obsceno pájaro it is but a short step.

CHAPTER THREE

EL OBSCENO PÁJARO DE LA NOCHE : ORDER AND CHAOS

In the many interviews he has given on El obsceno pájaro de la noche Donoso has repeatedly stated that he wrote the novel without any pre-conceived plan, that it evolved as a kind of exorcism of his personal obsessions or, to borrow Sábato's phrase, of his "fantasmas". He has told Biancotti and Sarduy, for example, that:

le roman que l'on écrit est un instrument pour se connaître, pour s'identifier, pour définir ses propres limites, et celles de l'univers que l'on connaît!

This suggests that the act of literary creation allows Donoso to come to terms with life, that the formal expression of a chaotic universe satisfies to some extent the author's quest for a sense of order. It is worth repeating here the comparison he develops between El obsceno pájaro and the construction of a mediaeval city in an interview with San Martín:

Quisiera que fuera una cosa tremendamente polifacética, tremendamente vital, tremendamente móvil, tremendamente barroca, no en un sentido de Carpentier; barroca como las ciudades medievales que de alguna manera tienen un sentido...

De alguna manera, las ciudades medievales tienen un urbanismo propio interior que es como una acumulación de cosas en que se llega a una forma extraordinaria, maravillosa, que es un pueblo en que no hay un propósito inicial, sino que hay una sobreposición de vidas y de tiempos que van creando un conjunto; que van creando una forma...

Yo quisiera que la novela tuviera esa forma que va más allá de la forma, esa metaforma, digamos de la ciudad medieval, que tiene todo el contenido, todo el significado y toda la contradicción que puede tener una ciudad medieval.

Although the apparently chaotic structure of El obsceno pájaro may reflect the ambiguity of a reality beyond man's comprehension and the turmoil of a universe without meaning, the fact that Donoso does arrive at some kind of internal form provides him with an antidote to the engulfing chaos of which he is so painfully aware. It is proposed here to demonstrate how El obsceno pájaro brings out the collapse of man's attempts to reconcile

himself with the absurdity and anarchy of life and how, via the creation of a congruent form within which to express this conflict, art emerges as the only viable alternative construct open to man.

Clearly, the intricate, contradictory nature of El obsceno pájaro makes it difficult to pinpoint accurately either meaning or form. Several critics (among them Borinsky, MacAdam, Magnarelli, Martínez and, to some extent, Gutiérrez Mouat) present the novel as a series of linguistic signs behind which there is no real significance. However, as was argued in the introduction, ambiguity is not necessarily a complete barrier to interpretation: there may be more to the novel than what Magnarelli sees as the mere "illusion of depth"³; as Myrna Solotorevsky suggests:

en el mundo de adentro... hay un secreto, no desentrañable, no transportable hacia la luz, pero que importa preservar; la máscara no estaría, entonces, encubriendo el vacío, la profundidad que ella finge sería verdadera"⁴.

Indeed, the novel's very ambiguity is a pointer to Donoso's existential malaise: the seemingly incoherent picture we are given dramatises modern man's inability to comprehend the meaning of a life that has been arbitrarily thrust upon him.

At the same time, the purely formal emphasis of the structuralist approach does not always clarify our understanding of complex Latin American works like El obsceno pájaro. In a recent article on the novels of Sábato, Paul Alexandru Georgescu highlights some of the limitations of the Barthesian approach in a way equally applicable to Donoso's novel. The correlations Barthes sees between cardinal functions do not always exist: sometimes part of the correlation is withheld or several possible versions are given. Catalysers are replaced with hypotheses or rumours giving only possible readings of events. Character indices do not necessarily radiate outwards in a coherent manner, for contradictory elements are often introduced into a character's make-up. Informative

indices cannot automatically be presumed to refer to concrete surroundings: they may simply be the result of a character's mental fantasies. To compensate for these inadequacies Georgescu posits the notion of a third structural layer beyond that of functions and signs, what he calls "signos numerales": this level involves the use of metaphor, temporal perspective and parallel narratives in order to expand the significance of the text. In other words, the key to our understanding of the novel lies not in our ability to break it down into causal sequences but in an awareness of the inter-relationship of episodes and motifs on a wider, symbolic level. As Adriana Valdés writes in a study of the "imbunche" motif in El obsceno pájaro:

la relación entre motivos no podrá depender sólo del argumento, del tiempo o del personaje: su sentido se irá constituyendo en parte muy importante por resonancias inesperadas, por una ligazón casi mágica entre los episodios.⁵

This third level of symbolic interpenetration unifies the novel's disparate narrative threads. We have already seen how the stories of the main character groupings lend themselves to the identification of symbolic parallels: the novel's various episodes are united by a common pattern of existential symbolism - the interpenetration between the text's various narrative planes does not take place solely on the level of the action itself. However, there is more to this process of mutual interpenetration than the mere creation of general resonances between episodes: it actually constitutes an important element in the novel's structural basis. Donoso has remarked that El obsceno pájaro is characterized by "el binarismo como negación del maniqueísmo".⁶ A close examination of the text reveals a system of binary oppositions running throughout the course of the novel. Practically every symbol, every motif, every character falls into this overall pattern. Furthermore, the opposition of these constituent elements within the novel refers back to the one basic opposition mentioned earlier: order-versus-chaos. Everything stems from this central idea: a whole series of lexically diverse elements combine on a semantic

level provoking a free flow of associations between motifs that enhances the reader's appreciation of the text. It is this system of binary oppositions deriving from the order-versus-chaos conflict that forms the true internal syntax of the novel.

Binarism is therefore seen not only to generate ambiguity but also to create narrative unity. As Gutiérrez Mouat says:

No hay "centro" en el sentido de que no se logra la coincidencia entre significante y significado... Pero si no existe este centro..., sí existe en cambio una dialéctica estructural que opone al discurso abierto del carnaval (y del juego) el discurso cerrado de los valores culturales.⁷

Though Gutiérrez Mouat's perception of the central dialectic differs to the one offered here, the important point is that this system of oppositions is seen as an alternative method of narrative structure.

In order to allow for a greater interaction between the pairs of motifs Donoso first introduces a series of parallels so as to increase the level of association between the novel's various elements. One obvious set of parallels is that established between the mythical stories of the past and the events of the present. Thus Jerónimo's attempts to avoid the unpleasant side of life find their echo in the landowner's raising of his poncho in order to erase an ugly aspect of reality. Similarly, Inés is associated with the "niña-bruja" and the "niña-beata" while Peta Ponce recalls the figure of the old nurserymaid. Equally important are the manifold spatial parallels between the Casa and la Rinconada: among other instances, one can note, for example, the physical similarities, the protective quality each holds for its inhabitants and the analogous presentation of Boy and the child messiah.

It is important to notice the parallelisms within the novel because they provide the basis for the mutual cross-references established by the system of interconnecting, paired oppositions. Furthermore, the fact that motifs

are simultaneously compared and contrasted underlines man's inability accurately to define reality, as well as highlighting the idea that ^(the) seeds of chaos are always present in our apparently ordered existence. It is worth noting also that Donoso often increases ambiguity by introducing a direct discussion on the nature of a specific episode. Humberto-Mudito offers several alternatives as to the real circumstances of Boy's conception and Quinteros's detailed analysis of the "niña-bruja"/"niña-beata" myth indicates a whole gamut of possible interpretations. Thus the process of binary opposition is extended into the realm of direct contradiction of one episode by another.

However, it is the actual chain of oppositions linking up with the central order-chaos dichotomy which constitutes the structural backbone of the text. A series of images associated with order (or the desire for order) are systematically opposed to images of chaos, each individual image linking up in turn with a new variation on the same motif. A fundamental opposition is that between youth (representing order) and age (representing chaos). "Youth" here refers to the post-adolescent phase of the upper middle classes. The orphan girls, for example, represent chaos: but this is due not only to their age, but also their status as orphans - social outcasts from the lower classes. There is, however, an interesting contrast between the early and later years of Inés and Jerónimo. Their superficially happy, youthful relationship soon gives way to the reality of frustration and old age. Inés consciously attempts to transform herself into an old woman: the anarchy of senility is "una forma de libertad" (p. 399) because it represents freedom from rational laws. Equally it is a state of neutrality, for there is nothing to look forward to: "soy libre, ya no podría sentir, pertenezco al sexo sintético que es el sexo de las viejas" (p. 400). It is significant that Inés explains her position to misiá Raquel Ruiz in sexual terms: if sexual activity is a symbol of the quest for

fulfilment then Inés's withdrawal from the sexual world brings out her loss of hope and surrender to chaos.

The old women, along with Inés, constantly oppose games to reality. They prefer the fictional construct of the game to the real world. At the same time the game image, like the "viejas", emerges as a representation of chaos. Games after all are based on chance. The game in which the old women stick fragments of saints' statues together in order to "organizar identidades arbitrarias" (p.327) reflects, like the telephone game, the fragility of the human personality and the pervasive ambiguity of reality. Their withdrawal into the world of the game brings out another aspect of their immersion into a world of chaos.

The final chapter shows the order represented by the new home being overrun by this chaos the old women personify. Padre Azócar and the young priests come to move them but the women argue crazily about Brígida's surnames, go looking for pumpkin seeds and end by boarding the buses in a state of total disorder. Padre Azócar realizes that it is useless to organize "estos seres anárquicos" for "las mentes de las viejas se enredaban en una maraña que impedía todo intento de iniciar un orden" (p.529).

The youth-age dichotomy finds its correlation in the masters-servants opposition. Servants are said to confront the unpleasant side of reality that their masters choose to ignore. Masters feel "pavor de las cosas feas e indignas" (p.66). But in forcing their servants to perform distasteful tasks they lose part of themselves to their employees, "la mitad inútil, descartada, lo sucio y lo feo" (p.64). The servants "fueron robándose algo integral de las personas de sus patronos al colocarse en su lugar para hacer algo que ellos se negaban a hacer" (p.65). Consequently, they build up "algo como una placa negativa" (p.65), achieving "el reverso del poder" (p.66). Thus the ruling groups cling to a notion of order while the servile class are seen as embodying the dark, nega-

tive, chaotic side of life which their masters choose to ignore.

This opposition is taken further by the establishment of several more specific dichotomies stemming from the master-servant idea. Misiá Raquel Ruiz, although Brígida's mistress, is forced to look after the servant's finances to the extent that she becomes a "prisionera de la plata de la Brígida" (p. 313), her life having been made a misery. This inversion suggests the encroachment of chaos upon an ordered vision of the world. Moreover, a whole series of related oppositions, operating on various levels, suggests that the same crisis is present in the Azcoitia family. The Azcoitias barely acknowledge the existence of the Casa, inhabited as it is by such representatives of chaos as ex-servants and old women:

La falta de interés de los Azcoitia por esta Casa es secular. Como si le tuvieran un miedo que no se confiesan ni a sí mismos y prefieren desentenderse de ella en todo sentido menos en el de mantener el derecho de propietarios (p. 55).

A more specific opposition encapsulating the order-chaos, youth-age, master-servant ideas is that of Jerónimo and Peta Ponce. Jerónimo imposes his own artificial order on to a world which he chooses to see in terms of a series of logically interlocking medallions. Peta, however, lives in "un desorden de construcciones utilitarias sin pretensión de belleza: el revés de la fachada" (p. 181). She is part of "el mundo de abajo, de la siniestra, del revés, de las cosas destinadas a perecer escondidas sin jamás conocer la luz" (p. 183). This human embodiment of chaos does not fit in to any of his rationally conceived medallions, but belongs to "la leyenda enemiga que contradecía a la suya" (p. 182).

The opposition is given added force by other groupings in the binary chain of linking pairs. The first comes when Jerónimo's medallions are set against Peta's handkerchiefs. The beauty and perfection of the handkerchiefs she gives him contradicts the system of reasoned laws upon which he has so far based his life: "un tizonazo de

admiración hizo trastabillar su orden al reconocer en la Peta Ponce a una enemiga poderosa"(p.183). The second important related opposition is that created between the classical beauty of Jerónimo's four noble, black dogs and the "perra amarilla"(which is associated with Peta Ponce and the nurserymaid-witch of the old legend). Significantly, his dogs are unable to capture the yellow bitch which steals their meat: the idea of chaos holds sway over the artificial concept of order. The conflict between historical time and mythical time underlines this point. In Achugar's view, both represent man's attempts to define reality. The old hag (possibly Peta Ponce) prevents Mudito from escaping at the end of the novel: "el triunfo de la Peta Ponce es derrotar las vanas construcciones que el hombre ha erigido contra el tiempo".⁸ Peta's ability to distort time makes her an embodiment of chaos and ambiguity: her apparent victory over Mudito emphasises the ascendancy of the qualities she represents.

It would be interesting at this point to consider the rôle played by the various chaotic elements mentioned so far in Donoso's presentation of sexuality in El obsceno pájaro, for this too indicates yet another binary opposition within the novel. Stabb has remarked that "the erotic is clearly a defining characteristic of that obscene nightbird chattering in the 'unsubdued forest'".⁹ There does seem to be a very definite relationship between sexuality and fatality here: this again relates to the order-versus-chaos conflict because it involves the juxtaposition of an image of hope of fulfilment with an image of decay, death and despair. When Iris Mateluna is pretending that Damiana is her baby, her washing of the old woman's vagina provokes an orgasm in the aged lesbian (p.125). When people are making love in the Gigantes's car the yellow bitch appears at the window. When Jerónimo and Inés make love in the open the yellow bitch appears again sniffing and licking the secretions left by their bodies (p.194). Humberto thought he had

made love with Inés on the night of Boy's conception but later suspects that the act took place with Peta Ponce:

en esas tinieblas yo puedo no haberle dado mi amor a Inés sino a otra, a la Peta, a la Peta Ponce que sustituyó a Inés por ser ella la pareja que me corresponde, la Peta, raída, vieja, estropeada, sucia, mi miembro enorme la penetró a ella, gozó en su carne podrida, gemí de placer con la cercanía de sus manos verrugosas, de sus ojos nublados por las legañas, mendigando el beso de su boca acuchillada por las arrugas, sí, en las tinieblas de esa noche sólo los ojos del tordo vieron que fue el sexo de la vieja, agusanado por la cercanía de la muerte, que devoró mi maravilloso sexo nuevo, y esa carne deteriorada me recibió (pp. 223-4).

He now feels terrified that Peta will return to repeat the sexual act with him. He still desires Inés but, through ageing, she has now adopted the characteristics of Peta:

Así tiene que ser, así ha sido siempre, Inés, Inés-Peta, Peta-Inés, Peta, Peta Ponce, jamás he podido tocar la belleza porque al desearla la convierto en desastradas dueñas de pensión (p. 431).

Significantly, when he attempts to seduce Inés she is transformed into the wrinkled old hag, Peta. The purpose of this juxtapositioning of the horror of old age with the supposedly youthful, vigorous activity of sexual intercourse is that it reinforces the novel's central existential message. Sexual activity, a bodily function, may represent the quest for transcendence, but by introducing the motif of old age into a sexual context Donoso suggests the inevitability of bodily decay. As we are so eloquently reminded in many of Vallejo's poems, we are in fact prisoners of our body. Thus, at the point at which the characters feel they may be achieving a symbolic fulfilment, they are in reality confronted with a terrifying image of chaos and death.

The order-chaos conflict present in the above-mentioned contrasting binary motifs is reinforced by a series of other oppositions less central to the plot. There is an ironic contrast established in the double presentation of don Clemente: when we first read of him he is

described as an old lunatic who used to run naked around the convent; we later see him as he used to be, a wily politician in apparent command of his senses. The order in which the reader is given these two images of the same man expresses Donoso's view that the seeds of destruction are present in all of us. Madre Benita is set against the "viejas". She develops her own construct in the form of charitable work in order to ward off the chaos represented by the emptiness of the old women's lives: "pobre (sic) viejecitas, hay que hacer algo por ellas, sí, usted se ha matado trabajando para no conocer el revés de la Brígida" (p.29). The opposition of men and women also corresponds to the order-chaos polarity. Gutiérrez Mouat sees this in terms of a conflict between two approaches to narrative - the traditional (men) and the modern (women) - but an existential interpretation can also be advanced. The motif runs throughout the novel but is most fully developed when Inés moves to the Casa. Inés, we are told, "ha ido impidiendo que su marido se desprenda de esta Casa, siempre por motivos irracionales, totalmente subjetivos, imposible comprender esos motivos que hicieron que generaciones de mujeres Azcoitia hayan ido intrigando y urdiendo una red de protección para esta Casa" (pp.376-7). She compares the irrationality of women with the reason of men who take control of everything because "ellos entienden lo que significa y saben explicarlo, y explican tanto que las cosas dejan de tener significado" (p.377). Just as men are symbols of an illusory order and women symbols of chaos, Europe appears in the novel as representing order while Latin America is associated with chaos. Again the references are numerous; one striking example comes when Humberto describes Jerónimo's return from Europe: "el hecho es que la presencia de Jerónimo era una lección de armonía, incómoda porque era imposible emularla en estas latitudes bárbaras" (p.163). The interesting feature of the presentation of these motifs is the way they all link together, providing structural unity and reinforcing the novel's central

ideas.

So far we have been considering oppositions stemming basically from a youth-age, masters-servants dichotomy. Another obvious polarity is that set up between the Casa and la Rinconada. These are more than mere "metáforas de la ficción", as Gutiérrez Mouat claims.¹⁰ La Rinconada, as we have seen, is an attempt to impose order onto chaos. Jerónimo wishes to destroy "ese inmundo laberinto de adobe, de galerías y corredores" and replace the wild trees and plants with "matorrales podados en estrictas formas geométricas que disfrazaran su exuberancia natural" (p.230). This leads to two further oppositions - Jerónimo-versus-the freaks and Jerónimo-versus-Boy. As was suggested earlier, Jerónimo tries to suppress the sense of disorder implied by Boy and the monsters. However, the freaks themselves adopt la Rinconada as a construct against chaos too. The estate and the world beyond its walls are systematically opposed. They fear the collapse of "el paraíso del que ninguno se atrevía a salir" (p.406). Emperatriz sees the outside world as an "infierno" (p.407). After breaching the boundaries of the estate, Boy asserts that: "ahora que conozco la realidad, sólo lo artificial me interesa" (p.485). He asks Dr. Azula to perform an operation on his brain to remove his memory of the real world so that he can return to "el orden inicial" (p.485).

Humberto's mental crisis is also expressed in terms of this system of binary oppositions corresponding to the notion of order-versus-chaos. His problems are engendered by his father who instills in him the urge to become a person of stature and significance; this provokes his obsession with assuming the identity of don Jerónimo. From now on Humberto fluctuates between the need to become "somebody" and the desire to be "nobody", between power and weakness, expansiveness and withdrawal, between what Goic calls "la voluntad de ser y la voluntad de autoaniquilamiento".¹¹ The problem is reflected in his ambiguous attitude to Iris Mateluna. During the telephone game he thinks he can control her thoughts but simultaneously fears her; if she wins he feels that "la sangre

que el doctor Azula me robó volverá a correr por mis venas,dejaré de ser una mancha de humedad en una pared, me rescatarás,o no,quizás oyendo su voz me repliegue más, hasta quedar anulado"(p.441).Sometimes he dominates Iris, sometimes he obeys her,"ciego y sin voluntad"(p.82).It is interesting to note that the power-weakness opposition is reinforced by another symbol in the chain of inter-connecting elements,namely that of the Chalet Suizo.It is something more than "the unattainable ideal home" referred to by McMurray¹²:it brings out the contradiction between the reality of Mudito`s situation and his absurd aspirations.He addresses himself to Iris:

Arranco mi mano de tu pecho.Enciendo una luz discreta y te muestro la cajita de música,abro la tapa,oyes el Carnaval de Venecia,tus ojos se van a iluminar,los haré asomarse a los espejitos de la puerta y de la ventana:te indico la puertecita,quiero que entres,ahora,ahora,ahora mismo,cazarte dentro de la caja de música.

- ¿Creís que soy huevona? ¿Que vai a poder hacerme lesa con ese juguete?

No sé qué contestar (p.142).

The conflict within Mudito is presented largely in sexual terms.He dreams of seducing Emperatriz.He will:

agarrarla en sus brazos,penetrarla con su sexo, matarla de placer al ensartarla gritando con su sexo inmenso...

Sintió su pantalón mojado.Su miembro decayó (p.269).

At times he imagines he has a large,red,potent penis;but on other occasions it is a "trozo de carne inerte"(p.431), "una cosa inútil"(p.463).He feels his look controls don Jerónimo`s virility:he has "la mirada cargada de poder" (p.84) and thinks that his ex-master is desperate to "recuperar su potencia que yo conservo guardada en mis ojos"(p.96).Yet he too is dependent upon the look of other people;referring to Iris he says:

Estoy acostumbrado a ser una presencia sobre la que los ojos se resbalen sin que la atención encuentre nada en qué fijarse. ¿por qué me seguías, entonces,si ni siquiera me ibas a conceder existencia con una mirada? (p.76).

This conflict is,of course,as Bacarisse,McMurray and others have pointed out,a symptom of Mudito`s schizo-

phrenia. At the same time though it fits into the general order-chaos binary system, the desire for sexual power and self-control corresponding to the need for a sense of order, and the reality of sexual feebleness equalling the process of succumbing to chaos and despair.

The taut web of inter-relations within the binary system is given added unity by a further layer of symbolic interpenetration. A whole series of images stems from one central symbol: that of enclosure. This image is itself binary in nature, for it suggests a conflict between outside and inside, appearance and reality, hope and despair, integration and withdrawal, order and chaos. There are two essential aspects of the enclosure image as presented in El obsceno pájaro. The first is its association with the concept of the construct, with the attempt to find meaning in things that have no meaning. A striking example is that of the packet. Although many critics (notably Borinsky, Gutiérrez Mouat, MacAdam and Magnarelli) see this image in purely literary terms (that is, as a reflection of the text as a series of linguistic signs behind which there is no deeper meaning), a metaphysical interpretation is, in my view, more convincing. Like Colonel Aureliano Buendía's production of golden fish in Cien años de soledad and Amalia's hopeless hunt for the missing finger from the statue of St. Gabriel, the process of wrapping things up is a symbol of the absurd, pointless activity that is life. The search for something of significance inside the packages corresponds to man's futile quest for meaning in life. Múdito asks:

¿No ve, Madre Benita, que lo importante es envolver, que el objeto envuelto no tiene importancia? ... ¿Para qué sigue abriendo y rompiendo envoltorios... si tiene que saber que no va a encontrar nada? (pp. 30-1).

Other symbols link up with this one to reinforce the notion of the conflict between the desire for meaning (order) and the reality of despair (chaos). Múdito attempts to climb through a non-existent window, a recurring image in the novel; the window is illusory, only

there "para que creyera que existía un afuera"(p.303). The cells in the Casa are used as storage space for discarded oddments: Inés visits to search for "una sombrera de cuero donde podía haber un envoltorio donde podía haber un sobre donde podía haber guardado hace años miles cierto certificado importante o cierta fotografía"(p.55) - but as usual her quest is fruitless.

A second important feature of enclosure images is their relation to the idea of withdrawal or escape. Solovtorevsky has observed that "los ámbitos cerrados...representan la protección y la libertad, pero también el estatismo y la anulación. Asimismo el mundo de afuera... es mostrado como peligroso y terrible"¹³. As the characters attain an increasing symbolic awareness of the chaos surrounding them they attempt to recede even further into their own artificial constructs of order. As we have seen, the freaks prefer to stay within the boundaries of la Rinconada and Boy expresses his wish to languish in a mental limbo. The Casa, although itself a labyrinthine image of anarchy, is equally a symbolic refuge from chaos. Inés moves there after her hysterectomy (an operation which recalls Mudito's references to Iris's body as a "cáscara superflua"(p.76), a mere "envoltorio"(p.437), and indeed his description of himself as a worthless "corteza"(p.217). Mudito thinks that "es terrible la ciudad"(p.341), living in fear of the "abismo de la calle"(p.347) as opposed to the Casa where he experiences the relief of being "adentro, libre"(p.347) and enjoys "la paz de los corredores y las galerías"(p.79). He begins to wall up parts of the Casa so that he can retreat even deeper into it (pp.400-1).

Mudito's withdrawal also involves the destruction of his previous identities as he heads along the path to oblivion:

he quemado mi nombre definitivamente, mi voz la perdí hace mucho tiempo, ya no tengo sexo porque puedo ser una vieja más entre tantas viejas de la Casa, y mis papeles incoherentes de garabatos que intentaron implorar que se me concediera una máscara definida y perpetua, los quemo... (p.156).

He imagines that Dr. Azula's operation has robbed him of 80% of his organs. He is now merely "un pedazo de hombre" (p.336), even "esta manga exangüe a la puerta de un convento" (p.148).

This process of withdrawal links up with another image in the chain, that of the "imbunche". Adriana Valdés has made a careful study of this motif identifying both positive and negative aspects in it: it thus forms part of the binary system identified earlier. It is much more than a representation of "la tradición histórica chilena" as Vidal suggests.¹⁴ The notion of becoming an "imbunche" ironically constitutes an attempt to escape chaos by retreating into self-annihilation. Boy's operation transforms him into a kind of "imbunche". This is a state to which the mentally disturbed Muditó also aspires. For him this would be "la paz total" (p.288). He cries out to Peta Ponce:

déjame anularme, deja que las viejas bondadosas me fajen, quiero ser un imbunche metido adentro del saco de su propia piel, despojado de la capacidad de moverme y de desear y de oír y de leer y escribir, o de recordar... (p.433).

Thus, via the linking up of motifs on a symbolic plane, the story of a mythical creature effects our interpretation of the present. The pattern of events is developed further as Donoso introduces more variations on the "imbunche" theme. One is his identification with Iris's baby, the so-called saviour child. He is wrapped up in a kind of strait-jacket so tight that "me está reduciendo más y más, ya estoy tan pequeño que una anciana me podría cargar en sus brazos" (p.391) - recalling the way the size of the clothes Inés knits for her longed-for child decreases concurrently with the decline of her hope. The process is taken a stage further with the introduction of the image of the sack. The old women sew Muditó up in sacks, transforming him into a "paquetito sin sexo" (p.525). However, there is still an element of binarism present here:

sálvenme, no quiero morir, terror, estoy débil,
tullido, inutilizado, sin sexo, sin nada, rasado,

pero no gritaré porque no hay otras formas de existencia, estoy a salvo aquí dentro de esto de donde jamás he salido... (p.538).

Yet, despite the comfort and security that the sack represents for him, he feels terror when the old hag carries him off. Although the struggle between order and chaos is present right to the end, Mudio's complete destruction in the novel's closing lines seems indicative of the triumph of the latter.

The binary system of inter-related images identified in El obscuro pájaro suggests that the novel's structure is not as chaotic as is often supposed. A key to the structural system seems to lie with the figure of Humberto-Mudio. Most critics, with notable exceptions like Gutiérrez Mouat and Achugar - who sees the basis of the narrative as "una libertad hiperbólica donde es rey el juego imprevisible de la inasible imaginación"¹⁵ - agree that Mudio represents the main centre of consciousness from which all the other voices in the text stem. An identity crisis, engendered in Humberto by his father, provokes a chain of metamorphoses in his character. Promis and Quinteros suggest that Mudio is himself a freak who projects his monstrosity on to the text as a whole, while Bacarisse's account of Humberto's schizophrenic ontological insecurity points to the novel's basis of organization: Humberto's condition leads him to deceive deliberately the reader in order to avoid understanding, so although the structure is distorted by madness, "the homogeneity of the emotions behind the novel unifies its disparate sections"¹⁶. The chain of identities generated by his madness leads to a narrative structure based on the principle of transformation. Humberto becomes Mudio, a "vieja", Iris's dog, the Gigante's papier-mâché mask, Iris's doll, the miraculous child, even a shadow, a stain on the wall, inert matter. At the same time we witness a series of changes in narrative voice: misía Raquel Ruiz, Madre Benita, Iris Mateluna and the boys from the "barrio" all present themselves to us in the first person. The effect of this is to convey the illusion of

narrative autonomy and thereby enhance its immediacy. However, the overall impact of the structure's mutative basis is to suggest, in Gertel's words, that "transformation is a mirror of the world"¹⁷. Donoso does not simply describe destruction and disintegration: as Cornejo Polar has observed, he finds "un significante no arbitrario que plasme, encarnándolo, esè significado"¹⁸. This structure reflects varying levels of interpretation: it is a plastic symbol of the protagonist's madness, of the general disunity of the personality, of social decadence and collapse, of the chaos of a meaningless universe, and of a complex and ambiguous reality.

Although it functions as a formal equivalent of chaos and ambiguity, El obsceno pájaro does have a good deal of internal coherence, as the earlier consideration of the paired patterns of symbolism indicates. Hasset states that "the novel defies any attempt at a logical explanation"¹⁹. It is true that the novel is based on the principles of contradiction and, as the binary system itself implies, duality. It is also true that the many inconsistencies in the plot make it difficult to be certain about what exactly happens on a narrative level. However, it would be unfair to describe El obsceno pájaro, as does Castillo-Feliú, as "una novela sin estructuración alguna"²⁰, for Donoso does employ a variety of techniques to help the reader to find his way through this textual jungle. The first of these is the presentation, albeit fragmented and erratic, of a reasonably intelligible plot. It is not proposed to detail the events of the narrative here, for several critics have reconstituted a rough plan of the plot in linear form. Quinteros's version, for example, is perfectly plausible, though Vidal's is less convincing: he suggests that Humberto goes straight from the Bar Hércules to steal back his books of poetry from don Jerónimo, after which he lives deliriously as a dropout until one day he turns up at the Casa where he recreates a false story about the Azcoitias based on gossip he overhears from the old women (although later on in

his study Vidal contradicts himself by suggesting that Mudio's delirium takes place in the Casa rather than during his time as a dropout). Vidal's suggestion seems unlikely: for a start, he is confusing Humberto's first book of poems with the book Jerónimo commissions him to write about the Azcoitia family, for these are the books that are in the library (although Vidal explains this away as one of Humberto's hallucinations⁴). A more acceptable reconstruction would be to suggest that Humberto goes to work for don Jerónimo and sets up the colony of freaks at la Rinconada before he goes to the Casa. Mudio goes back to Jerónimo's house after Brígida's death (at the request of Iris Mateluna) and steals back one of his books, after which he ends up at the police station. He returns to the Casa in a feverish state and deliriously recalls the past memories associated with the events of the book (as is indicated by the many references to Madre Benita and the Casa included in the sections dealing with the relationship of Jerónimo and Inés and the creation of the artificial paradise of la Rinconada). The story of the Casa's decline follows on from there. Of course, there are numerous contradictions and variations introduced into the plot: the whole story of Humberto's relationship with Jerónimo could be sheer fantasy. The point is, however, that, fantasy or not, Donoso provides the reader with a plausible narrative framework within which to base a more general interpretation of the text.

Furthermore, Donoso introduces a series of references to time to help us fit events roughly into an overall time scheme. The convent is established towards the end of the eighteenth century. As the reference to the Battle of Verdun suggests, Jerónimo probably returns to Santiago around 1916 at the age of 31 having spent about five years in Europe. Boy is born six years after his wedding. Humberto leaves la Rinconada when Boy is 4. Emperatriz and Dr. Azula run it for twelve or thirteen years. Boy escapes at the age of approximately 17 (the time of one of Jerónimo's possible deaths). The main action is almost certainly set in the '60s: this is hinted

at by the references to Castro, Allende, Vietnam, Onassis, mini-skirts, the Rolling Stones, Petula Clark and so on.

As critics have pointed out, space rather than time is our main point of reference in the novel. The distinction between the Casa and la Rinconada helps the reader make sense of what is going on. (although it is true to say that there is a large degree of parallelism between the two places, for Mudio projects his present obsessions and surroundings on to the past). This spatial differentiation is reflected in the actual structuring of the text, which is divided roughly into three parts: the middle part corresponding to the depiction of the life of Jerónimo and his son, with the other two parts referring largely to events in the Casa.

This broad spatial-structural division is indicative of the fact that there is an overall form to the novel. The first three chapters are basically exposition: Chapter 1 introduces the characters who inhabit the Casa while the third chapter gives background information on the ex-convent and the Azcoitia family; the novel's themes are suggested by the motifs of death and decay brought into the first chapter,²² while the emphasis on the legend and its variants in the second chapter is a crucial pointer to the novel's system of dualisms, polarities, contradictions and general ambiguity.

Chapters 4 to 8 set the plot moving with the story of Iris's alleged conception of a saviour child. This strand of the narrative is an important unifying factor in the novel: it binds together events in the Casa, right up to the end when Mudio becomes the child and the old women go off to their new home thinking they have been granted salvation by their young messiah. Moreover, these chapters prepare us for the second part. The idea of Humberto's resentment towards don Jerónimo is made apparent by the nature of the plan he weaves around Iris: it is designed to compromise Jerónimo sexually, thus forcing him to maintain the Casa open as a home. The relationship of these two characters will be developed in Part II,

but before that we are told, in Chapter 6, of the birth of Humberto's obsession with Jerónimo. It is also established in this first section that Mudito changes identity as a form of escape. The old woman-Mudito identities constitute a species of sexual neutrality. However, Iris re-awakens his sexuality, thus reminding him of his previous incarnations :

no te acerques más, Iris, no me toques así,
no Humberto, no permitas que la Iris siga
tocándote porque va a romper tus disfraces,
si no huyes tendrás que volver a ser un tú
mismo que ya no recuerdas dónde está ni quién
es, acercas tus labios gordos a mi boca y tus
muslos hurgan entre mis pobres piernas flacas
que tiemblan, no le permitas que te transforme
en Humberto Peñaloza con su carga de nostalgia
intolerable, huye para que tu sexo no despierte
con la presión de esas palmas carnosas, que no
responda a su lengua que explora tu boca y tu
lengua, mantenerte yerto en el rincón donde
sus tetas y sus caderas te aprietan, Humberto
no existe, el Mudito no existe, existe sólo la
séptima vieja (pp.145-6).

She forces him to go back to his former self:

Iris...me acorrála y me desnuda, exponiéndome
a todo porque voy a tener que sacarlo todo de
debajo de mi cama, mi voz, mi facultad de oír, mi
nombre olvidado, mi sexo aterido, mis manuscritos
inconclusos, todo voy a tener que usarlo y des-
plegarlo, qué haré con mi humildad, cómo no señora
dice mi venia, para servirla está mi carrito,
no soy vieja, soy Humberto Peñaloza, el padre de
tu hijo, los embarazos milagrosos son cuentos de
viejas a cuyo círculo no me dejas pertenecer por-
que estás arrancándome de ese refugio blando... (p.143).

After Iris makes him go out to search for her child's father (whom Mudito claims is don Jerónimo), he returns in a fever under the influence of which he recalls the past. Iris, it seems, has forced Mudito to confront his previous identity: given that he adopts "disfraces" to escape the terror of the insignificance inherent in that identity, this re-immersion into the past provokes his delirium and his memories. The ninth chapter, which deals with his ravings in the Casa, acts as a pivot between the two sections, for it introduces elements of the story of la Rinconada. We have thus been fully prepared for the novel's second section.

This second section (Chapters 9 to 18) is itself subdivisible into two parts. The first deals with Jerónimo's career and his relationship with Inés (along with a consideration of Humberto and Peta who represent the reverse side of the first couple), culminating in the birth of Boy in the thirteenth chapter. The rest of the section deals largely with life on la Rinconada. The purpose of the second part as a whole is to establish the previously discussed parallels and contrasts with the Casa, to emphasize Humberto's identity crisis and to reinforce the sensation of chaos and ambiguity. It is significant that these sections (dealing with the hope of marital bliss and the setting up of a pseudo-paradise on earth) are presented after the sombre account of life in the decaying, decrepit Casa; this underlines the futility of hope and the predominant tone of despair.

However, in the last three chapters of this section (16 to 18) the consistency of the narrative begins to break down. Mudito's mind drifts beyond the walls of la Rinconada to an imaginary conversation between Larry and Miss Dolly (which includes the intervention of Peta Ponce), to a recollection of the days before he went to work for don Jerónimo, to an extraordinary hallucination concerning the removal of his organs by Dr. Azula. This fragmentation of the narrative (together with the image of the operation) suggests the mental disintegration experienced by Humberto at this time. This would also explain his subsequent metamorphosis into Mudito and his eventual arrival at the Casa: "me están quitando la identidad, hasta eso me están robando, Humberto Peñaloza, Humberto Peñaloza, Humberto Peñaloza, les grito mi nombre pero mi voz no se oye..." (p. 274). Thus we have been prepared for a return to the Casa. Again the spatial switch is made via a pivotal chapter. Chapter 18 gradually introduces images of the Casa until the transition becomes complete: Humberto tears at a photograph on the hospital wall, uncovering layers of newspapers and chipping off fragments of the wall in the process, until he is asked

to sweep them up - he is now Mudito performing his chores as the Casa's handyman.

The final section (Chapters 19-30) charts the decline of the Casa, underscoring again the novel's sense of hopelessness and despair. This is made clear right from the start of the section: Padre Azócar comes to remove the host and the holy lamp, to "detener el corazón de la Casa" (p. 317). This episode initiates the downward spiral that characterizes the entire section. Interestingly, the episode is introduced within the framework of misia Raquel Ruiz's visit to the home, itself presented as a memory of Madre Benita which is in turn contained within Mudito's own mind. This skilfully effected multiple juxtaposition reinforces the atmosphere of despondency and finality. Misia Raquel admits that her life has been made a misery by her obligation to look after Brígida's finances. Furthermore, her offer to use the money to set up a new home seals the fate of the Casa which is now bound to be demolished. Set next to this is the removal of the lamp and the erosion of Madre Benita's faith.

The arrival of Inés introduces a note of cheeriness for the old women but generally her presence in the Casa highlights the process of ruination. This is the first time Inés really appears in the novel as a character in her own right (she was described in the middle section merely in relation to Jerónimo): it is significant that the reader is presented with a character who has lost all hope of realizing her dreams (marital satisfaction, family life, the beatification project). This old woman stands in stark contrast with the pretty young girl of the middle section. Furthermore, she gradually assumes the qualities of the "viejas" as she wins their clothes and adopts their habits: the climax comes in the twenty-sixth chapter when she pulls out her false teeth and kicks them away.

Mudito's final mental disintegration runs parallel to this process of decline. The birth of the child messiah (Mudito himself) in the twenty-sixth chapter is the be-

ginning of the end, for it represents the closing of the previously open-ended motif of Iris Mateluna's supposed pregnancy. It is clear that Mudio will never acquire a fixed identity: the only alternative to fluctuating "disfraces" is total self-annihilation. He therefore opts for a complete mental withdrawal, something which involves the elimination (in his own mind) of all external reality. This explains the patterning of the final chapters. In Chapter 26, Inés is removed from the Casa (as, he thinks, is the threat of Peta Ponce, for she took over Inés). He says of Inés, "Ya la eliminé a ella" (p. 471); of Peta, "te engañé y logré eliminarla" (p. 471); of Jerónimo, "ahora tendré que eliminarlo a él" (p. 471); and, addressing himself to Jerónimo, "ahora me eliminaré yo para que te desplomes y te partas en mil fragmentos... tengo muchas páginas en blanco esperando que yo escriba tu fin, tengo mucho tiempo para inventarte el fin más abyecto" (pp. 471-2). Chapters 27 and 28 therefore go back to la Rinconada. Jerónimo is killed off and Boy is transformed into a vegetable: thus the Rinconada saga is neatly brought to a conclusion. The finality of Jerónimo's fate is underlined by the fact that the twenty-eighth chapter, closes with a passage from Humberto's book on the Azcoitías describing the senator's funeral. In the next chapter, charting the further decline of the Casa as the old women turn to begging and robbery, Iris Mateluna is dispatched from the home; the final chapter then sees the departure of the "viejas". All of the other characters are now gone, so all that remains is for Mudio to dispose of himself. He has been put into several layers of sacks, thus achieving in effect the status of an "imbunche". His destruction by fire marks his complete elimination, closing the novel in a circular pattern: it began with death and now ends with death, underscoring the idea of man's incarceration in a hell on earth, an existential trap from which there is no hope of escape.

If the novel's tone is one of almost total nihilism, how does Donoso manage to come to terms with life at all? In a review of El obscuro pájaro D.W. Foster remarked that:

The fascinating skein of the narrative is an example of the self-assigned rôle of much modern literature to portray pseudo-mimetically the complex if not ultimately meaningful structure of the myths by which mankind forms and justifies its existence, and also to compete with those myths in the creation of a parallel interpretative structure, the novel itself.²³

El obsceno pájaro debunks the myths of love, religion and reason - constructs developed by man in order to counteract the chaos of the universe. Achugar even suggests that by introducing parallels between the Casa and la Rinconada, and between historical and mythical time, the novel questions the validity of all categories by which man attempts to measure or define reality. But if Donoso eliminates these constructs he replaces them with one of his own: art. Despite the novel's chaos and ambiguity there is a discernible form to it: Caviglia comments on its "remarkably precise morphology of memory";²⁴ Lipski writes of "a carefully planned and minutely executed structure";²⁵ McMurray describes it as "an artistically conceived fictional universe enclosed in a carefully outlined framework into which meaning and coherence have been injected by a variety of unifying elements";²⁶ Coover suggests that "in spite of all its surface disorder, 'The Obscene Bird of the Night' has been carefully, intelligently - even cabalistically - designed";²⁷ Pujals sees "una relación entre las partes que establece una totalidad coherente";²⁸ Quinteros asserts that "El obsceno pájaro de la noche no es una novela caótica... La obra aparece con su propio orden".²⁹ The system of binarism and the overall structural pattern identified earlier lend support to these views. El obsceno pájaro lacks the highly symmetrical structural harmony of Este domingo and El lugar sin límites. Indeed Donoso has repeatedly asserted that he did not approach his fourth novel with a pre-conceived plan. He has told Rodríguez Monegal:

Yo no escribí esta novela. Esta novela me escribió a mí. No podía elegir una estructura determinada porque las estructuras me estaban eligiendo a mí... En esta novela creo que me desbandando completamente y lo que me interesa es darle caza a los

fantasmas, o no darle caza a los fantasmas, sino que ver qué es fantasma y qué soy yo. Cómo te diré... escribí esta novela un poco para saber quién soy... Pero la forma tenía que cambiar. Pero la forma no cambió porque yo quise cambiarla, sino que la forma se me cambió.³⁰

At the same time, however, he has indicated to Marie-Lise Gazarian Gautier that: "I have very much the feeling that when I write a novel I set out to do something very concrete; it has a size, a shape, a plan".³¹ In El obscuro pájaro Donoso clearly has arrived at a form which, by becoming an embodiment of chaos, allows the author to overcome the terror it represents. Thus the binary system extends to the novel's very structure: the act of writing itself is, if not exactly an attempt to impose order on chaos, then an attempt to achieve some sense of order by confronting the reality of chaos. It is only in the professionalism of his artistry that Donoso is able to find any kind of defence against the "unsubdued forest where the wolf howls and the obscene bird of night chatters".

P A R T III

AFTER EL OBSCENO PÁJARO DE LA NOCHE: A CHANGE IN DIRECTION

In assessing the evolution of Donoso's first four novels, Promis Ojeda writes:

En El obsceno pájaro de la noche (1970), la obsesión deja de ser planteamiento y se transforma en mundo. De aquí que afirmemos que con esta novela se cierra y se cumple un ciclo, más allá del cual no existe otra posibilidad expresiva. Como en el caso de Cien años de soledad, la novela de Donoso es el broche que cierra una etapa, después de la cual sólo cabe cambiar de rumbo!

Coronación was an expression of existential despair, but the tensions which the novel reveals between traditional and innovatory techniques suggest that Donoso was still feeling his way towards a form that would fully embody his ideas. In Este domingo the process of evolution was taken a stage further: the residual optimism expressed in the characters of Mario and Estela had now disappeared, while the structural fragmentation and stream-of-consciousness narrative began to reflect the characters' sense of alienation and confusion. A similar effect was achieved in El lugar sin límites, with the underlying symbolism adding an extra dimension by projecting more tangibly the notion of an archetypal existential crisis affecting all men. Finally, the functional interrelationship of form and content in El obsceno pájaro de la noche marked a movement beyond the mere description of disintegration and collapse, to a point at which the novel itself became an image of the chaos and terror which, in Donoso's view, is the essence of man's existence.

The pattern to emerge from this first stage of Donoso's literary development is a growing sense of metaphysical anguish matched by an increasing complexity of form and technique. However, after El obsceno pájaro, the pattern changes sharply. Tres novelitas burguesas contains three tales of fantasy in the tradition of the short stories of Cortázar and other River Plate writers; Casa de campo, although more ambitious, employs a direct,

simple, deliberately artificial style; La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria is, on the surface, a relatively straightforward novel with ingredients of 1920s nostalgia and "soft-porn" eroticism; while El jardín de al lado marks an apparent return to the genre of the personal, psychological novel.

Why does this change take place? It is unfair, in my view, to see it as a mere decline in the quality of Donoso's writing. Humberto Rivas sees La marquesita de Loria as little more than "un divertimento de José Donoso"², while Shaw simply describes Casa de campo as "muy amena y a veces cómica"³, complaining of the Tres novelitas burguesas that "encajan dentro de una tradición rioplatense que Donoso había ya superado en El obscuro pájaro de la noche"⁴. The symbol of the dog in La marquesita de Loria and the final chapter of El jardín de al lado undermine the view that these novels are simplistic in nature: as we shall see, these two novels challenge the claims of traditional realism in a new and effective way. The use of fantasy in the Tres novelitas throws doubt upon the traditional realists' conception of reality just as effectively as the formal experimentation of other Latin American novels. Bendezú argues that fantasy actually probes reality more deeply than traditional realism:

El retorno a la realidad del hombre por medio de la fantasía controlada implica, pues, que el "fabulador moderno" no huye de ella, sino que la penetra más profundamente y la interpreta con otros recursos técnicos de la narración contemporánea y, de esta manera, responde al grave interrogante del destino de la novela después del agotamiento de la novela realista?

A possible explanation for the change in direction may be found in Donoso's own words. In the Historia personal del 'Boom' and El jardín de al lado he makes it clear that he considers the 'boom' to have ended. Furthermore, in a recent article he writes that "siento en forma extraordinariamente firme que los latinoamericanos hemos llegado al final de una etapa", going on to ask:

¿en qué momento perdimos nuestros cuerpos, los latinoamericanos, y nos transformamos en abstracciones para filosofar y generalizar y experimentar? Es increíble que hasta novelas que no se pueden considerar de primera categoría... adolezcan de esta ambición totalizadora, que en un momento del cercanísimo pasado consideramos como la marca registrada sobresaliente y gloriosa de la novela de este continente, pero que nos está pesando un poco. ¿No basta construir complejísimos edificios de palabras para preguntarnos quienes somos, o para probar que somos esto o aquello? ¿No habremos llegado, de pronto, a un callejón sin salida de la novela útil, la novela exploradora y fundadora, y sea tiempo, quizá, para la novela de la persona?... ¿No ha llegado un momento de ruptura para la novela latinoamericana contemporánea, de cambio, para renacer de las cenizas de tantas y tantas novelas totalizadoras, agobiantes de significado, ahogantes de experimentos, que se imprimen todos los días y que pretenden honradamente y a veces brillantemente, desentrenar las verdades de nuestro destino general?

Donoso seems to feel that the 'boom' has exhausted itself, that formal experimentation and innovation have led to another form of traditionalism, that the new novel is running the risk of replacing the stereotypes of realism with different stereotypes of its own creation. Thus he posits the idea of a return to the more simple forms of the personal novel, formulating the paradoxical notion of innovation through traditionalism. It is significant in this respect that Ronald Schwartz describes the Tres novelitas burguesas as "an anti-anti-novel..., a form that perhaps marks the new direction for Latin American novelists and narratives for the 1980s".⁷ This does not constitute a departure from the view that the perspective of traditional realism is too narrow: on the contrary, it reflects Donoso's concern to find new and effective ways of jolting his readership's complacent perceptions of reality. It is the introduction of fantasy or artificiality into an apparently traditional or realistic framework which comprises a major stylistic feature of Donoso's post-1970 work.

It is equally possible to see parallels between the evolution of Donoso's fictional technique and his personal outlook on life. The same obsessions with death,

despair and chaos identified in his first four novels are also present in his subsequent fiction. Furthermore, these obsessions are highlighted by the later novels' style and structure, despite the relative lack of complexity of the more recent work. However, the sense of existential anguish is considerably diluted: the Tres novelitas burguesas are often humorous, sometimes even positive; on an allegorical level Casa de campo appears to hold out some hope for Chile's political future; El jardín de al lado, meanwhile, despite chronicling the decline of a middle-aged couple, lacks the despair of the earlier work, venturing instead an attitude of philosophic resignation. An awareness of the absurdity of life is undoubtedly present in the post-1970 novels, but the sense of sheer terror which impregnated his earlier work is either missing or at least toned down by humour and irony. Writing El obsceno pájaro was, as suggested in the previous chapter, a kind of exorcism of his personal "fantasmas"; Donoso now appears to have learned to live with his existential malaise, his work having given way to a stoical acceptance of the emptiness of life rather than sinking even deeper into abject fear.

This development in attitude might well explain the changes in Donoso's fictional technique: that is, the relaxation in Donoso's attitude perhaps calls for a moderation of the element of structural chaos. Just as his first four novels increased in complexity as they increased in their sense of despair, conversely, the process of formal simplification in the later work parallels the abatement of the author's sense of anguish. Once again, we see the link between form and content in Donoso's work: the abandonment of the tortuous techniques that characterized El obsceno pájaro reinforces this idea. The development in narrative technique illustrates his fiction's evolution: the creation of continuously appropriate vehicles for probing reality and reflecting the author's personal outlook on life.

It is proposed in this section to consider the four

novels published between 1973 and 1981 in the light of this modification in outlook and technique. After an examination of Donoso's evolution in terms of content, each work will be examined individually from the standpoint of his narrative method. At the same time, it is intended to examine the latter aspect of the author's post-1970 writing not only as a materialization of his attitude but also as a reflection of his desire to renovate the new novel: not simply by returning to traditionalism but also by subverting the traditional novel from within. This will be the emphasis of the chapter on La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria, for example, where the reader is forced to question the assumptions upon which the novel he is actually reading is based. The final chapter - on El jardín de al lado - will return to this idea emphasising the duality of the desire to return to traditional forms yet simultaneously attack those forms: the resolution of this duality will be shown to bring out the synthesis of Donoso's two-sided attitude to life - the mood of resignation and acceptance will be seen to displace the mood of anguish and despair.

CHAPTER ONE

1973-1981 : RELATIVE CALM

Tres novelitas burguesas marks the beginning of the process of turning away from the total negativism of El obsceno pájaro de la noche. Most interpretations of the three novellas have centred on the idea that middle-class values of fashion and materialism undermine the integrity of the individual personality: this is the line taken by Calae de Agüera, McMurray Tatum and Schwartz among others. Schwartz even attempts to relate his idea to what he sees as the central concern of Donoso's work - "Chilean life of the twentieth century"¹ - this in spite of the fact that the stories are set in Barcelona. However, the stance of these critics seems to over-simplify the case. An allegorical reading of the text is necessary, rather than a merely social or satirical one. The conflict between the social order and the individual personality suggests the presence of a binary system based on an order-versus-chaos opposition, similar to that identified in El obsceno pájaro. Donoso does not explore the destructive effect of the values of Barcelona's middle-classes merely out of social or psychological interest: the materialism and fashionable attitudes of the middle-classes represent the constructs man develops to ward off his inherent fear of chaos. Once again Donoso debunks the myths of love and consumerism: the only truly viable construct to emerge is that of art. However, the tone of the novellas (especially the first and last) is such that one receives the impression that the author recognises the validity of the artificial framework for certain other people and that he himself has managed to exorcise the growing anguish by the writing of El obsceno pájaro.

The constructs under attack in "Chatanooga Choochoo" are mainly the false values of fashionable Barcelona society. Donoso's exposé of the pretentious sham of bourgeois superficiality is an allegorical account of the way we cling to an artificial order of our own crea-

tion rather than meet head on the reality of chaos. Thus certain holiday resorts are "in", as are certain turns of phrase. Nostalgia for the 40s, 50s, or 60s leads to new fashion cults: the followers of fashion "se lanzaban hambrientos sobre el cadáver de un pasado cada vez más atterradoramente reciente, hasta que pronto no les quedaría otra alternativa que transformar su propio presente en carroña para poder alimentarse"². Kaethe is worried that "con esa aceleración de la nostalgia, ella... sería obsoleta antes de haber sido siquiera contemporánea" (p.124).

Nowhere are man's attempts to impose a false order on experience in this way more evident than in the case of Sylvia Corday, a slave of fashion - a "prisionera en ese pasado ficticio resucitado por una moda" (p.25). Her total submission to fashion is underlined by the fact that she paints on a new face every day according to its dictates. Her falseness indicates much more than the confluence of the theme of "la no unidad de la personalidad con el de la crítica de los valores sociales de la clase burguesa"³, to quote Calae de Agüera. It is more too than an attempt to portray a literary character "as a more or less arbitrary conglomeration of signs", as Magnarelli would have it.⁴ The emphasis on artificial values and on the lack of unity of the human personality reveals man's efforts to come to terms with reality.

This point is reinforced by Donoso's depiction of the way people construct attitudes to life which are essentially false. He ironically highlights the shallowness of the "inmoral moral nueva" (p.64), the "libertad antiburguesa" (p.65) of Sylvia, and the "posiciones estetizantes e izquierdizantes" (p.14) of the Roigs. Even philosophy and psychiatry are seen as dependent upon fashion. When Anselmo is suffering from a castration complex he decides to consult "el doctor Monclús quien, yo sabía, obraba verdaderos prodigios no con los métodos anticuados de Freud, sino con el más contemporáneo behaviourismo, sí, y con algo de yoga... una mezcla de Masters and Johnson con Jung que me parecía bastante interesante y probab-

lemente efectiva"(p.58).But this new construct soon loses its value:Anselmo eventually realises that "el doctor Monclús no era más que un mistificador que se aprovechaba de la ignorancia de los snobs para hacerse rico a costa de ellos"(p.87).

Donoso's most interesting attack on the notion of the construct is to be found in his treatment of the relationship between men and women.To see the novella,as McMurray does,as a "spoof on women's liberation"⁵ or,in Schwartz's words,as "a pro-Women's Liberation tale"⁶ is, in my view,to miss the point.Both attitudes (that of the men and that of the women) are shown up as hollow.The "women's lib" outlook of Sylvia is just another passing trend.This can be seen in her relationship with Ramón:"a pesar de la alardeada 'libertad' de la pareja,él siempre continuaba siendo un señorito de la vieja escuela en busca de la tónica 'mujer objeto',de la cual,también tópicamente,Sylvia encarnaba la 'liberación' en las páginas de las revistas femininas"(p.30).Her attitude is as intolerant as the one it was supposed to replace:she is one of those "mujeres que,enteradas hace poco de la emancipación femenina en un ambiente para el que esta actitud resulta todavía arriesgada,aplican machaconamente su catecismo contra las 'pobres',las víctimas de sus maridos y de su propia pusilanimidad,que se ven obligadas a permanecer atadas en la ciudad junto a sus niños durante los week-ends"(p.12).

However,even more interestingly,the male attitude to women is also shown to be false.A basic design-principle of the novella is,as in El obscuro pájaro,to juxtapose systematically motifs of order and chaos.Thus we have scenes depicting smug attitudes to life (representing a false order) set against scenes describing the subversion of those attitudes.A chain of binary relations is soon set up:Anselmo's old sense of order is opposed to the disintegration of his personality; his sense of power is contrasted with his basic weakness;his attitude to his wife is contradicted by the reality of her behaviour;finally the rôles of men and women are completely

reversed. These binary oppositions all illustrate the pattern. As in El obsceno pájaro, men symbolise order while women represent the dark forces of chaos: the triumph of women in this novella underlines the collapse of man's artificial sense of order.

The male-female/order-chaos conflict is a point to which we shall return in the next chapter. It must be stated here, however, that although chaos does appear to hold sway, any possibility of extreme pessimism is neutralized by the humour and relative simplicity of the story. As we shall see, the novella's ironic ending is intended to show up the hollowness of Anselmo's construct: the power he thinks he exercises over his wife is non-existent. But Anselmo is happy: Donoso does seem to recognise that despite its falsity the human construct does have a value for certain individuals.

The issues raised in "Chatanooga Choochoo" are also dominant features of "Átomo verde número cinco" and "Gaspard de la nuit": a few brief comments on these texts should serve to indicate the similarities in subject matter. Like most critics, Calae de Agüera sees "Átomo verde número cinco" in socio-psychological terms (though Magnarelli claims that their "problem is not so much social...as it is linguistic"⁷). However, the former does not simply see materialism as responsible for lack of individuality; she claims it is a mask to which we turn in order to suppress our irrational instincts: "los objetos de que son desposeídos Marta y Roberto son las máscaras o formas civilizadas de la burguesía que ocultan la animalidad de la persona"⁸. But the problem is deeper than one of the rational-versus-the irrational. As Cruickshank has said, thinking of the modern French novel: "material things prevent human fulfilment and act as the catalysts of mental anguish or spiritual tragedy"⁹. Materialism is an integral part of the barriers guarding us against against loss of existential orientation. Thus the gradual loss of material goods experienced by Roberto and Marta is a symbolic dramatisation of man's loss of

his sense of order and his consequent collapse into chaos.

Given the progressive, linear structure of "Átomo verde número cinco", any consideration of the loss of material goods/loss of order parallel must be considered in relation to technique. A detailed examination of the novella would therefore be inappropriate at this juncture, as it would risk unnecessary repetition later. It is worth pointing out, however, that - although there is humour here - "Átomo verde número cinco" is much less compromising than "Chatanooga Choochoo". The final vision is quite negative, for the Ferrers' disturbing experiences bring them to the verge of complete self-destruction. There is still a tension of opposites in Donoso's post-1970 outlook: the desire for resignation is still matched by a continuing awareness of the absurd.

If "Átomo verde número cinco" appears to end on a bitter note, the effect is somewhat dissipated by the lyricism of the following novella, "Gaspard de la nuit". But despite the positive elements reflected in both form and content, the same basic concerns are present here too. Once again, middle-class values function as a symbol of false security threatened by alien forces. Sylvia Corday enjoys an ordered existence based on the principle of fashion. However, her sense of order is shaken by the arrival of her son Mauricio. His refusal to give in to the dictates of fashion and his mysterious whistling amount to much more than the mere rejection of a middle-class identity - which is what criticism of Tres novelitas burguesas has chiefly emphasised hitherto. More importantly, in my view, Mauricio represents the element of chaos that disrupts the artificial harmony of the constructs human beings develop to impose false meaning on to their lives. It is significant that Sylvia rejects Mauricio's whistling because it is "inadmisible...incomprensible" (p.204). She needs "alguna explicación que definiera con palabras su destreza perturbadora para silbar esa música desconocida que lo encerraba dentro de un círculo tan extraño, tan unitario, tan difícil de comprender, tan

complejo"(208). She feels that "el círculo que trazaba la música de Mauricio iba a dominarla y tragársela" (p.204). She sees music in purely popular terms: but Mauricio's whistling is "el revés de todo eso"(p.203). Silvia is not simply an exemplification of "the realistic, naturalistic writer or reader" as Magnarelli suggests:¹⁰ her attitude to her son forms part of her deep-rooted ontological fear.

However, although Mauricio's whistling does pose a threat to Sylvia, her anxieties are gone by the end of the novella. Mauricio exchanges identities with a young urchin who is happy to play the rôle required by his new "mother". Indeed their mother-son relationship functions as an optimistic symbol of the positive aspects of family life: regardless of their materialistic tendencies they form a basically contented group. At the same time Mauricio - who rejects Sylvia's bourgeois mentality - also achieves fulfilment. His whistling represents a desire for self-liberation. After a number of set-backs this liberation is eventually achieved: by assuming the characteristics of the beggar-boy he is able to enjoy a new found freedom. The positions of Mauricio and Sylvia will be examined more closely in the next chapter where we shall turn to the novella's technique: suffice it to mention here that a considerable evolution in attitude has taken place. This is a tale which, while pointing to the falsity of human constructs, also appears to stress their worth to the individual.

Interestingly enough, in Donoso's next novel, Casa de campo, there is hardly any attempt to confront directly the existential and metaphysical themes of the earlier works. This is indicative of the development in attitude identified above. However, such elements are present in Casa de campo: they are brought out symbolically by the characters and plot of the novel. As with Tres novelitas burguesas, the social and political order adhered to by the Venturas is representative of the false sense of

order man develops to ward off his fear of a chaotic universe. Unlike Arabela, who is "carente de la desgarradora urgencia de entretenerse o de justificar su existencia",¹¹ they create ersatz contrivances in a vain attempt to structure their lives meaningfully or to escape, in the words of Bacarisse, their sense of "ontological insecurity".¹² The collapse of their position of power at the end of the novel is a symbolic dramatisation of the frailty and naïvety of their faith.

The Venturas draw a "tupido velo" over the unpleasant side of reality. Having suppressed it they replace it with sheer artifice. Melania reminds us that "la apariencia es lo único que no engaña" (p.16) - but the falseness of their constructs soon becomes all too apparent to the reader. Their life is "pura alusión y ritual y símbolo" (p.182). They deny the reality of Colomba's period; they refuse to acknowledge Cordelia's coughing; they reject the existence of Fabio and Casilda's child; on returning they insist on entering through the useless main gate even though the fence is no longer there; they ignore the deformation of Cosme's face and the agony of the expiring Arabela; Celeste dies in a pappus storm proclaiming that all is well. Celeste is, in fact, herself a perfect fictional embodiment of the falseness of the human construct. Just as Balbina insists that Wenceslao is a girl, Celeste is blind but she and the whole family farcically behave as if she were not; Morgana secretly does her sewing so that the others can commend her mother's artistry; Olegario chooses her clothes with great care while the others praise her good taste; furthermore they are all involved, for "ni la coreografía de las ceremonias familiares jamás cambiaba de sitio ni de forma, para que de este modo la memoria de Celeste erigiera en verdad la farsa del mundo que no veía" (p.142).

This falsity relates to the notion of man's imposition of order on chaos. Their vain attempts to suppress those aspects of life they choose to ignore highlight symbolically man's refusal to accept the chaos and

absurdity of life. Their destruction of Marulanda's natural surroundings in order to erect their holiday home provides a striking illustration of this point. In a passage which recalls don Jerónimo's construction of la Rinconada in El obsceno pájaro de la noche, Donoso describes how, in their building of the garden, the family went about "desterrando toda nota que lo comprometiera con lo autóctono" (p. 57): "los Ventura contaban entre sus triunfos el haber logrado alterar la naturaleza, demostrando así su poder sobre ella" (p. 57). Clearly, their ability to impose an order on a wild, natural phenomenon fills them with comfort for it gives them the illusion of being in control of their fate. In fact, they go on to suppress all natural phenomena, including beauty and love (because these - being spontaneous, difficult to control and therefore dangerous - represent chaos). They prefer Melania to Cordelia because "la belleza pura es terrible por los misterios que encierra, una cualidad abstracta, difícil, que compromete también la inteligencia del que la aprehende, y era considerada por los Ventura como inferior a la seducción instantáneamente identificable de una encantadora adolescente" (p. 96). They regulate their emotional relationships with their children, setting up "la 'hora de los arreglados'" (p. 29) and a systematic plan for a family farewell (p. 139). This attitude rubs off on to some of the children. The game La Marquesa Salió A Las Cinco (itself an image of the construct, for it attempts to "sustituir la historia por la fantasía" (p. 135)) has the same effect as the parents' behaviour: Mauro complains to Melania that "me amas y te amo sólo cuando jugamos a La Marquesa Salió A Las Cinco... Somos incapaces de sentir nada cuando no acatamos las reglas de algún juego" (p. 97).

The adults-children conflict is a fundamental element in the binary order-versus-chaos system. Like the old women of El obsceno pájaro, the children here represent anarchy and disorder. It is significant that Lidia feels that the servants should cruelly suppress the unruly inclinations of the family's offspring:

Éstos, les aseguraba en su arenga, eran sus enemigos, empeñados en su destrucción porque querían destruir todo lo estable por medio de su cuestionamiento de las reglas. Que los sirvientes quedaran alertados sobre la brutalidad de seres que por ser niños aún no accedían a la clase iluminada de los mayores capaces de todo con tal de abusar, desobedecer, ensuciar, reclamar, destruir, atacar, minar la paz y el orden mediante la crítica y la duda, y aniquilarlos a ellos, los sirvientes, por ser guardianes, justamente, de este orden civilizado, tan venerable que desafiaba toda crítica (p.39).

As Wenceslao explains, the adults use the myth of the cannibals (for the natives themselves represent anarchy and disorder for the Venturas) to control the children (chaos) and thus guarantee stability (order):

Los antropófagos no existen, de modo que no hay nada que temer. Son una ficción con que los grandes pretenden dominarnos cultivando en nosotros ese miedo que llaman orden (p.130).

But the fear hidden by the construct soon begins to emerge as they become suspicious of their children's behaviour:

Esta situación, rebelde a toda exégesis, se iba poniendo intolerable. ¿Pero qué era lo intolerable? ... Sí, detalles de esta índole espesaban la atmósfera, dejando a los Ventura a un solo paso del terror. ¿Pero terror, en buenas cuentas, de qué? ... No había, ciertamente, nada que temer de niños bien educados que los adoraban. ¿Pero... y si, en el fondo, no los adoraran? ¿Si sus retoños interpretaran como odio sus desvelos por ellos, como intentos para anularlos el negarse a creer sus enfermedades, como deseo de robarles individualidad el emparejarlos con reglas que los regían por igual a todos? (pp.21-2).

After the Venturas leave, the children are liberated and chaos reigns. Wenceslao cuts off his hair and Mauro loosens the spears in the fence, while the other children abandon the rules of conventional games (imposed order) to join in the dizzy irrationality of this new game (chaos):

(los ajedrecistas) volcaron el tablero y las piezas, y sin preguntar por qué ni para qué ni cómo, sumando sus alaridos de asombro a los de los tres hermanos que habían abandonado toda cautela, sumaron también sus manos para arrancar más y más lanzas con el vértigo irracional de aquello que los estaba envolviendo, destruir el límite, abrir el parque, disolver aquella esmeralda

encantada dentro de la que vivían, en la inmensidad de la llanura... Los demás primos los vieron, y dando voces y llamándose unos con otros corrieron de todas partes a sumarse a este juego de arrancar lanzas, abandonando muñecas, novelones, quehaceres, atropellándose para unirse a la locura... (p.126).

Casilda, meanwhile, decides to "desarticular, desmontar el mundo de su padre" (p.204) by stealing the gold. She rejects her mother's authority by making a forbidden facial gesture: "hizo el gesto prohibido conscientemente, para derrocar toda autoridad..." (p.204). Her frolicking in the gold dust and her sexual relationship with Fabio undermine the notion of order even further. Malvina, too rolls about in the gold dust: having asserted her individuality through her thefts as a child, she now goes on to defy the existing order in the capital by her flamboyant relationship with Pedro Crisólogo. Cordelia also rejects prevalent values by living with another native, Francisco de Asís.

The adults-children conflict is underscored by the masters-servants opposition. As in the earlier novels, the lower and servant classes represent the dark threatening, forces of chaos for the rich. The clarity of the correlation between the masters and illusory order, and between the servants and chaos, is brought out in an exchange involving Silvestre and Juan Pérez:

- ¿Y a tu juicio - preguntó Silvestre, quizás un poco ofendido - en qué consiste nuestra superioridad?

Juan Pérez no titubeó:

- En la ausencia de la duda. (p.270).

The Venturas' desire to suppress all elements of chaos is paralleled by their systematic destruction of the servants' individual identities, by their efforts to "mantener la rigidez de las jeraquías con el propósito de que ni siquiera un eco de sus propias individualidades imperfectas se filtrara hasta los salones donde transcurría el apacible veraneo de los Ventura" (p.38). However, Donoso emphasises the fragility of the family's construct. The Mayordomo's courteous "Sí su Merced", "transformaba

la mística de los señores, al ser enunciada por sus labios rígidos, en una ideología de crueldad pura" (p.274). He is, in fact, "la incarnación de una fuerza vil creada por ellos mismos" (p.274). As the servants leave for Marulanda the Venturas contemplate with terror "el rostro del individuo del que podrían transformarse en víctimas, si de alguna manera que no comprendían no lo eran ya" (p.274). The chaos represented by the servants is actually an integral part of their masters' make-up: its suppression constitutes a vain, dishonest attempt to ignore the unpleasant realities of our existence.

As in Coronación, the hierarchical system continues even within the servant classes. The Mayordomo says of Juan Pérez that "es mi cloaca, el oscurísimo resumidero del poder" (p.326). Like the "viejas"/servants of El obscuro pájaro, Juan Pérez is forced to do the dirty work his superior chooses to avoid: in this respect, he functions as a symbol of the chaos the Mayordomo, now representing order, prefers to erase from his life.

However, even given the continued presence of the existential theme, it has to be said that this feature of Donoso's thinking is not as prominent as it was in his pre-1970s work. This suggests that he now has his personal existential crisis under control. Indeed the fact that Casa de campo is in many ways a political novel would seem to indicate a more positive attitude to life: implicit in political protest is the hope of political change. It should be noted that Donoso - who used to complain bitterly about socio-political interpretations of his work - has consistently emphasised the political level of Casa de campo. He has told San Martín that "aquí situó la experiencia de Chile, como una cosa que me importaba"¹³ and has stated elsewhere:

Por primera vez me doy cuenta de que la violencia que siento con respecto a la burguesía tiene una realidad y que tengo que tomar una posición: no puedo hacerlo desde cátedras, ni haciendo discursos políticos, ni haciendo declaraciones, pero sí escribiendo una novela simbólica sobre ella. Sí, hay una lectura simbólica, política, de Casa de campo, en la que hablo de Pinochet y del golpe de

estado chileno. No ocurre como en El lugar sin límites donde la lectura era posible. Aquí es una lectura necesaria. En este sentido sí ha habido un cambio⁴

Donoso presses his point further, as Luis Iñigo Madrigal has indicated, by the way he deliberately dates the text on the final page: he began writing on the 18th of September 1973 - the anniversary of Chile's Revolt against Spain (18.9. 1810), and only seven days after the Pinochet coup.¹⁵

But the novel's political level goes back much further in time than the events of the 1970s. Like Cien años de soledad, Casa de campo presents the reader with an allegorical outline of the main trends in Latin American history. The coming of the early Venturas, their repression of the natives, and their appropriation of the gold and salt mines parallels the events of the Spanish conquest. Like the Spaniards, the Venturas strip the natives of their clothes (that is, their culture and traditions) turning what was once "una raza noble" (p.35) into slaves. The growth of the family's business interests corresponds to the economic developments of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Just as the Latin American work-forces were exploited so too are the natives: Hermógenes swindles them by paying them low prices for their gold; furthermore, their drainage system is poisoned by the Venturas' excrement - thus, like the lower and working classes, the natives suffer "como consecuencia del refinamiento de los señores" (p.67). However, changes do come in the novel, paralleling the growth of modern and foreign capitalist interests in the Latin America of the late nineteenth century and after. Malvina represents a new emerging bourgeois middle-class; the jealousy and suspicion of the family towards her correspond to the tensions of a changing society. The descriptions of the "extranjeros" highlight equally the upsurge in foreign interests and Latin America's increasing dependence on foreign capital. Their desire to buy and completely change Marulanda by eliminating the natives and the "gramíneas" reminds us of the economic imperialism of modernising foreign powers

and the demise of the traditional ruling classes.

Of course the Venturas also represent the backwardness, decadence and corruption of much of Latin American society. Their snobbery and selfishness underlines the unjust nature of the class system, while the brutality of the Mayordomo and his lackeys as they heartlessly enforce the curfew calls to mind the dealings of many authoritarian régimes. Order is enforced by "leyes arbitrarias" (p. 51) and all forms of liberalism are stamped out. An image of the restrictions on political freedom is that of Adriano Gomara (who represents liberalism) locked up in a strait-jacket. Having used his murder of Mignon as an excuse for putting him away, the Venturas now exploit the fear of cannibals (on a symbolic level, fear of communism): but this is merely "una fantasía creada por los grandes con el fin de ejercer la represión mediante el terror, fantasía que ellos mismos terminaron por creer" (p. 34).

The family's day-trip is symbolic of the opportunity for free elections. The chaos that follows the grown-ups' departure shows up the instability of the old order, while the species of revolution on Marulanda that brings natives and children together, with Adriano Gomara emerging as leader, is a clear reference to the election of Salvador Allende in 1970. However, despite the nobility of his intentions, just as Allende's programme failed, so too does Adriano's leadership. Life in Marulanda soon comes to be characterised by dissatisfaction and hunger (corresponding to injustice and low standards of living), laziness (corresponding to inefficiency), and rivalries (corresponding to internal political bickering). His foolish apportionment of the 'piano nobile' group's food recalls Allende's hot-headed land redistribution plans. He is forced to abandon his dreams of nationalisation and self-sufficiency, realigning himself with the 'piano nobile' group and Malvina. However, he is only taking advantage of "una componenda" (p. 472) - a temporary upsurge in an unstable market. The business deal with Malvina - merely "un humillante espejismo" (p. 473) - collapses and she

hands over to foreign interests (a possible reference to U.S. involvement in the coup). Mauro now turns against Adriano who is no longer able to control the economy or the internal political tension.

The return of the servants headed by the Mayordomo, and the murder of Adriano, is an obvious parallel for Pinochet's brutal coup in September 1973, resulting in Allende's death in mysterious circumstances in the presidential palace. The account of the reign of terror that follows is a clear attack on the activities of the Pinochet régime. Although the servants (the military) intervened on behalf of the Venturas (the ruling classes), it is clear that they want to stay - indeed it is they who escape at the end and not their masters. The return to civilian rule is still, it seems, a long way off.¹⁶

The political picture painted by Donoso thus far is indeed a glum one. In keeping with the system of interconnecting symbolic planes it reinforces his sombre existential outlook. The servants' brutality is a means of maintaining the Venturas' sense of order: "se les pagaba estupendamente para que mantuvieran el orden" (p. 37). The lackeys/military are there to guarantee a construct which is essentially false: there is no real order. This point is realised by Wenceslao. The collapse of his faith in his father's political programme parallels the epistemological scepticism of modern man: "lo peor es haber tenido certezas y saber que ahora, de reconstruirse algo, será reconstruir cualquier cosa menos certezas, por saberlas peligrosas" (p. 358).

Nevertheless, the novel does end on a positive note. Donoso goes beyond the present, looking to Chile's future and introducing an element of hope. MacAdam rightly suggests that "en Casa de campo tenemos la sensación de que los que han sobrevivido el golpe de los Ventura cuando toman de nuevo el poder serán los fundadores de una sociedad nueva",¹⁷ an opinion shared by Madrigal. Wenceslao (notable for his humanitarianism) emerges as a possible creator of a new order. His eating of the flesh of Amadeo (who has made the ultimate humanitarian sacrifice) symbo-

lises his return to a way of life unperverted by "civilisation" as we know it and his total commitment to a cause. He chooses the way out of man's ills that is suggested by Nicanor Parra in his poem, "Soliloquio del individuo": Wenceslao and the others must abandon the modern world and turn to the traditions of the past. Young and old join the natives to face the pappus storm - and they survive. Thus Donoso looks forward to a somewhat nebulous future state when men transcend their egoism and learn to live in a natural state of harmony and love. This new insistence on a hopeful future is a considerable departure from the outright despair of El obsceno pájaro.

The emphasis is somewhat different in Donoso's seventh novel, La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria (1980), which is at first sight the most surprising departure to date from the author's profound, intellectual outlook: it is, according to the blurb on the cover of the first edition, "una brillantísima incursión... en el mundo de la novela erótica y galante".¹⁸ Humberto Rivas sees it merely as "un divertimento de José Donoso", a light-hearted, sexual fantasy whose tasteful treatment never threatens "el tono festivo de toda la narración".¹⁹ However, as Pérez Blanco has correctly observed, La marquesita de Loria "es mucho más que una novela erótica y galante".²⁰ Unfortunately the latter critic's outlook is equally limited: he considers the novel simply to be a reworking of Blest Gana's brand of social realism, a reiteration of what Pérez Blanco sees as the basic tenet of Donoso's work: "ante todo y sobre todo la denuncia de una sociedad que olvida su propio ser y tiende sus ojos hacia el pañuelo europeo... con el que sólo podrá cubrir su fracaso".²¹ While accepting the existence of an element of social criticism in this work, it is plain that the social aspect is little more than a backdrop against which Donoso develops wider concerns: most notably those connected with the existential malaise of modern man. The novel can only be properly

understood as a metaphor: the superficial exterior hides an inner complexity as great as that of any of Donoso's major works.

In many ways, La marquesita de Loria marks a return to the attitude partially espoused by Andrés in Coronación. In that novel (and in the subsequent works) the idea of the failed quest for fulfilment was central. Andrés's eventual acceptance of the chaos of the universe (via his madness) was the only honest alternative: it was only by submitting himself to the reality of chaos that he managed to achieve any form of liberation or satisfaction. Blanca finds herself in a similar position in La marquesita de Loria. The main difference is that Andrés's dilemma was expressed explicitly, whereas the more sophisticated author of the 1980s suggests Blanca's predicament purely by means of symbolic allusion. The significance of Donoso's account of her diverse sexual activities is that her quest for sexual (and material) fulfilment is representative of man's deeper quest for spiritual satisfaction. Sábato has written on the rôle of sexuality in the modern novel:

El sexo, por primera vez en la historia de las letras, adquiere una dimensión metafísica. El derrumbe del orden establecido y la consecuente crisis del optimismo... agudiza este problema y convierte el tema de la soledad en el más supremo y desgarrado intento de comunión, se lleva a cabo mediante la carne y así... ahora asume un carácter sagrado.²²

Blanca's abandonment of wealth and promiscuity in favour of a mysterious, elemental relationship with the dog Luna is indicative of her realization that we can only come to terms with life by accepting its absurdity. Her disappearance at the end of the novel is not, as Pérez Planco states, an indication of Europe's debasement of Latin American values,²³ nor is it a simple reaction against the pseudo-conventions of her environment, as Gutiérrez Mouat suggests:²⁴ it is a dramatisation of her total rejection of the concept of order.

The notion of Blanca's quest is developed right from

the start. She is overcome by "este enloquecedor anhelo por lo desconocido" (p.46), and evolves a strategy, "con el fin de elegir acertadamente aquello que más placer podía procurarle" (p.12). She therefore engages in a series of sexual adventures which she subconsciously hopes will lead her, as did Mauricio's whistling in "Gaspard de la nuit", towards fulfilment. The idea of a search for some greater goal is emphasised repeatedly. Sexual satisfaction makes her feel "tierna y fragante y ofrecida" - "¿Pero ofrecida, en buenas cuentas, a qué, a quién...?" (p.47). Considering her erotic activities she concludes that "a pesar del placer, todo había sido un ensayo" (p.97). After her first experience with Almanza she asks herself: "¿Pero qué más quería, si eso fue a buscar en la calle Ruiz de Alarcón?" (p.101).

The reality is that eroticism cannot afford her the satisfaction to which she aspires. She recalls the disillusionment she felt when, as a child, she saw the sea for the first time: "¡No es tan grande como me habían dicho!" (p.99). She compares this feeling to her present sexual frustration:

Pero le faltó lo mismo que echó de menos en esa primera visión del mar cuando era una niña tan pequeña que se le permitía sentir y decir verdades: no fue, decididamente, la devastadora aventura proyectada por la magnífica ambigüedad de la palabra... (p.99).

Sexuality is shown to be an empty mode of behaviour. In order to excite Paquito, Blanca turned to "el artificio": "por medio de sus escenificaciones quizás demasiado transparentes del peligro (ella) estuvo a punto de conocer la felicidad" (p.35). Sexual activity is an artificial construct developed by man in order to inject false meaning into his life: it only brings him "a punto de conocer la felicidad" - in other words it merely satisfies his need for the illusion of happiness. For many writers - Onetti, Cortázar, Puig among them - sexual perversion is a form of liberation in that its subversiveness frees man from limitations. By contrast, in Donoso's novels, as

in Vallejo's poetry, it merely reminds man of those limitations. It is significant that Blanca rejects the option of sexual aberration: she is unattracted by the prospects of a lesbian relationship with Casilda or a 'ménage à trois' with Almanza and Tere Castillo. Whereas Mauricio's whistling in "Gaspard de la nuit" did lead him to fulfilment, eroticism does not have a similar effect for Blanca in this novel.

Donoso accentuates this point by presenting Archibaldo Arenas as a God who makes false promises (though Lon Pearson inexplicably compares him to the "devil"). He is the only character who appears to offer any real chance of sexual liberation: but, as with religion, the hope he represents is purely illusory. Blanca asks of him: "¿Era más que un prestidigitador que prometía la felicidad para luego no cumplir?" (p.166). She feels the urge to obliterate "su linda cara traicionera que lo prometía todo y no daba nada" (p.167). She therefore decides to "despachar a Archibaldo y el espejismo encarnado en él, quedando, como debía ser, sola con Luna y lo que él le diera" (p.175).

This last quotation implies that, for Blanca, the key to fulfilment lies with the dog Luna. The animal's eyes indicate the real path to fulfilment:

Allí estaban esos ojos límpidos como dos continentes en blanco, como páginas sin escribir, como senderos jamás transitados, dos honduras gris-oro que no expresaban nada porque sólo eran, en las que la mente de Blanca podía hundirse, y disolverse o encontrar algo que desde este lado de las lunas gemelas ella no alcanzaba a ver (p.163).

The sense of calm incarnate in the dog's gaze supports the view that Luna has the answer:

Tenían algo de sacramentales esas dos redondelas fijas que le devolvieron la serenidad que hacía media hora creía haber perdido para siempre. Hubiera querido permanecer por el resto de sus días en esa oscuridad, observada por esas dos lunas distintas que constituían una sola mirada (p.140).

The contrast between the glisten of his eyes and the shine of the expensive consumer goods in Blanca's room

suggests that her only possibility of salvation lies in the rejection of the material world as we understand it:

Luna, con sus ojos gris-limón tan incomprensiblemente carentes de intensidad, tan vacíos, reluciendo de otra manera que el cristal y que la araña de lágrimas y la plata de los objetos y los bronce de los muebles del dormitorio nupcial..., se quedó mirándola fijo toda la noche, con la intención de incluirla para siempre en la órbita de sus pálidos satélites gemelos (p.144).

Significantly, Blanca specifies on two occasions the destruction Luna effects in her room as "caos" (pp.148,149). He is even said to be "destruyendo el universo" (p.165). The reason for this is that the key to understanding (represented by Luna) depends upon man's recognition of the absurdity of life and the chaos of the universe. This is why she describes his eyes as "esos ojos que prometían todo porque no tenían nada" (p.186): paradoxically, it is only by accepting the impossibility of fulfilment that we can achieve any form of transcendence.

Blanca's complete withdrawal from the world is expressed via the extreme symbolism of her disappearance in the final chapter. She wishes to vanish into "la oscuridad total donde sólo podían existir los remansos lunares de los ojos de Luna" (p.189). The dog "la llamaba, la incitaba a seguirlo, invitándola" (p.192). She therefore abandons Mario (and the carnal satisfaction he represents): "se puso de pie en la intemperie para desobedecer a Mario y seguir al perro que parecía ofrecerle algo más" (p.192). Her apparent devourment by a terrifying monster denotes her definitive absorption into chaos. The sound of the shot hints at the idea of suicide: this is symbolic of her rejection of life. Interestingly, the only things to be found are a silver clasp, a gold watch and a French shoe - all symbols of the material world from which she has escaped.

The final pages - comprising a cheerful account of the good fortune of most of the remaining characters - offer a picture of the negative constructs she has spurned.

Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that, despite the irony of the novel's closing passages, the other characters are content - even if their attitude to life is more limited and less honest than that of Blanca. As with Tres novelitas burguesas, Donoso demonstrates that there is some value in the artifices men develop in order to structure their lives. But unlike the last of the "tres novelitas" the overall emphasis here is on the repudiation of faith and the tyranny of chaos.

If La marquesita de Loria is indicative of an attitude of despondency, then Donoso's following novel, El jardín de al lado (1981), marks a return to a less negative outlook. It lacks the optimism implicit in "Gaspard de la nuit" and Casa de campo, but nevertheless gives an impression of stoic resignation. The fundamental futility of life is not denied - but it is counterbalanced by a bold determination to make the best of it. The author has, to some degree, exorcised the torment of insight without falling prey to wishful thinking. El jardín de al lado is a lucid illustration of the culmination of the process of intellectual evolution set in motion after the writing of El obsceno pájaro. The epistemological uneasiness of the 1970s is evident from the contrasts within individual works: in Tres novelitas burguesas, the rather uncensorious humour of "Chatanooga Choochoo", the positive viewpoint of "Gaspard de la nuit", and by contrast, the peculiar mixture of comedy with horror and despair in "Átomo verde número cinco"; in La marquesita de Loria, a non-malevolent treatment of character combining with an intriguing blend of jocosity and nihilistic symbolism. El jardín de al lado expresses the fusion of these two opposites. It brings out the author's achievement of a sense of calm through the very acceptance of the absurdity of life.

El jardín de al lado is a very personal book. There are indeed a number of striking autobiographical parallels between ^{the author's} ~~his~~ life and that of the novel's main character

Julio Méndez: both are Chilean writers, living in exile in small northern Spanish towns; both are in their fifties, prone to hypochondria, and averse to collective activities; both have taught English and have wives who are translators; both of their aged mothers die in an old mansion home in Santiago. There are, of course, a number of significant differences between Julio and his creator: but the interesting point is Donoso's desire to make a personal statement about his own situation in life as an individual.

Given the personal nature of the novel, it is not surprising that Donoso uses the predicament of the writer-character to highlight the conflict between art and politics. With the exception of Casa de campo, Donoso's work has never really been politically motivated. In Historia personal del 'boom' he makes a telling contrast between "mi propia congénita tibieza política" and "el compromiso total de Carlos Fuentes"²⁶. El jardín de al lado shows a similar scepticism towards political dogmatism, which is often seen as a mere adjunct of fashion: there is an ironic reference to the Zamora brothers, "socios propietarios de una boutique afro-hindú-folk-western-hippie-protesta"²⁷; the Rastro in Madrid is said to comprise of "este pulmón de la juventud contestataria que uno creyó muerta después del Mayo del 68, pero, perdura como un estilo que ahora no se sabe por qué y para qué es" (p.126); the attitudes of ex-hippies like Katy Verini are said to be lacking in validity, "porque ya no es una ideología, sólo un manierismo" (p.126). Even the prevalence of politically important events is related to what is currently in vogue. By the end of the 1970s the overthrow of Allende was just a fading memory: as Bijou comments - "Chile está pasado de moda" (p.53).

Julio's lack of political rigidity confronts him with the problem of "la relación entre arte y ética" (p.18). He cannot share the outlook of the painter Adriaola, "que consideraba toda manifestación artística importante sólo en cuanto es útil a la comunidad, como instrumento

de protesta, como enseñanza para el pueblo" (p.47). For Julio, "uno no escribe con el propósito de decir algo, sino para saber qué quiere decir y para qué y para quiénes" (p.159). He realizes that "la gran novela no ha sido jamás una novela de convicciones, ha sido siempre la novela del corazón" (p.168). Even the politically active Gloria is aware of this point: "Te quiero explicar que yo, como persona, no es que no siga exaltada, políticamente, y sobre todo en relación a Chile. Haría cualquier cosa para que la situación cambiara en mi país. Pero sé que eso es ajeno a la literatura, quiero decir, ajeno por lo menos a mi literatura" (p.262).

It is plain, then, that, for Donoso, literature is to be seen as an intimate exercise concerned with the fears, apprehensions and emotions of all human beings - the dilemma of existence. He has defined El jardín de al lado as "the story of defeat on several levels"²⁸. All of the novel's different levels - personal, romantic, sexual, literary and political - come down to one basic existential theme: that of man's attempts to reconcile himself with frustration. The reality of this frustration is all too evident for Julio and Gloria. They live in a cramped, run-down apartment in an oppressive Spanish resort town. Their dress is shabby, their physique on the decline. They drink too much and obliterate their misery with sleeping-pills and valium. Julio admits that "hacía tanto tiempo que yo no sentía placer con nada" (p.36-7), while Gloria "ya ha olvidado qué es el placer... y sólo se ve cercada y aprisionada por la derrota" (p.176).

Donoso presents this sense of frustration on a number of different planes. First the couple's relationship is seen to be under great strain. Their violent confrontations and mutual recriminations are almost continuous. Husband and wife are both trapped in individual prisons of isolation: "ambos, aquí y allá, incomunicados" (p.176). The climax to this pattern of conflict comes with Gloria's mock-suicide attempt and her consequent immersion into a deep depression.

Julio's problem is accentuated by his awareness of his age. Laden with nostalgia, he repeatedly recalls the

past. He compares himself unfavourably with the young, carefree passers-by: "me sentaba en la última fila de mis cincuenta y tantos años para contemplar - ya que raramente para compartir - la alegría de tanta carne inconsciente y...tan sin problemas"(p.41). Instead the ageing Julio is tormented by the worries of cancer and death. His troubles are further underlined by his poor relations with his son and other young people. The novel is replete with references to the generation gap, to Julio's alienation of Pato, and to his unease with Bijou. The effect of this is simply to re-affirm Julio's age and gradual approach to death.

Julio's frustration is also literary. He blames the publishing world (represented by Núria Monclús²) and the closed-shop mafia of consecrated 'boom' writers (represented by Marcelo Chiriboga) for his lack of success as a novelist. However, his attitude is shown to be unfair: the last chapter shows Núria Monclús to be a charming, sensitive and intelligent woman, while Julio's vehement attack on Chiriboga merely boils down to "mi amargura y mi envidia"(p.140). The fact is that he lacks talent: he will never fulfil his ambition of writing the Chilean Rayuela. He is an "escritor de tono menor condenado a no pasar jamás al tono mayor de la gran novela de hoy"(p.35). His writing is "falso, débil, inútil"(p.109); "mi frondosa, sentimental, autocompasiva, aburrida novela...no era ni convincente como literatura ni válida como experiencia"(p.114); "mi novela, en suma, es pésima"(p.117). His humiliating encounter with Marcelo Chiriboga and the ultimate rejection of his book are the final blows to his hopes.

Related to Julio's literary ill fortune is the decline in his degree of political commitment. Katy suggests that his so-called "moderación humanista" is really "pedantería cobarde", but Julio defends himself: "No nací para ser héroe, ni siquiera para tener razón, lo que puede señalarme como un ser limitado y comodón, pero qué le voy a hacer: es lo que soy... Todo languidece, y pierde coherencia, y ya no soy capaz de transformar nada en teoría ni en

acción que lo enmiende y lo explique todo"(p.116).His equivocal political outlook reflects a general devaluation of passionate sentiments, his confusion and withdrawal. In a long but important passage he links this lack of political fire (symbolised by his six days in a Chilean prison) to the other aspects of his malaise:

¿Cómo impedir que se esfumaran y palidieceran mis seis días de calabozo, que eran como el trazo que definía el contorno de mi identidad? ¿Cómo impedir que se desvaneciera algo tan mío, fuerte sobre todo porque por primera vez me vi arrastrado por la historia para integrarme en forma dramática al destino colectivo?... Pero, claro, habían pasado siete años desde entonces, llenos de experiencias menos trascendentes y más confusas, mezquinas experiencias personales que no me aportaban otra cosa que humillación: mi ineptitud para la sobrevivencia sin la protección de la universalidad; el odio, desde mi punto de vista totalmente injustificado, de Patrick; mis regulares relaciones con Gloria...; la constante sensación de fracaso, de no estar "bien dans ma peau", como decía Patrick, no Pato; todo este cúmulo de vejaciones se había sobrepuesto a aquella experiencia cuya jerarquía yo tan desesperadamente trataba de mantener mediante las páginas de notas que escribía como quien riega una planta moribunda, pero que, ay, al fin se iba secando pese a tanto esfuerzo. La experiencia heroica iba palidieciendo, los lazos con aquellos que tuvieron experiencias de parecido rango se iban soltando, su heroicidad misma se tornaba cuestionable, ironizable, y mi derecho a reclamar participación en el asunto me iba pareciendo más y más dudoso... (p.31-2).

The fact that Julio's political difficulties are closely tied to his other anxieties is indicative of a highly significant point: that the novel does not simply deal with literary and political questions in isolation, but that all the various motifs reinforce the general theme of frustration, of modern man's sense of existential unease.

This is also true of an equally important factor in Julio's frustration, namely his exile from Chile. Although the novel does include some discussion of the reasons for voluntary exile, its main emphasis is upon exile's effects on the individual: again the accent is not on political specifics but on man's universal anxieties. The consequences of dislocation are quite profound:

Pero las experiencias del presente, la pobreza y en algunos casos la miseria de la trashumancia

y la terrible lejanía y la soledad y el triunfo que desarticulan los recuerdos que dispersan y alejan y el olvido o el rechazo de lo vernáculo, todo esto formaba un enjambre de zumbido enloquecedor como una nube agresiva que ahora hacía muy difícil oír con claridad los motivos por los cuales uno se vino y después permaneció donde estaba, cumpliendo a duras penas las modestas tareas de la sobrevivencia en un sitio donde uno no tiene ningún motivo para estar (p.33).

Julio feels cut off from the protective womb of Chile, adrift in an alien world: "la situación me ha forzado a elegir una vida afuera de ese útero pequeñito, aislado, protectivo que es Chile pese a los peligros que todos conocemos, pero que es protectivo en comparación con la inclemencia de esta inmensidad que es el afuera, donde nos hemos visto obligados a renacer" (p.71). This is why he refuses to sell his parents' home: because it represents a last link with his native soil. He has always been worried that "cuando se termine esa casa ya no tendré dónde volver" (p.66). When his brother Sebastián suggests selling the house he screams and collapses (p.170). The very idea appalls him:

¿Vender Roma para no tener donde posarme, en fin, ni siquiera una rama? ¿Cómo me puede exigir eso Sebastián? Claro, él no conoce la miseria ni lo que es andar por el mundo sin piso bajo los pies, sin aire que respirar, sólo aire hueco, perteneciente al vecino, o el appestoso aire con olor a pollos al ast y a papas fritas de Sitges (p.220).

He claims that "la zozobra de ya no tener esa casa donde posarme... me produciría infarto" (p.221), and remembers with nostalgia the fragrance of "la madeleine perfecta del barrio donde nací, donde mi madre acaba de morir, de donde mi hermano sensatamente quiere arrancar mis raíces para dejarlas expuestas al aire químico de Madrid" (p.222). Julio's words in the preceding quotations recall those of Pancho Vega in El lugar sin límites: "Creí que quedaba aquí esto con mis huellas, para después pensar cuando quisiera en estas calles por donde voy entrando, que ya no van a existir y no voy a poder recordarlas porque ya no existen y yo ya no podré volver... Me gustaría tener dónde volver no para volver sino para tenerlo, nada más,

y ahora no voy a tener. Porque don Alejo se va a morir" (p.101). In this scene Pancho's fear symbolises his crisis of faith, his terror at the loss of God (don Alejo) and the absurdity of existence. Similarly Julio's words reflect not only the tribulations of exile but also his general sense of frustration and disillusionment with life. Thus the novel's scope ranges much further than Pérez Blanco would have it: he sees El jardín de al lado on a purely personal, almost anecdotal level - "la justificación por parte del propio creador (José Donoso) del exilio voluntario y de la vuelta a Chile en este año de 1981"³⁰. It is much more than this: exile functions as a symbol of wider forms of alienation.

This is the significance of the stress laid on the symbol of the house in Santiago. It represents the ideal home, a lost paradise which Julio hopes to recapture one day. The obvious parallel with the idyllic garden next door to Pancho Salvatierra's Madrid flat re-affirms the analogy. Julio confuses in his mind the Chilean and the Spanish gardens: the youthful, Edenic overtones of Donoso's evocation of the latter are suggestive of the paradisaical importance of the Latin American home. The irrational desire to maintain the house (despite the ridiculous expense and Julio's own impecuniosity): illustrates man's reluctance to sever his final link with hope and faith.

In the last chapter of the novel we are told that the house has been sold: but, contrary to expectations, this brings peace, not despondency. In the penultimate chapter Julio is actually on the brink of despair. He sees hope as "lo más maligno de todo" (p.241), and therefore wishes to withdraw from life completely: "siento un vértigo por dejar de ser quien soy, y lanzarme a la sima" (p.237). He wants to assume the identity of a wretched North-African beggar: "quiero ser ese hombre, meterme dentro de su piel enfermiza y de su hambre para así no tener esperanza de nada ni temer nada, ... este bello mendigo enfermo que yace sin haber conocido la esperanza" (p.239). However, Julio does not sink into the abyss of defeat: he changes

his mind. Indeed, the whole of the final chapter constitutes a rejection of the negativism of the previous one. The last word is with Gloria: she does not engage in the noble existentialist struggle of the absurd hero, like Manuela of El lugar sin límites; but nor does she give up like Japonesita of El lugar sin límites, nor break down like Andrés of Coronación, Inés and Humberto Peñaloza of El obsceno pájaro, Roberto and Marta of "Átomo verde número cinco", nor reject life like Blanca of La marquesita de Loria. Instead, Gloria simply shrugs her shoulders and gets on with the task of living. The fact that she no longer dyes her hair nor paints her nails suggests that she sees no point in optimism: but her overall contentment implies equally that she is now able to cope with life. As she herself says: "siento cómo las cosas se han apaciguado, tomando su lugar dentro de esta perspectiva, que puede ser falsa y lírica, pero que ahora me atrevo a aceptar como mía" (p. 250). Thus we have reached the final point in the development of Donoso's existential outlook up until his departure from Spain in 1981. The build-up towards the climactic negativism of El obsceno pájaro was displaced in the 1970s by an ambiguous mixture of continued pessimism and a sense of relief. The synthesis of this inner tussle was achieved with El jardín de al lado. The author recognises the chaos and absurdity of life, but this recognition is complemented by a sense of calm and resignation. Donoso may have found his peace.

CHAPTER TWO

TRES NOVELITAS BURGUESAS : REALISM AND FANTASY

The collection entitled Tres novelitas burguesas stands in sharp contrast to El obsceno pájaro de la noche. Although they do contain techniques that bring out the interplay of order and chaos, they conform to an overall pattern of harmony and structural unity. This is true not only for the three individual novellas but also for the text as a whole. It is my intention here to examine each of the tales in turn and then in relation to each other; it is hoped that this consideration of the technical aspect of the novellas will act as a pointer towards possible developments in Donoso's existential outlook.

The structure of "Chatanooga Choochoo" develops in a careful, almost symmetrical pattern. It divides basically into three sections, the first corresponding to exposition, the second to development of plot and themes, with the third acting as a dénouement. It is worth considering this general structural pattern before coming to any detailed commentary.

The first section covers the first twenty-nine pages of the novella in the Seix Barral edition, taking us up to the point where Anselmo returns to the present having considered the previous night's activities. The first part of this section involves an account of Anselmo's reactions to Sylvia as she cooks in the flat. Thus we are introduced right away to the two main characters and a polarity is immediately set up between them: this forms part of the link in the men-women/order-chaos pattern, preparing us for what follows. Moreover, Anselmo's expression of his internal fears creates a sense of menace (reinforced by the order-versus-chaos movement of the narrative to which we shall return later); the reader's interest is therefore grasped from the start. The main themes are also hinted at here: the falseness of Sylvia is brought out in her pseudo-feminist remarks and in Anselmo's consideration of the artificiality of her features.

Indeed it is this contemplation of Sylvia's falseness which provides the mechanism for the transition to the past. Sylvia's comment on Magdalena's "good taste" provokes Anselmo to consider the deceitfulness of someone who can make such a remark about someone they only met last night. Thus the bridge between the present and the past is established, allowing Donoso to give the reader the necessary background information contained on the events of the previous night.

The narrative now expands outwards. The reference to the party allows the author to write about Ricardo and Raimunda Roig, a topic he can develop into a general attack on the hypocrisy of the middle classes. Donoso gives us a paragraph centred around Raimunda, followed by one centred around Ricardo. He then begins the process of narrowing in the action again, turning now to the Roigs' relationship with Anselmo and Magdalena and their invitation to the party. The superb description of the party continues the attack on the bourgeoisie. Donoso does this, not by direct authorial intervention, but by introducing snippets of conversation characterised by pretentiousness, clichés, pseudo-cosmopolitanism, and continuous references to fashion and brand names. A series of neatly drawn caricatures also contribute to the atmosphere of pretence and ostentation.

The author's technique has a striking cinematic effect. The camera gives us a general overview before focusing in on specific characters: it then concentrates on the words and actions of those characters until the viewer is eventually drawn into their intimate, private world. Similarly, Donoso now begins to home in on the main characters, thus luring his readers more deeply into the story. Sylvia is contemplated from a distance as an unnamed character. The emphasis is on the artificiality of her appearance (a recurring image again strengthening the theme of falseness). Kaethe alleges that this strange woman paints on a new face every day and is pieced together "con módulos de plástico como a un maniquí de

escaparate"(p.19).At this point,these remarks seem to be typical examples of exaggerated bourgeois language.However, Donoso is skilfully dropping a hint in order to prepare us for what happens later.Anselmo feels the urge to "abalanzarse sobre Magdalena para desarmarla como una maquinaria"(p.22).Once again Donoso is planting the idea of the dismantling of people into the reader's mind in order to ensure the acceptability (within the context of the novella's fictional reality) of the fantastic revelation that Sylvia can indeed be dis-assembled at will.

The performance of "Chatanooga Choochoo" now follows. The crucial importance of this dance will be discussed later.After the dance,Kaethe introduces Anselmo to Ramón. The narrative narrows in even further when Sylvia and Magdalena join them in the next paragraph.The process continues as the couple leave for a drink and then decide to go back to Ramón's flat.However,the whispered conversation between Sylvia and Magdalena (who is unable to join them)arouses Anselmo's suspicions.Sylvia's reference to Magdalena as "la mujercita sumisa"(p.28) offends him further,reminding him of a comment Sylvia has just made about his wife back in the present.Thus Donoso cleverly provides a link between the past and the present,allowing the action to return to the point at which it left off.The section of exposition now comes to an end:the author has caught our interest,introduced the characters,given any necessary information and highlighted the main themes.It is significant that he repeats the threatening image of the butterfly and ends the passage on a suspenseful note:Sylvia's insistence on her 'affinity' with Magdalena "me pareció peligrosa" (p.29) - there is real fear at the end of this section and the reader's attention is fully in the author's grip.

The tension is heightened by the impression given by Donoso that this is in fact the end or climax of a section.The final paragraph of the exposition section

was concerned with the internal thoughts of Anselmo. It is only in the following paragraph that we return to the narrative proper, marking the beginning of a new section as Donoso takes up the story again. This segment of the text expands upon the plot and themes introduced in the previous section. It divides roughly into two parts: the first dealing with Anselmo's activities in Sylvia's flat, the second developing his fears and concerning his attempts to conceal the mystery of his missing penis from his wife. The first part will shortly be examined in some detail: it covers the growing dominance of Sylvia over Anselmo. The second part is interesting because it expands the Anselmo-Sylvia conflict into an Anselmo-Sylvia/Magdalena opposition and a more general men-women antithesis. We have already been prepared for this by a number of references to the idea of women's secret meetings in cafés, the implication being that they go there to plot against their husbands. Anselmo, whose deepening worries lead him to withdraw to the safety of his bedroom, becomes alarmed at Magdalena's telephone conversation with Sylvia and the arrangement she makes to meet her: indeed he is overcome by "el miedo de este encuentro" (p. 64). Later, when reading to his children, "seguí leyendo, tratando de mantener la voz segura y aferrada a la rectitud de la línea para que no me temblara ante la realidad de la confabulación que por fin se había producido entre estas dos mujeres..." (p. 68). The phallic symbolism of Magdalena's deliberate method of eating her éclair implies that she knows about his missing penis, something which discomforts him even more. When he suggests the idea of going out on Saturday night, Magdalena's assertion that she can "comunicate" with Sylvia disturbs him even further because of the phrase's connotations of "siniestros medios extra-sensoriales" (p. 71) .

Moreover, as well as developing Anselmo's increasing fear of Sylvia and Magdalena, this part of the novella expands the doctor's unease into a phobia against all women. He becomes afraid of his nurse, Mrs Sanz: "Sí, ahora

más que nunca me pareció idéntica a Sylvia y peligrosa como ella, voraz sí, eso era exactamente lo que era la señora Sanz" (p. 59). He even wishes he could "desarmarla como a Sylvia" (p. 59). He soon feels that "todas las mujeres, entonces, querían adueñarse de mí, cada una de su sección" (p. 59). Like Humberto Peñaloza, he hides away in his house in order to keep away from "las maquinaciones de toda clase de brujas" (p. 62). He eventually comes to feel "un muñeco en las manos de las mujeres" (p. 86).

Having introduced the major elements of the novella in the first section, then, Donoso uses this second section to objectify Anselmo's fears (via the concrete example of his dealings with Sylvia), going on to develop his paranoia in the second part of the section. Furthermore, by allowing Anselmo's apprehensions to evolve into a general terror of women, Donoso amplifies the novella's internal symbolism so as to highlight the threat posed to the doctor's sense of order by the forces of chaos. The ascendancy of chaos is underlined by the parallelism inherent in the scene where Anselmo applies Magdalena's make-up for her. This recalls his earlier making up of Sylvia's face, the implication being that Magdalena now has the same powers as Sylvia: "al adquirir Magdalena su rostro (el de Sylvia) compartiría esos poderes" (p. 77). Anselmo feels that making up women gives him a certain power over them (for he manipulates their features). However, we know that his attempts to control Sylvia were completely undermined: it was she who stole his penis. Similarly, the parallel situation of Magdalena is indicative of her domination of her husband, anticipating the revelation that she can dis- or re-assemble him at will.

The remainder of this second broad section deals with the couple's trip to the Bistrot and the events of the following day. The Bistrot episode allows Donoso to use cameo caricatures to reflect even further the falsity of the main characters' world. Equally importantly it provides a link in the plot, for it prepares us for the Roigs' second party (to which the couple are here invited) and

it allows Sylvia to return Anselmo's penis to Magdalena (unknown to the reader and, ironically, to the irate Anselmo). The function of the paragraphs dealing with the following day is to develop the irony of Anselmo's decision to join forces with Ramón against their respective wives.

The final section begins with the massage Magdalena applies to her husband. This section's importance - as we shall see - rests in its demonstration of the total power of women over their spouses, corresponding - not simply to what Tatum sees as a satire against "el extremismo deshumanizante del 'women's lib'" - but, much more significantly, to the triumph of chaos over man's wrongly held perceptions of a stable universe. However, the humorous tone of the novella diminishes the potentially disturbing impact of this idea. The final picture of an innocent Anselmo happily going home to make love with his wife, blissfully ignorant of her mysterious machinations, does seem to suggest that Donoso recognises the value of the human construct for certain individuals - despite its falseness. The harmony of the narrative's arrangement is a reminder of this.

At the same time though the novella's overall design also reflects the ascendancy of chaos over the illusory notion of order. Donoso's technique is to build up repeatedly a mood of calm or confidence only to undermine that sense of security by the introduction of an element of perturbation. The opening paragraph describes Sylvia cooking in the early evening against a picturesque background which creates a languid, serene atmosphere. However, the butterfly that knocks against her back (a recurring image of the intervention of chaos in a world of apparent order) provokes her to speak, thus breaking up the flowing movement of the paragraph. The next paragraph seals the change of tone:

Sentí que el tono idílico del día transcurrido eligiendo casa en la urbanización repentinamente cambiaba de signo con las palabras de Sylvia, como cuando de pronto, sin que nada lo justifique, la leche se corta o se pone agria (pp.11-2).

The sudden switch to the first person internalises the narrative, allowing Donoso to focus abruptly on the fears of Anselmo, thus setting up a contrast between the apparent order of the external world and the individual's subjective intuition of its elements of disharmony. Equally the change of person pits Anselmo against Sylvia, suggesting that, for the former, the latter is an embodiment of the forces of chaos.

However, Anselmo's sense of calm soon begins to re-emerge:

¿qué protección era necesaria en este agradable mundo que habitábamos, donde el mal no existía porque todo era inmediatamente digerido? Nadie ignoraba que Sylvia y Ramón eran perfectos: su prolongada relación de estructura impecable era universalmente admirada... Cualquiera inseguridad resultaba fuera de lugar porque Ramón era Ramón del Solar (p.12).

But having recreated a relaxed atmosphere, Donoso shatters it again. Once more a short snippet of conversation breaks up the flow of the narrative: Sylvia's comment on Magdalena's good taste makes Anselmo suspicious, because the two women hardly know each other and cannot therefore be fully aware of each other's likes and dislikes.

The immediate threat of the present is temporarily left behind as the author concentrates on the previous night's party at the Roigs'. After an entertaining account of various frivolous goings-on, we are treated to a description of Sylvia and Magdalena performing "Chatanooga Choochoo" in perfect synchronisation. Again the human construct (represented by the social activities at the party) is juxtaposed with chaos (the dance). This dance totally undermines Anselmo's inner security, reminding him of the limitations of his vision of reality: he is "sin capacidad para comprender la repentina autonomía de mi mujer, ni tolerar su capacidad, hasta ese momento desconocida para mí que creía conocerla entera, de transformarse una vacía y vulgar muñeca estilo forties" (p.23). Donoso changes the tone yet again as the two couples get to know each other. A friendship appears to be developing but the mood is again disrupted when the two women whisper

"con un cómico tono de confabulación"(p.27).Anselmo now feels threatened by this "clima de sècta"(p.28).Reflecting on Sylvia`s insistènçe on her affinity with Magdalena he thinks that "la palabra `afinidad`...me pareció peligrosa"(p.29):

Nevertheless,when Donoso returns the action to the present a new feeling of calm descends over Anselmo as he convinces himself that all is well.He reflects lengthily upon the positive element of his meeting with Ramón and Sylvia,but suddenly his language changes:

... El encuentro en la casa de Ricardo y Raimunda había augurado una relación muy madura y muy joven - o por lo menos muy juvenil -, sí, hasta que la maldita mariposa nocturna, al chocar contra la espalda de Sylvia, puso en movimiento toda su maquinaria obsesiva, acelerándola, haciendo la repetición de lo mismo intolerablemente frecuente, hasta dotar a la palabra `afinidad` de un aura desapacible, que lo estropeaba todo... (p.32).

A relaxed tone returns to the prose, only to be undermined once more:

Ya volvería Ramón. Ya podríamos reanudar nuestro civilizado diálogo de hombres maduros pero todavía entusiastas.

Pero Ramón no volvía (p.32).

The technique is repeated when Ramón leaves the house altogether. Again a passage of relative peacefulness is interrupted, this time by the sound of Ramón`s car:

... me debo haber adormecido en la hamaca pensando que sin duda así eran las noches en la casa vecina que me proponía comprar, y así descansaría cuando los fines de semana, después del atosigamiento de trabajo en la ciudad, me permitiera una escapada para pintar. Sentí que el motor de un coche se ponía en marcha. Me incorporé de un salto y, asomándome, grité:

- ¿Quién es? (p.34).

This constant change of emphasis demonstrates the precarious nature of Anselmo`s sense of order and, by extension, man`s attempts to seek a harmonious interpretation of an essentially chaotic universe. After Ramón`s departure Anselmo feels "una leve sensación de desasosiego"(p.35) but relaxes somewhat as he prepares to go

to bed. A light-hearted description of one of the flat's toilets is unexpectedly punctuated by a feeling of unease: "repentinamente pensé que no debía haber venido" (p.36). A mood of quietude is quickly re-established as Anselmo falls asleep, but it is shattered by the re-appearance of the threatening image of "aquella mariposa nocturna" (p.37). This is, of course, Sylvia. She has already been presented as an element of chaos in Anselmo's life. The fact that she now turns up minus her arms and facial features underlines even further the fragmentation of Anselmo's previously ordered vision of the world.

The order-chaos alternation is in part based on a conflict between Anselmo and Sylvia (by extension, men and women). From now on this polarity is also facilitated by a power-weakness conflict, again corresponding to Anselmo's attitude to Sylvia. His desire for power over women symbolically reflects his nostalgia for faith in a structured, meaningful life; the reality of his weakness represents the hopelessness of that nostalgia. His consequent sense of frustration is dramatised in the text by the constant juxtaposition of passages highlighting each aspect of the polarity.

Realising Sylvia's "infinita y dolorosa falta de recursos" (p.41), Anselmo feels the urge to seduce her. Having kissed her, he rejoices in "el poder del hombre" (p.42), thinking that "todo en ella depende de la voluntad del hombre" (p.43). But as he gets more excited, the nature of the narrative changes disconcertingly:

Lo que yo quería era llevarme a ese maniquí sin brazos, con su boca voraz porque yo la quería voraz, carente de autonomía, a la cama y hacer el amor con ese juguete. El no dotarla del resto de sus facultades dependía totalmente de mí. Esa muñeca no podía buscar nada en el amor, sólo ser instrumento. Pero Sylvia se estaba prendiendo a mí con su boca, envolviéndome con la lascivia de su cuerpo incompleto: era como si su intención fuera comprometerme para después obligarme a algo, o más bien pedirme hacer lo que ella quisiera... (p.43).

Having made her up, Anselmo's sense of power returns. He demands that she make love with him again: when she refuses

he threatens to obliterate her features with the vanishing cream; but her kissing of him "me hizo olvidar mi propósito" (p.47), His pride grows again: he assumes her impatience is "un halago a mi virilidad" (p.48), but she is now commanding him with "una expresión autoritaria" (p.49). He thinks he can control her by removing her mouth ("quitársela para que cesara su charla estúpida" (p.52)), but he is already "obediente ante esta Venus sin brazos" (p.52). After triumphantly making love with her he feels "una curiosa sensación de haberme sometido como un niño bueno" (p.54). Sylvia's theft of his penis - "mi más poderosa arma para someter" (p.55) - underscores his total submission. His sense of order has now gone, for he has lost "lo que hacía gravitar mi unidad como persona" (p.54). His desire to dismantle her and "guardar todo cuidadosamente en una caja" (p.55) is as hopeless as Humberto Penaloza's attempts to lure Iris Mateluna into the Chalet Suizo.

As the days go by, Anselmo's fear of Sylvia and Magdalena grows consistently. However, he eventually decides to join forces with Ramón at the Roigs' second party so that they can combat the threat represented by their wives. He thinks they will be able to "desarmarlas no en el sentido de quitarles sus armas, sino de desmontarlas como a Sylvia" (p.86). He joyously speculates about the total control he will exercise over his wife:

yo iba a recuperar lo que Sylvia y ella me habían quitado, y aprendiendo de Ramón el secreto de cómo se desmonta a la mujer legítima... yo desmontaría a la mía y así, guardándola cuando quisiera, podría usar mi virilidad a mi antojo con cualquiera de los miles de maquillajes que esconden a mujeres maravillosamente descartables ... (pp.88-9).

Donoso has again developed an atmosphere of calm and security, for Anselmo has managed to convince himself that he can control his destiny. However, the author demonstrates once more the falsity of his position by introducing the most striking juxtaposition of the entire novella. Just as Anselmo is feeling at his most smug and most self-

confident, Magdalena gives him a massage. What follows is much more than a "dream sequence" on Anselmo's part, to quote McMurray.² This passage is of pivotal importance. The narrative voice changes to the second person form suggesting that Magdalena is now in command - a point underlined by the language she uses: words like "anestesiado" and "anestesiándote" imply that Anselmo's self-control is drifting away. This is confirmed as she goes on to dismantle him. The switch to third-person narration describing, from Magdalena's point of view, how she packs her husband away into a little case, accentuates the irony of Anselmo's outlook: he is totally at the mercy of women, of the forces of chaos. The natural, precise style of the following pages gives the impression that such actions are commonplace: this adds further weight to the point that Anselmo (and, by extension, the reader) is completely unaware of the true nature of reality.

An extra layer of irony is added by the switch back to the first person. The two women decide to reassemble their partners and the men carry on as if nothing has happened:

- Sí. Ahora. Pongámosles las cabezas al mismo tiempo...

- ¿Ahora?

- Sí, ahora.

Y Ramón y yo estábamos riéndonos porque Magdalena parecía una viuda. O, sugirió Ramón:

- Morticia. ¿Te acuerdas de Charles Addams? (p. 97).

The use of the word "Y" implies that Anselmo does not realise he has been interrupted, while the men's inane joking stresses their ignorance even further. But there has been a subtle change in the nature of the juxtapositions used by Donoso. Previously in the novella he was opposing changes within Anselmo's attitude towards the outside world. Now the author's presentation of events is more ironic, for Anselmo is unaware of the chaos inherent in his existence: he has symbolically plumped for the blissful ignorance of the human construct. However, by using irony in this way, Donoso is deliberately compromising his readers by forcing them to laugh at Anselmo's

position: the reader recognises the falseness of such evasion and is brought face to face with the essentially chaotic nature of his own life.

The irony is continued as the party atmosphere develops. There is a clear parallel between this party and the Roigs' previous one. However, this time it is the men who mechanically perform "Chatanooga Choochoo". The first party involved an ironic argument for the cause of women's liberation, presenting a situation in which the traditional husband (especially Ramón) was in charge. Now the opposite is the case: the women are now dictating the actions of their men. Anselmo realises of Magdalena that "ahora, porque ella me guiaba, yo estaba cantando para complacerla" (p.100); Magdalena tells him that "lo hiciste tal como yo quería" (p.102). The irony of Ramón's situation is that the domineering husband turns out to be a mere puppet in the hands of his wife; Anselmo's position is doubly ironic for he was shocked and angry at Magdalena's behaviour at the first party but now finds himself doing exactly the same thing, this time making no comment about his own scandalous exhibition. There is further ironic parallelism in that the language now used to describe Anselmo recalls that employed in the depictions of the artificial Sylvia who can wipe away her identity with vanishing cream: "tuve la curiosa sensación de que me estaba desvaneciendo, que me iba borrando, y el hecho de que Ramón, mi doble, desaparecía tragado por el tumulto de la reunión me dejó como sin mi propia imagen en el espejo para poder comprobar mi muy dudosa existencia" (pp.100-1). The positions are now reversed: he is now as he once imagined Sylvia to be, with his existence totally dependent on the will of a dominant partner. The first party represented order, with men controlling (or thinking that they controlled) women - though even then a threat to that order was emerging in the form of Magdalena's unexpected autonomy. Now the situation has turned about completely: women have triumphed over men, chaos has triumphed over order.

The effect of the final pages of the novella depends largely upon the juxtaposition of Anselmo's naïve perception of reality and the more complete picture of reality as presented to the reader. When he gets back his penis he feels confidently in control of a "Magdalena sumisa" (p.102) - but it is she who has returned his organ, she who controls him. As they leave, he sees her glancing at her little suitcase: thinking he can "leer los pensamientos de mi mujer" (p.103), he deduces that she is making a mental note to meet Raimunda in a café to pick up the case. Of course the case is the one in which Magdalena keeps her husband; furthermore the idea of such meetings is a recurring motif in the novella, acting as an indication of women's secret plotting against their menfolk. The ironic distance between Anselmo's view of events and the fictional reality as the reader understands it, is thrown into even higher relief when these two ideas are repeated in the novella's closing lines: "iba, yo estaba seguro, a hacerla olvidar la maleta negra ... por lo menos hasta el otro día, cuando llamara a Raimunda por teléfono para salir a tomar un café uno de estos días y recobrarla porque la necesitaría" (p.104).

The order-versus-chaos movement (with the victory of the latter over the former) does seem to indicate a continuing sense of despair in Donoso's outlook on life. However, as we have seen, the novella is framed within an ultimately harmonious pattern: this suggests the ascendancy of art over chaos and is indicative of a modification in the author's attitude. In "Chatanooga Choochoo" the construct actually works for the main character: Anselmo attains some form of happiness - be it an artificial creation or not. The disappearance of the sheer terror of El obsceno pájaro and its corresponding structural distortion, may imply that Donoso too is beginning to learn the value of the construct.

In "Átomo verde número cinco" on the other hand the outlook is less positive. As we have seen, materialism in this novella serves as an image of the artifices we

create in order to give false meaning to our lives; when Marta and Roberto's material possessions begin to disappear so too (on a symbolic plane) does their sense of order and faith in life. The novella's linear development brings out the couple's dilemma by juxtaposing opposite elements and by building up an ever-accelerating pattern of disintegration. The first four paragraphs are abstract in nature; they do not refer to any specific moment in time but constitute a general consideration of the central character's situation. Significantly the novella opens without reference to Roberto Ferrer at all: most of the first paragraph is a discussion of the merits of setting up home in "el piso definitivo" (p.107). The language describing this ultimate level of existence contains associations of finality: the words "definitivo" and "permanente", for example, are opposed to the notion of "una existencia más o menos transhumante en pisos alquilados" (p.107). Thus from the very beginning we are given a sense of the permanence and security that such a new home affords to its occupants. The descriptions of the selection procedure for furniture and ornaments is a further indication of the comfort to be gained from establishing one's perfect home. Having set out these basic ideas Donoso turns our attention to the couple whose present situation reflects them: Roberto and Marta Ferrer. However, he introduces a note of foreboding into the narration by ending the otherwise confident first paragraph with a reference to the couple's lack of children: this suggests that their obsession with the new flat is merely a distraction from the emptiness of their life. This is a technique which Donoso turns to again and again in the novella, particularly in its opening stages: the introduction of deliberate hints of unease to undermine the validity of what the main characters cling to.

Having switched the focus to Roberto, the author now develops an important aspect of the novella's symbolism. The dentist's painting emerges as a symbol of his quest for fulfilment on a non-material plane; significantly he

expresses a wish to follow the example of Gauguin and abandon his present life-style for the sake of art. This desire for fulfilment via art is embodied in the empty room: he refuses to furnish it, opting to "darle tiempo al tiempo para que la necesidad de pintar, cuando surgiera si surgía, lo hiciera con tal vigor que determinaría la forma precisa del cuarto" (p.109). The reader's expectations are raised from the start as we wait for artistic inspiration to arrive and the room to be filled. However, none of these things happens: he does not abandon civilisation like Gauguin; we never see him painting; he never fills the symbolic room (a void, which like his empty life, can be filled with nothing meaningful). Donoso's technique, then, is to prepare the reader for an outcome which never emerges: the search for fulfilment is a hopeless quest.

These first four general paragraphs have the function of setting the scene for the plot, introducing the main characters, hinting at the themes and misleading the reader by wrongly arousing his expectations. Donoso is now in a position to turn to a specific place and time in order to expand upon the exposition. He begins the fifth paragraph with Roberto musing about "la solución Gauguin" (p.110) on a specific Sunday morning in his new flat: Gauguin therefore provides the link between the general and the concrete levels of the novella's opening movement. Donoso's concentration on Roberto over the next pages allows him to develop the ideas of the previous paragraphs through the example of one character's outlook (presented via an indirect third person narrative).

Again there is tension of opposites in the narration. A binary distinction is drawn between the warmth of the inside (order) and the cold of the outside (chaos): "toda esa gente que camina allá fuera está en un ataúd y por eso tiene frío. Adentro, en cambio, es decir afuera del ataúd, donde él estaba, hacía calor" (p.111); "afuera llovía, mientras la gente tenía frío y él no" (p.112); later we see him "en el dormitorio, con su lucecita de velador encendida

y el resto en penumbra, cálido, protegido - mientras afuera llovía y llovía" (p.134). As the novella progresses, this is eventually developed into a more general inside-outside opposition. At one stage Roberto loses the artificial, protective order represented by the flat:

sí, había desaparecido, su miedo tenía fundamento, no iba a poder volver, se iba a perder en la ciudad, en la intemperie, lejos de teléfonos y direcciones conocidas, en las calles enmarañadas por la noche y por las luces multiplicadas y refractadas por la lluvia... (p.142).

Like the child/narrator of Este domingo, secure in the "redoma" of his father's car, the protagonists of this tale feel free from the terror of the city when travelling in the ambulance, where they are "refugiados dentro, protegidos" (p.162). Significantly, they then withdraw totally into their flat; their exit into the city near the end corresponds with their total collapse into chaos. However, the inside-outside polarity is part of an ongoing pattern of the novella's imagery. At the early stage of the plot under consideration here, the hot-cold binarism serves the purpose of re-affirming Roberto's need for a construct as well as hinting at the possibility of a threat to his order.

This second phase of the exposition also introduces foreboding by taking up again the painting imagery of the opening paragraphs. The fifth paragraph develops Roberto's smugness in his new material surroundings, but ends with a reference to the white room: the incomplete nature of this symbolic room introduces a note of confusion into the reader's mind, suggesting that all is not as well as Roberto would like to think. In the next paragraph he again speculates as to what he will do with the room, and again decides to leave his urge to paint to "nacer de un fuerte impulso interior" (p.112): the reader's attention is once more put on the alert for something that will not happen, a point hinted at in the following paragraph where he rejects the option of imitating Gauguin.

The painting imagery makes way for the introduction

of an important new central symbol in the eighth paragraph: that of his own painting, Átomo verde número cinco. The next four paragraphs outline its history. The pride he feels in the canvas is emphasised. The flashback to their fifteenth wedding anniversary, when Marta asked for the painting, brings out the romantic, emotional aura surrounding it. Significantly, Donoso develops a general passage on their anniversary night - dealing with their exotic meal, their sexual activities and so on ; but the paragraph concludes with a reference to the really important thing for Roberto - "que (Marta) prefería que le regalara como recuerdo de esa noche su cuadro Átomo verde número cinco" (p.115). The painting is still the main subject of the narrative as we return to the present, though again there is a disconcerting insinuation behind Roberto's recollection of his wife's question: "¿Por qué no lo guardamos por mientras en tu cuarto vacío?" (p.115). Nevertheless, the atmosphere of calm is taken further as Roberto hangs Átomo verde número cinco on the wall. This is the finishing touch that finally sets the seal on his sense of contentment with the flat. The several pages devoted to the painting underline its importance as the culminating element in the flat's decor and Roberto's sense of satisfaction. He now waits excitedly for Marta to return home and witness the finished product.

However, this is where the turning point in the novella comes. The exposition is over and now the plot proper begins with the mood of comfort and security receiving its first serious threat. This is portended by a double reference to the terror of the empty room and the terror of the outside:

Sí, tener a Marta aquí para colocar su figura protectora de modo que tapiara la odiosa entrada a la habitación vacía, clausurándola para siempre, de modo que su cuadro colgado junto a la puerta quedara como su obra definitiva en este piso definitivo, en este vestíbulo definitivo, anulando también la tentación de entrar a la habitación vacía, y también por otro lado, la otra tentación, distinta pero igualmente potente, de abrir la puerta de su casa y salir corriendo y

perderse para siempre:le bastaba estirar la mano para abrir esta puerta...(p.118).

The sound of the bell ringing jolts him back on to a plane of excitement,as he looks forward to the thrill of showing Marta the newly hung Átomo verde número cinco:

....El momento solitario de la plenitud había pasado y ahora Marta se incorporaba triunfalmente a ese momento para prolongarlo bajo otra forma.Sí,le bastaba estirar la mano para abrir la puerta y dejarla entrar.Así lo hizo,exclamando:
- ¡Marta...!

Pero no era Marta.Era el portero.O por lo menos el hermano del portero...(p.118).

This important contrast is superbly effected.Recalling the order-versus-chaos movement of "Chatanooga Choochoo", Donoso builds up a feeling of contentment (in the long passage dealing with the painting) and near-euphoria in the above-mentioned paragraph;but Roberto's illusions come tumbling down as the short, stilted opening sentences of the following paragraphs signal the wrecking of his hopes.The feeling is given further weight by the parallelism in the language.The expression "le bastaba estirar la mano para abrir la puerta" is used in both the above quotes,each coming towards the end of consecutive paragraphs.The first,however,was part of a reference to the terror of plunging into the chaos of the city;the second was heralding the arrival of a new stage in Roberto's developing sense of plenitude thanks to his luxurious flat.By undermining the validity of Roberto's second set of thoughts,Donoso skilfully suggests that the first set indicates his true fate:that is,the eventual loss of his sense of order.

After this set-back,a temporary atmosphere of calm returns to the prose:Donoso builds up another "order" movement as he describes how Roberto proudly shows the supposed doorman's brother round the flat.Again he introduces a hint of terror to suggest and prepare us for what might happen:as they pass the door of the ominously empty room Roberto "sintió el escalofrío producido,sin duda,porque se olvidó de cerrar la puerta del piso"(p.119).

But this is only a momentary interruption: the general tone is one of self-admiring ostentation - until, that is, the doorman's brother calmly steals Átomo verde número cinco. The importance of the title and the previous pages' lengthy insistence on the central and crucial rôle of the painting in Roberto's life now becomes apparent: by making the doorman's brother steal the canvas, Donoso symbolically implies that a fundamental element of the whole philosophy upon which Roberto's self-satisfaction was based is now gone. The ordered vision of the world implicit in the novella's first thirteen pages is in effect demolished in one fell swoop. This technique is just as valid as the consistent presentation of an image of chaos: the intention of the structural distortion of El obscuro pájaro. What Donoso does here is to undermine man's attitude to reality by developing the narrative within an apparently realistic framework, only to invalidate that outlook by the sudden introduction of an element of fantasy (which we are in fact prepared for by a series of pointers dotted throughout the text). This is the technique of "Chatanooga Choochoo", for example, and one to which Donoso will return, in slightly different forms, in La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria, El jardín de al lado and Cuatro para delfina.

Typically, Roberto seeks a rational explanation for the theft. Another order-versus-chaos movement is started as he takes comfort in his conclusion that Marta must have arranged for the painting to be collected. However, after the paragraph outlining these thoughts, the next one begins: "Pero Marta no sabía nada de nada" (p.123). Once more the precariousness of Roberto's stability finds its reflection in the cruel juxtapositions of the prose.

After Marta returns a quarrel ensues between the couple. It is a significant aspect of the novella's formal pattern that this happens each time an item disappears, thus demonstrating the uncertain nature of their construct, showing up at the same time the hollowness of the conventions of love and marriage (in themselves

further aspects of that construct). This particular argument ends with Marta leaving after Roberto stares accusingly at her barren belly (another symbol, like the room, of the void in their life that cannot be filled). The impact of their arguments is heightened by Donoso's unusual use of language. He places very detailed references to material goods in the middle of descriptions of emotional conflicts. As they are quarrelling, "Roberto se alejó más aún de Marta, sentándose al otro lado de la mesa de cristal Marcel Breuer colocada ante la chimenea" (p.125). Marta soon becomes upset by her husband's heartless gazing:

Esperó que, como otras veces, Roberto acudiera a abrazarla, a consolarla, a decirle que no importaba, a mecerla como a una niña porque ella era una niña, nada más, una pobre niña que porque era niña no podía tener niños, a besarla como a una niña... Pero esta vez Roberto no acudió: a través de la explanada fría de la mesa Bauhaus, abrigada apenas por la presencia de una escultura africana enhiesta en el centro y por las cuatro pilas de revistas bajo pisapapeles de cristal..., la mirada de Roberto continuaba hiriéndola (p.126).

The effect of juxtapositions of this nature is to suggest that their lack of communication is due to their substitution of genuine affection with the illusory pleasures of materialism.

Marta's departure and Roberto's withdrawal to the empty room (which also functions as a symbol of the unattainable ideal of a meaningful life to which he subconsciously aspires) marks the end of the third main stage in the novella's movement. After the general opening paragraphs, the concentration on Roberto's smugness on the Sunday morning, and the episode of the theft, there is now quite a lengthy period until the next item disappears. The tension Roberto feels after Marta's departure is soon relieved, as the paragraph monitoring his mental processes is replaced by a return to a straightforward narrative of his actions. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference to the first part of the novella, for now he is troubled by "la incomodidad de la sensación

de que nada cuajaba en el piso" (p.127). However, Donoso slows the action down and introduces a slight note of calm with the reassurance of Marta's return, their concoction of a possible rational explanation, and the pride Roberto feels in showing Anselmo round the flat. Of course, this is all a trick on the author's part, for he is lulling the reader, like the characters, into a false sense of security (as is suggested by another premonitory reference to the empty room during Anselmo's visit (p.132)). Things are to change abruptly, as in the whole shape of the novella.

The change comes with the disappearance of the candelabra (taken, it is inferred, by Anselmo). The tone of the preceding paragraphs is routine and matter-of-fact, a depiction of a typical, contentedly married middle-class couple:

Pronto llegó Marta y encendió las luces. Le preparó una cena liviana, se metió en la cama, leyeron él los Xuetas en Mallorca y ella Maurice, de Forster, y después de hacerlo tomar el último Optalidón por si acaso, apagaron las luces y se quedaron dormidos.

Al otro día Roberto amaneció con la cabeza limpia, sin molestias de ninguna clase, preciso y claro como un cuchillo, entonado para el trabajo y lleno de entusiasmo para asistir a Boris esa noche y aun para vestirse de etiqueta, a lo que naturalmente era reacio. Cuando llegó a mediodía besó a Marta..., etc. etc. (p.135).

However, the long passage of continuous prose is soon broken up by a short burst of dialogue: this break signals the loss of the candelabra.

This is a crucial moment in the overall structure of the text, for from now on there is very little evidence of the order-chaos movement: on the contrary, what follows is a downward spiral of chaos alone. The quarrels become more vicious, later developing into mutual hatred, while the rate of disappearances increases dramatically. Bendezú rightly comments that "en el crescendo de tensiones, la progresiva desaparición de las cosas significa también la gradual desaparición de la identidad de Roberto y Marta"³: but more importantly the novella's crescendo

movement highlights the acceleration of their loss of faith in the construct they have built up in a futile attempt to anaesthetise their sense of terror before a meaningless life.

In keeping with the pattern, the couple argue when the candelabra's absence is discovered. Another stage follows with a series of three disappearances in rapid succession. Roberto tries to take refuge in his empty room but it appears that the bulb has gone. He leaves the flat instead, but in the lift he finds that his floor is missing; he later sees his plight in terms of the Borgesian idea of man as a creature lost in a formless labyrinth:

¿No se quedaría vagando eternamente en el ascensor de piso en piso, del dos se pasaba al cuatro, el tres no existía, las luces encendiéndose y la campanilla sonando en cada piso que no era el suyo, taladrando sus oídos por toda la eternidad? (p.143).

After stepping out into the street he quickly realises that the entire block has vanished. Fortunately the doorman helps him find his way back to the flat where he confirms the loss of the lightbulb. By now real terror has set in, as is indicated by the double use of the word "históricamente" to describe the movement of Roberto's hand as he desperately flicks the switch on and off (p.145). Having confirmed this latest theft he turns to Marta, "odiándola por penetrar con él en el miedo y haberlo aceptado" (p.146), and rips her sequined dress. A sudden acceleration in the number of disappearances has brought the couple on to a new level of confrontation, corresponding to the beginning of their mutual disintegration and a sharp decline in their confidence in the orderly nature of their existence.

The rapid build-up in the pace of the narrative is suddenly brought to a halt by the sound of the doorbell announcing the arrival of the four evangelists. Tatum has commented that "la apariencia de estos seres grotescos introduce en la obra otro elemento fantástico que transmite al lector el caos que ahora caracteriza la vida de la pareja"⁴. Piling one theft on top of the other would be a somewhat cumbersome, monotonous way to proceed with

the tale; Donoso's technique therefore is to introduce a sizeable episode which will serve as an image or reflection of the atmosphere of chaos he wishes to develop. He creates such an atmosphere by means of deliberate comic exaggeration in the depiction of these propostorous figures. Furthermore, the irony of their message of religious salvation in the context of such disarray, merely underlines the hopelessness of the Ferrer's plight. The deadpan description of their synchronic theft of the crystal paper-weights adds the coup de grâce to this finely-drawn ludicrous scene.

Donoso again lingers on the aftermath of the theft before moving on to the next stage of the robberies, as from now on the process of disintegration really begins to gain momentum. The couple's characteristic quarrelling starts again with Roberto destroying the dress and Marta throwing his hat into the fire. The flat itself is now in decline, for the beads from the dress have ruined the carpet: this is the beginning of a contrast Donoso develops between the first part of the novella and the present. As they step out into the street the author turns his attention to Marta: she is affected as much as Roberto. She blames him for everything and is able to perceive "la silueta odiosa de su rencor" (p.155). It is significant that she now thinks that "Átomo verde número cinco era pésimo, en el fondo una suerte que hubiera desaparecido del vestíbulo, porque, para decir la verdad, estropeaba el conjunto" (p.155). Donoso has built up the chaos to such a high point that he now introduces this dramatic contrast: Marta's present attitude to the painting is a complete reversal of her previous position. Her request that Roberto should give her the canvass as an anniversary gift was the factor that elevated the work to such a high status in their life together: the change in outlook - deliberately engineered by Donoso to come at this point - is an illustration of the triumph of chaos over order.

There are two more groups of thefts before the no-

vella's final stage begins. The first group involves the disappearance of an item of furniture, which is seen to be packed into a removals van, and the loss of Marta's little finger in a car accident. The couple's consequent period of rest in the hospital allows Donoso to chart their growing fear even further as they await anxiously the moment of their return to the flat. Their home-coming begins a new stage. Four thefts take place in rapid succession: the torch is gone; Mrs. Presen takes the mixer; Anselmo helps himself to a Saura lithograph; Magdalena pockets Marta's spot cream. This cumulative process is matched by a decline in the couple's respect for each other and in their care for the flat. The effect of the emphasis on their new home's perfection in the first part of the novella is now fully realised by dint of the powerful contrast formed with their flat's present dilapidated state:

... la basura se estaba pudriendo. Se apilaban los platos sin lavar^{en} el fregadero atosigado, y un olor a vajilla sucia comenzó a invadir el piso nuevo, ahora desordenado y no tan nuevo; las revistas abiertas tiradas encima de los sillones, las lentejuelas verdes molidas que se pegaban a la suela de las pantuflas, crujientes y ásperas y que se metían en todas partes; la cama sin hacer, la ropa en el suelo ... (pp.168-9)

Having withdrawn completely into the inner isolation of their apartment, the couple's quarrelling and mutual recriminations continue, to the point at which they pace around each other like animals in a cage, waiting for the moment to pounce:

se rondaban uno al otro, vigilándose con el corazón seco y frío, y ya no querían ni necesitaban ni recordaban a nadie fuera de ellos mismos..., obsesivamente empeñados en buscar algo, otra falange del dedo meñique de que apoderarse en el otro, pero que fuera definitivamente del otro (p.171).

This is the culmination of the novella's penultimate segment. The accelerating pattern of thefts coupled with a parallel series of quarrels was a developing image of the gradual dissolution of the Ferrer's empty lifestyle and hollow values. This structure, based on the principle

of progressive erosion, gives the reader the impression of a build-up towards some sort of destructive, ruinous climax. The couple's reduction to a near-animal state forebodes the ending and prepares us for the final stage of their collapse.

The start of a new phase of the action is heralded by the change in language. After the above-mentioned animal image, a new paragraph begins: "Una tarde, sin embargo, cuando Roberto..." (p.171). The return to a traditional narrative tone suggests that a new, decisive phase is about to begin. The couple take a taxi to Peso 108. Ironically this is simply a note of Átomo verde número cinco's weight and not an address at all: thus the painting (once a symbol of total satisfaction) actually leads them to their doom - though Magnarelli, rightly stressing the novella's ambiguity, sees their mis-reading as a failure "to see the arbitrary and ephemeral relationship between the signifier... and the signified"⁵. The reversal of the painting image is shown again when Marta verbally articulates her true feelings about it for the first time: she denies its monetary value, insisting that "Átomo verde número cinco tiene un valor más bien sentimental, si se puede llamar así lo que sentimos por esa tela..." (p.179). The emotional significance of Átomo verde número cinco (detailed exhaustively in the novella's opening stages) is now undermined completely. Donoso deliberately chooses this point to make Marta admit the truth, for this is where their relationship finally slips into total disintegration and chaos.

The finality of their fate is heightened by the language of this section: a number of Dantesque references suggest that the taxi-driver is taking them on a descent into a formless, infernal labyrinth. Indeed their entrance into the old building reminds the reader of Lönnrot's entrance into Triste-le-Roy in Borges's "La muerte y la brújula". The confusing, labyrinthine appearance of the edifice is an image of the chaos of the universe which Roberto and Marta are now symbolically facing. Furthermore,

the old warehouse relates to the images of the empty room and Marta's womb: it is a void which cannot be filled with anything of meaning, simply "espacio que cobija" (p. 177), made up of nothing more than "grandes espacios desordenados" (p. 180). The breakdown in language, as the third person changes to a double second person within a single narrative continuum, parallels the breakdown in the sense of order and civilisation they used to cling to. It reflects their growing animality and the maximisation of their mutual hatred:

eso es mío, no, esto es mío, no es tuyo, es mío,
entrégamelo, has vivido a costa de mi trabajo
toda la vida, engatusaste a mi madre hasta que
te dio el mueble de laca... dame eso... y eso
...no... mira cómo sangro... sudo y no veo...
devuélveme el meñique que perdí por culpa tuya
porque tú me lo robaste... dame... me duele...
mierda déjame, puta de mierda, ándate, no, ándate
tú (p. 187).

The final picture of the couple, naked and ready to pounce like animals, merely underlines the extent of the collapse of their construct and their descent into chaos.

Despite its apparent structural harmony "Átomo verde número cinco" is a much more despairing tale than the other two "novelitas burguesas". This, indeed, is reflected in its structure, as we have seen. The idea of an inevitable acceleration towards a catastrophic climax is reinforced by a number of factors: the order-versus-chaos movement of the opening stages; the binary imagery; the persistent use of hints of foreboding; the pattern of disappearances, often coming in clumps of rapid losses; the parallel growth of quarrels and mutual hatred; and the reversal in meaning of two central symbols - that of the new flat and the painting which gives the novella its title. By introducing a note of fantasy within an apparently realistic context and developing that element of fantasy towards a climax, Donoso amply demonstrates an alternative means of creating a sense of terror to that employed in El obsceno pájaro.

However, the grim outlook of "Átomo verde número cinco" makes way for a more positive mood in the next

novella, "Gaspard de la nuit". As in the previous novellas the narrative design underscores the element of conflict by opposing order and chaos; but at the same time its overall structural and stylistic harmony indicates a relaxation in the intensity of Donoso's bleak existential vision. The patterning appears straightforward. The novella is clearly divided into four sections, each with a different function. The first section is essentially one of exposition. Donoso gives us the relevant information with little delay: this is facilitated by the presence of a character already known to the reader, Sylvia Corday. There is no need for lengthy introductions and Sylvia's thoughts immediately outline the problem created by the arrival of her estranged son, Mauricio, from Madrid. The emphasis on Mauricio's eery whistling arouses the reader's curiosity, introducing at the same time the central symbol of the novella. The first section also brings out the falseness and hypocrisy of Sylvia, thus preparing us for the clash of personalities between her and her son. The basic themes are also hinted at here: man's fear of alien elements that contradict the apparent order of his existence and his need to suppress individuality by means of a nonsensical collective identity. The second section develops the issues raised in the first. It is itself subdivisible into two parts: the first explains the nature of Mauricio's whistling, establishing his need for liberation and transcendence; the second further highlights the difficulties of Mauricio's quest by concentrating on Sylvia's attempts to make him conform to a certain mould.

The first section uses Sylvia's thoughts to introduce the essential dilemma; the second describes two scenes which illustrate the problem more thoroughly. Having explored the main area of conflict, Donoso uses the third section to commence the process of resolution. Its main thrust is to develop the possibility of liberation for Mauricio by means of a series of veiled, poetic references to another presence that is beckoning him. This prepares

us for the fourth section which basically recounts the dénouement; the transfer of identities between the two boys finally takes place. The last section is a kind of epilogue, functioning as a commentary on what has gone before: having rejected a conventional identity, Mauricio now feels a sense of plenitude; the new life he looks forward to constitutes the culmination of the search recorded in the novella and a rejection of the falsity depicted here and in the three texts as a whole.

The above sketch of the novella's overall plan indicates its near-classical harmony. However, there is much more to the patterning than this: behind its apparent simplicity lie a number of techniques which are skillfully manipulated in order to expand the functional capacity of the story's form. One such technique is the dual presentation of events through the eyes of Sylvia and Mauricio. Its purpose is twofold. Firstly it reinforces the case for Mauricio: the juxtaposition of his attitude with that of his mother demonstrates the gap between the shallowness of her stance and the integrity of Mauricio's quest for a truly honest mode of existence. The first section presents events exclusively from the point of view of Sylvia. Her artificiality and her obsession with fashion are brought out from the start. Her superficially non-conformist attitudes are shown to be just another type of conventionalism: this fake pseudo-liberalism is no real alternative for Mauricio. A couple of ironic juxtapositions emphasise the point. The first two paragraphs contain extensive references to the previous night's wedding reception for Jaime Romeu's daughter. The significance of the episode is that Sylvia associates it with the conventional atmosphere in which Mauricio is brought up:

Jaime Romeu era el equivalente exacto del marido de Sylvia en Madrid: una decadencia opulenta más cercana al folklore que a lo internacional. Y en ese ambiente tuvo que crecer el pobre Mauricio (p.192).

However, the fact that it is juxtaposed with Sylvia's exposition of her own brand of conventionalism suggests

that neither will afford a way out for Mauricio. The irony is accentuated when Sylvia, searching for methods of entertaining her son, asks him what he would like to do; his reply that he is going for a walk shocks her:

Se había imaginado sus deberes maternos como algo muy complicado, que incluiría prepararle un gran almuerzo dominical, llevarlo al cine, presentarle a los hijos de sus amistades, acompañarlo al tenis, a la piscina, a la playa... en fin: la típica y angustiada esclavitud de la madre clásica que ella no era, que no quería ser, y que era la imagen de todo aquello contra lo cual ella había luchado en su vida (p.206).

But the rôle Sylvia claims to be rejecting is the one she really wants to play: she has in fact been pressing Mauricio to do the sort of things she refers to. Thus the impression to emerge from this opening section is that Sylvia wants to force the falsity of her own lifestyle on to her son, consequently eliminating his personal identity. However, the next section focuses our attention on Mauricio: the implication here is that what Sylvia sees as his rejection of her values is his way of searching for a more sincere and meaningful level of existence. The juxtaposition of these two outlooks allows the reader to compare both attitudes to life: he will reach his conclusions without the need for direct authorial intervention - the message is put across by an almost imperceptible manipulation of the storyline.

This process continues as the novella develops. The long passages of uninterrupted prose describing Mauricio's whistling in Section 2 are broken up by the falsity of Sylvia's "¡Hola, guapo!" (p.223) and "Venga, guapo" (p.224), and the long period of dialogue that follows: this corresponds to the "violación" (p.224) Mauricio perceives in Sylvia and Paolo's attempts to interrogate him about his penchant for music. The hanging imagery stresses the point: in the first part of the section it indicated Mauricio's quest for power; now it reflects Sylvia's attempts to dominate him via the imposition of her bourgeois mentality. The boy sees himself as "el culpable antes de ser condenado a la horca", facing "el interrogatorio previo

a la condena"(p.228).His mock hanging of himself is a reversal of his earlier fantasies about hanging the man in the park in his mind`s eye;this complete turnabout extends the impact of the juxtaposition between his quest for a free identity and the one his mother wants him to have.A similar episode occurs in the third section. Sylvia undermines the spontaneity of his whistling by buying the Cassadeus recording of Gaspard de la nuit;in the second section the music of 'Ondine' was seen as a medium for achieving fulfilment;now it is associated with the threat represented by Sylvia - "la silueta de Sylvia, conjugando velos y transparencias como cualquiera ondina de buena marca,dejó a Ramón sentado en el sofá es-carlata,y cruzando las sombras de la terraza se acercó a Mauricio,que la vio aproximarse no como a la ondina de la música sino como a un pez voraz que agitara su cola transparente y sus aletas antes de devorar"(p.247).She intervenes again in Section 4,this time to disrupt the peace and calm of his sleep.Both of these last-mentioned interruptions come after long passages depicting Mauricio`s growing sense of fulfilment;her regular appearances in the novella are a constant reminder of the threat to the harmonious state to which he aspires.

However,the pattern of juxtaposition is more complicated still,for if Sylvia represents a threat for Mauricio,then he equally represents a threat for her.It is highly significant,in my view,that the novella opens with Sylvia.The first section does not give us Mauricio`s point of view:we do not yet have the benefit of understanding the reasons for his unusual personality;we are therefore forced to identify with Sylvia to some extent.Despite her artificiality,the reader does,up to a point, trust her account of her son`s behaviour;this is partly because of Donoso`s deliberate introduction of snippets of conversation from the past which act as specific illustrations of Sylvia`s thoughts;these short dialogues (which appear in the third,fourth and fifth paragraphs) do give the impression that Mauricio is rather odd.The sudden

return to the present in the seventh paragraph jolts the reader: "Hacia una hora que había oído a Mauricio en la ducha" (p.198). The fact that the paragraph is made up of this single sentence increases the tension, suggesting that something is not quite right. What follows over the next page and a half is a build-up to the introduction of the whistling motif. The narrative breaks off while Mrs Presen tells Sylvia what Mauricio has been doing: the maid's working-class effusiveness lightens the tone somewhat, but it changes suddenly when she adds, "Y estaba silbando..." (p.200). The next five pages develop Sylvia's confused, frightened reaction to her son's mysterious whistling. The extent of the emphasis on the whistling (which is as yet unexplained to the reader) leaves us with no option but to share Sylvia's sense of unease. This whistling, which is "el revés de todo" (p.203), represents the element of chaos which undermines the artificial sense of order embodied in Sylvia's lifestyle: by making the reader see things from her point of view alone, Donoso compels him to participate in the feeling that his sense of order is threatened too. The conversation that follows with Mauricio merely gives the reader further evidence to support his reactions to the boy, while the persistent use of questions in the text of this first section re-affirms the general atmosphere of apprehension and confusion.

The change of emphasis in the second section then induces the reader to identify with Mauricio: he is presented as a prisoner of his environment valiantly struggling to break free. However, this change of emphasis makes us question our whole attitude to life. If we now identify with Mauricio, we must reject the attitude we held at the end of section one - that is, sympathy with Sylvia's point of view. Donoso is in effect gently criticising his readers' too ready identification with the outlook of the first section: he cleverly reminds us that our own attitude is generally like that of Sylvia; by making us question Sylvia's attitude he is really

making us question our own.

The technique demonstrates man's need to seal himself off from anything that might disrupt his sense of order. The author's periodic switches of emphasis from Mauricio to Sylvia are intended to press this point. Thus at the end of Section 2 Mauricio leaves, saying he is going to Vallvidrera; but he told Sylvia earlier that he had already been there. This terrifies Sylvia who gives vent to a "grito de temor" which Paolo interprets as "un ataque histérico" (p. 235). The third section develops Mauricio's quest for liberation; but sandwiched between the two parts of the section dealing with him, is a short group of paragraphs highlighting Sylvia's growing sense of disorder: she cannot understand her son and bursts into tears. When she wakes him up in Section 4 she cries once more, incapable of comprehending why he was whistling in his sleep with his eyes open. Despite the justifiable resentment of Mauricio and Sylvia's apparent frivolity, the reader can identify momentarily with her as Donoso occasionally swings the emphasis away from Mauricio, back to his mother: we are made to feel the same fear of chaos, the same sense of the frailty of our supportive mechanisms.

Donoso is not, in my view, simply juxtaposing mother and son for the sake of irony. He is giving the reader a more complete vision of events by allowing him to identify with both characters. The reader simultaneously understands Mauricio's need for liberation, but equally sympathises with Sylvia's motherly concern (despite her hypocrisy). Most critics would seem to agree with Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat that Mauricio's story "no deja de ser un comentario irónico sobre la postura vanguardista de la madre".⁶ Undoubtedly there is an element of irony present in the tale: but to suggest that the novella is an out-and-out attack upon Sylvia's outlook does not do justice to the characteristic ambiguity with which Donoso tells his tales. Indeed the ending of the fourth section smacks of sentimentality even, as Sylvia bursts out crying

when the new Mauricio calls her "mamá"; the section ends with her listening to the boy, "que silbaba Gaspard de la nuit en forma perfecta, y por primera vez lo encontró bello, no terrible" (p. 270). Donoso may mock the human construct at times; but the above-mentioned ambiguities do suggest that he recognises its value for others as a defence against anguish.

This new, apparently optimistic outlook is reflected in another aspect of the novella's patterning: that involving the presentation of Mauricio's quest for fulfilment. Like Carpentier's El acoso and Cortázar's "Reunión" there are parallels between "Gaspard de la nuit" and the musical piece which is its inspiration. The three movements of Gaspard de la nuit, by Ravel, correspond to three stages in Mauricio's story. The first two movements relate to the first two episodes in the first part of Section 2. The section develops the idea that Mauricio's whistling is a means of attaining freedom and fulfilment: in a later section he describes it as "un camino" (p. 259). He uses his whistling to exercise power over individuals: this quest for power is symbolic of the quest for satisfaction. His needs are underlined by the arrangement of the paragraphs. The first is a general discussion of the escapist value of the music. The second deals more specifically with his walk: the emphasis on the different sorts of passers-by - and his dismissive attitude to them - suggests the idea of a search for a certain kind of individual. This feeling is reinforced in the following paragraph when the narrative homes in on one young woman. Mauricio attempts to control her via his whistling. This episode is linked with the music of the first movement of Gaspard de la nuit, 'Ondine': this is the tune Mauricio is whistling in an attempt to mesmerise the woman (who is associated with the river goddess of the music). The flowing prose of a very long fourth paragraph parallels the build-up in the music and in Mauricio's desire for dominance. However, a long sentence,

suggesting his excitement and the uninterrupted progression of the music, is broken up abruptly as the whistling stops and the woman breaks free of Mauricio's spell:

Ahora era francamente música, el teclado entero que manejaba con su boca deteniendo a la mujer y demostrándole que no era libre, que dependía de otras fuerzas, y desde la frontera de su conciencia Mauricio se zambulló por fin en ella silbando agua pura en las primeras sonoridades, una mano y el pedal sintetizando el gran espacio de agua, la otra mano insinuando una presencia femenina con notas de contornos más definidos, llamándola, mandándola cuando la señora estaba a punto de seguirlo hasta la profundidad misma de la concentración compartida... pero silbó demasiado fuerte: ella, bruscamente lo miró. Mauricio, en un segundo, vio terror en esa mirada que se había dado cuenta por fin que venían concentrados juntos desde hacía cinco o seis cuerdas, y al darse cuenta, la señora con el cochecito huyó por otra calle estrecha, dejando a Mauricio parado en la esquina... (p.215).

The sudden change in the texture of the narrative highlights the collapse of Mauricio's hopes for transcendence. The answer does not lie with this woman; the section related to 'Ondine' does not hold the key.

The piano piece's second movement 'Le Gibet', has a parallel in the following episode. The literary text of 'Le Gibet', by the nineteenth century French romantic poet Aloysius Bertrand and the inspiration for Ravel's music, is a macabre description of a man hanging from a gallows. Concentrating on a man in the park, Mauricio imagines a noose tightening around his victim's neck as he whistles 'Le Gibet'. The sense of power Mauricio hopes to achieve from this visionary hanging, this "orgasmo de la muerte" (p.220), is symbolic of the liberation and fulfilment for which he yearns. But once again the analogous build-up of the prose, music, potency and hope is brought to a sudden halt. The paragraph breaks off and a new one begins:

El ahorcado no alcanzó a colgar. La música se detuvo en los labios de Mauricio, que echó a correr a todo lo que daban sus piernas para salir del parque y huir, no lo fuera a seguir el pobre condenado que nunca iba a llegar a pender (p.221).

Thus the passage dealing with 'Le Gibet' is brought to a close with Mauricio's aspirations dashed once more.

The above-mentioned reversal of the 'Ondine' and 'Le Gibet' imagery into threatening forces for Mauricio merely underlines the collapse of his hopes: he comes to feel as if Sylvia and Paolo are trying to hang him, and he sees his mother as a minatory perversion of the river goddess.

However, there is a third movement to Gaspard de la nuit - 'Scarbo'. After the passages corresponding to 'Ondine' and 'Le Gibet', Donoso turns away from Mauricio's interior world as he returns home to the flat. He does not detail another failure for the boy, this time in the context of 'Scarbo'. The fact that he does not go on to develop an immediate parallel with the third movement suggests a note of hope: if the first two movements stood for defeat, then perhaps the answer lies with the third. However, there is no self-contained episode linking up with 'Scarbo', as there were with the previous movements: the link is with the entire novella from the third section onwards. 'Scarbo's' bristling, rhythmic drive and diabolic virtuosity suggests the idea of turmoil and change, of a new force struggling to come to the surface. The bustling movements of the goblin would appear to correspond with the image of the beetle ("escarabajo"): an increasingly dominant symbol of the emerging possibility of self-liberation, a possibility that becomes reality in the fourth section when Mauricio swaps identities with a young urchin. Thus, whereas the cumulative structure of "Átomo verde número cinco" reflected a pattern of disintegration and despair, the structure of "Gaspard de la nuit" is based on the principle of hope.

This sense of hope is thrown into higher relief by the consistently developing symbolism of the novella: the symbolism suggests the notion of a quest for fulfilment which - unlike what happened in Donoso's previous work - will be realised. The central symbol is Mauricio's whistling; this, as we have seen, is a path towards an obscure but meaningful destiny. Significantly, he whistles Gaspard de la nuit; Ravel and Bertrand were themselves rebellious,

iconoclastic figures; and, as has been suggested, the music's structural counterpart in the novella predisposes us to the possibility of fulfilment.⁷ The physical appearance of Mauricio also anticipates the ending: the constant references to his thick eyebrows, which look like swallows, suggest the idea of birds and flying - traditional symbols of transcending limitations. Furthermore, he repeatedly expresses his wish to become like a blank page: it is significant therefore that he describes his new identity in Section 5 as "la hoja en blanco, el pentagrama vacío en que podía inscribirse" (p. 270).

Another aspect of the symbolism is the growing sense of attraction towards a new fate. Mauricio realises that "todo en él tenía una forma y obedecía a un plan. Aunque él no conocía esa forma y no sabía cuál era el plan, su existencia en alguna parte lo hacía caminar siempre hacia él. Esa forma lo estaba atrayendo desde un punto fijo" (p. 211). A series of symbols link together to forge the path towards the "form" he intuitively feels. The first is the slide-machine outside the zoo which exercises a strange attraction over him. In it he sees Vallvidrera, to which he feels equally drawn. It is notable that he goes to Vallvidrera in the third section, after the close of the 'Ondine' and 'Le Gibet' movements, and at the beginning of the 'Scarbo' movement postulated earlier. This new wave of optimism is matched by a series of references to a mysterious presence watching Mauricio: this evolves to the point at which the presence appears to be absorbing his whistling skills and stripping him of certain physical habits. Parallel to this process runs Donoso's development of the image of the "escarabajo" - its struggle towards the light in an attempt to take off reflects Mauricio's quest for fulfilment, while its association with the mysterious presence implies that the key to transcendence lies with this so far unidentified figure. The paired repetition of these two motifs (the presence and the beetle) prepare us for the element of fantasy in the fourth section. Donoso paves the way for

the exchange of identities, which grants Mauricio his freedom, by gradually suggesting, via these motifs, that such a transfer is indeed in the course of taking place. Thus the reader is more willing to accept this bizarre occurrence. His anticipation of such an outcome is fuelled equally by the sense of hope and expectation inherent in the novella's musical structure and internal symbolism: their only logical conclusion is Mauricio's triumph.

It is of little importance, in my view, whether or not Mauricio is, as McMurray suggests, schizophrenic: this seems to indicate an unnecessary desire for a realist explanation to an essentially non-realist tale, a desire also implicit in Callan's Jungian analysis of the story. The interesting thing is that - despite their fears - both boys (or both sides of Mauricio's personality) do achieve fulfilment. Tatum sees this as an affirmation of Donoso's "faith in human potentiality". This is a considerable development from the extreme pessimism of El obsceno pájaro. Indeed all the characters of "Gaspard de la nuit" are happy at the end. They may be living in an illusory world of false constructs: but at least it is working for them. Moreover, the idea of hope is embodied in the novella's very structure: both the parallel with Ravel's music and the evolving pattern of symbolism gear the action towards a positive conclusion. The juxtaposition of passages dealing with Mauricio and Sylvia demonstrate the partial validity of the latter's stance: her artificial order is shown to have some value, despite its evident falsity. Finally, the overall harmony of the structure - the abandonment of the need to distort - suggests a calmer attitude to life: it seems that Donoso, while still recognising the essential absurdity of life, has learnt to live with it.

The sense of harmony is reinforced by the inter-relationship of the three stories. Unity is given by the presence of the central characters in each narrative. Roberto and Marta are mentioned four times in "Chatanooga Choochoo" and once in "Gaspard de la nuit". Mauricio also

receives an indirect mention in the first story. Anselmo and Magdalena crop up on several occasions in "Átomo verde número cinco", while Sylvia and Ramón re-appear in "Gaspard de la nuit". On one level, these references simply give the impression of a superficial unity between the three novellas. However, there is a much deeper degree of integration between the texts. Sometimes the overlaps heighten the plausibility of individual stories, for other people's words corroborate the elements of fantasy. Thus the extraordinary tale of Roberto and Marta is made more credible by Magdalena's comment in "Chatanooga Choochoo" on the instability of Marta's "enredado matrimonio con Roberto" (p. 92); by Anselmo's preparatory observation in the same story that "Marta y Roberto... habían desaparecido misteriosamente sin que nadie contestara el teléfono en su piso nuevo desde hacía un par de días" (p. 72); and by Sylvia's remark in "Gaspard de la nuit" that the couple "están un poco raros desde que ella perdió el dedo meñique en ese accidente espantoso" (p. 210). An equally important function of the intertextual allusions is that of irony. Sylvia asserts in the first novella that "los niños eran una lata, el suyo estaba en los jesuitas porque el padre lo exigió y quizá no era a pesar de todo una buena cosa" (p. 29); this pseudo-liberated outlook contrasts ironically with the maternal instincts she demonstrates in the final story. The presentation of Anselmo Prieto in "Átomo verde número cinco" is equally ironic. He visits the terrified Roberto to calm him down; but we know, having already read "Chatanooga Choochoo", that Anselmo is a nervous wreck himself. It is almost amusing when Donoso writes:

La placidez de Anselmo le hacía bien al nerviosismo un poco acerado por la ironía de Roberto, y Marta y Magdalena salían juntas, iban a conferencias, almorzaban en el centro y hacían esas misteriosas cosas que hacen juntas las mujeres mientras los maridos trabajaban... (p. 134).

Anselmo is in just as bad a state as Roberto: the order we perceive in others is not necessarily as stable as

it seems. Furthermore, this passage raises one of the themes of "Chatanooga Choochoo": the suggestion is that neither men really understand the activities of their wives; they have a limited vision of reality and an equally limited control over their own destinies. This idea is repeated again in "Átomo verde número cinco" and also in "Gaspard de la nuit", where there are several hints at the irrationality (chaos) of women and the ascendancy of 'women's lib'.

Certain recurring minor characters also lend unity: Paolo and Mrs Presen appear in all three novellas. But, like the major characters, their presence has a more important functional value. Tatum has commented that "los otros personajes menores, como el homosexual Paolo, sirven para reflejar las cualidades de los protagonistas".^p This is true of Paolo: in each story he exhibits the false, pretentious bourgeois values of the main characters. Mrs Presen's rôle is more interesting, for she accentuates the order-versus-chaos opposition. She calls to mind the old servant women of El obsceno pájaro. In each novella we receive a different version of her identity: in "Átomo verde número cinco" she appears to belong to Roberto and Marta; this is confirmed in "Chatanooga Choochoo" where we are told that Marta has "lent" the maid to Anselmo and Magdalena; but in "Gaspard de la nuit" Sylvia says that she has "borrowed" the old servant from Magdalena. This gives Mrs Presen an indefinite identity, emphasising her position as a nobody, a mere servant only there to do her masters' dirty work. In El obsceno pájaro old women, servants and poor people were symbols of chaos, the side of life other people like to ignore: similarly in these stories Mrs Presen embodies a threat to the middle classes' comfortable, ordered existence. Sylvia hates her, constantly referring to her throughout "Gaspard de la nuit" as a "bruja". Roberto tries to shut her up as she gabbles about the poverty and illnesses of her large family. He thinks she lives in "las regiones inferiores" (p.138). He even comes to suspect at one stage that:

ella y su familia miserable eran los que venían a llevarse una cosa tras otra... todos emparentados con la familia del portero que, si uno hacía las averiguaciones del caso, seguramente resultaba teniendo no un hermano sino media docena de hermanos con sus correspondientes hijos, yernos, nueras, todos miserables, todos emparentados con la familia también miserable de la señora Presen (pp.166-7).

The fear of Mrs Presen becomes a fear of poor people in general. He goes on to imagine "la gente pobre" getting together for Sunday lunch:

era, entonces, durante esos terribles domingos familiares y bulliciosos, en esos almuerzos con carne asada chorreando grasa, que se ponían de acuerdo y fraguaban las confabulaciones para hacer desaparecer las cosas (p.167).

He soon comes to think this is all a plan of the lower classes to:

instalarse ellos en el piso en medio de todas sus bellas cosas que a pesar de todo eran todavía bellas, y además repletar el piso con sus chales sucios, sus aparadores de 'estilo' y brillantes superficies de fórmica imitando madera, con sus maletas de cartón desintegrándose, sus cuadros religiosos de colores estridentes, sus adornos de yeso pintarrajeado, sus niños, sus juguetes de plástico roto, sus parientes, sus almuerzos dominicales interminables, sus televisores, sus transistores, sus bocadillos descomunales... era horrible (pp.173-4).

This relates to Ricardo Roig's fear of ugly people, as announced in "Chatanooga Choochoo":

La gente fea es siempre mala; hay que tener cuidado y no meterse con ella; basta que una mujer que tenga las piernas cortas, o el cutis malo, o sea gorda, para que yo huya a perderme ... (pp.15-6).

These motifs also tie up with Anselmo's fear of women: the word "bruja" that Sylvia uses for Mrs Presen is the word he uses to describe Mrs Sanz and women in general. Thus we can perceive a whole series of inter-relationships between the three texts. What emerges in effect is a system of binary symbols similar to that identified in El obsceno pájaro. An element corresponding to order (or the aspiration for order) is opposed to an element corresponding to chaos. A whole chain of binarisms ranging

from the general to the specific can be identified: beauty-ugliness; rich-poor; lower classes-middle classes; masters-servants; main characters-Mrs Presen; men-women; power-weakness; Anselmo-Sylvia; Anselmo-Magdalena; inside-outside; heat-cold; Sylvia-Mauricio; and so on. This calls into question Barthes' theory that "the critic is not responsible for reconstructing the work's message but only its system". The two cannot be separated in Tres novelitas burguesas; the functional interplay of these motifs, which bind the texts together, attains significance only on a level of symbolic allusion - it is only by grasping the novellas' meaning that we can perceive their broad-based unity.

The correlations between the three narratives are a pointer to the overall harmony of the text. This is indicative of Donoso's personal quest for satisfaction through the professionalism of his artistry. It is significant that Mauricio seeks fulfilment via music (a symbol of art in general). Paolo also comments that Ravel's life was a constant struggle to "domar la fiera salvaje del romanticismo" (p.229). Similarly, Donoso's career has been a consistently evolving quest to find forms that express perfectly his developing vision of life. The formal integration of Tres novelitas burguesas suggests art's triumph over chaos and a reformed frame of mind.

This is reflected in the return to a relatively straightforward narrative technique. In "Chatanooga Choo-choo" Donoso uses a first person narrator (although he creates irony by switching to an alternative third person narrator at one stage). In the other two stories the indirect third person is employed; this reinstates the narratorial stance of Coronación - though the residual elements of traditional omniscience in that novel are no longer present. The use of the indirect third person facilitates the presentation of more than one point of view; thus in "Átomo verde número cinco" both Roberto and Marta are allowed to give their version of events, while Sylvia and Mauricio both have their say in "Gaspard de la nuit".

This gives the reader a wider vision of the fictional reality of the text, bringing out at the same time the fluid, ambiguous nature of reality as we understand it. The juxtaposition of two different narrative voices in "Chatanooga Choochoo" has a similar, though more ironic effect. These techniques mean that events are presented exclusively through the eyes of the characters, thereby allowing the author to withdraw and give the impression of greater narrative autonomy. Commentary is carried out by the characters themselves, for they interpret events as they see them: sometimes their opinions reflect those of the author, as with Anselmo's reaction to certain members of the Barcelona jet-set, or Mauricio's assessment of the western mentality; other times it is the ironic distance between the character's vision of reality and reality as it seems to the reader which influences our interpretation. Otherwise commentary is effected by the use of illustrative episodes (like the scenes from the Roigs' parties), snippets of dialogue (such as those from the parties again), the deliberate juxtaposition of episodes (for the sake of contrast or irony), by symbolism (as in the accounts of the dismantling of individuals, the disappearance of the Ferrers' possessions and the growth of Mauricio's sense of liberation), or by the general pattern of order-versus-chaos symbolism underlying the three texts as a whole.

The feeling of harmony is confirmed by the order in which the three novellas are arranged. "Átomo verde número cinco" is the only tale to deal with the actual collapse of the individual's sense of order. In the other two novellas the characters overcome their problems: the first is more ironic, with Anselmo taking refuge in an obvious falsehood; but the third novella ends on a positive note. The first two novellas are made up of a single narrative continuum, whereas "Gaspard de la nuit" is clearly divided into sections: this may be indicative of Donoso's desire to conclude the collection with a story of self-evident structural harmony. "Átomo verde número

cinco" structure (based on a systematic build-up towards disintegration and chaos) contrasts with the equivocal, oscillating order-chaos pattern of the first tale and "Gaspard de la nuit" structure which is geared towards the principle of hope. The three different structural patterns represent three different attitudes: ambivalence, pessimism and guarded optimism. Significantly, "Átomo verde número cinco" - itself often comical in tone - comes in the middle: it is sandwiched between a humorous, ironic tale on the one hand, and a sometimes sentimental one on the other. This dissipates the effect of its negative outlook, leaving the reader with the impression that a less despairing Donoso has to some extent managed to resign himself to life's ills.

Thus the changes in tone and style of Donoso's writing after El obscuro pájaro can be explained in terms of a development in his existential outlook and, as suggested earlier, in terms of his wish to approach reality from different angles. His work up to this point has depended upon stream of thought passages, structural fragmentation, distortion and contradiction in order to question the nature of reality. Now he uses fantasy to highlight the limitations of traditional realism, while employing a sudden or gradual twist within an apparently realistic framework to the same ends in La marquesita de Loria and El jardín de al lado. In his next novel Casa de campo he takes traditional realism to its extremes, with the very artificiality of conventional story-telling acting as an indictment of fiction's futile attempts to mimic reality. Indeed, rather than betraying the principles of the new novel, Donoso's post-1970 fiction breathes fresh life into Latin American literature by searching for new and equally effective methods of probing the nature of reality.

CHAPTER THREE

CASA DE CAMPO : LIFE AND LITERATURE AS ARTIFICE

Tres novelitas burguesas marked the beginning of a reduction in the structural and stylistic complexity of Donoso's work, pointing to the author's desire to find fresh methods of interpreting reality and corresponding with a parallel abatement in his sense of existential anguish. The process is carried on in Casa de campo, with the author now turning to artifice rather than fantasy. However, the later novel contains some important ambiguities. As in Tres novelitas burguesas, there is an implicit awareness of the chaos of the universe coupled with an apparent watering-down of the sense of despair. This is reflected in the way Donoso constantly opposes elements of order and chaos, but within an overall structural framework which is direct, harmonious and symmetrical. In keeping with this apparent leaning towards simplicity, Casa de campo employs a narrator who intervenes directly to lay bare the devices with which the novel is being constructed. But again there is a contradiction here: the return to traditional, uncomplicated forms suggests a less tortured, anguished vision of the world; but the deliberate subversion of those forms - by means of the narratorial excesses of our supposed raconteur - negates the sense of order implied in traditional prose. Furthermore, the novel, according to its author, has a definite allegorical purpose closely related to Chilean and Latin American reality; yet by reminding us that literature is mere artifice, pure fiction, Donoso is questioning his own novel's validity as a reflection of reality. These are the seeming antitheses upon which our consideration of Casa de campo will be based: it is hoped to demonstrate how the conflicting possibilities of Donoso's approach to his post-1970 narrative parallels a similar as yet unresolved dualism in his attitude to life.

As with the previous novels discussed, symbolism is

a basic organizational principle of Casa de campo. In our earlier examination of the novel's existential implications, a chain of binary order-chaos oppositions was once more seen to emerge as a fundamental feature of its structural patterning. The major elements of the chain could be seen to develop from a general opposition between the Venturas' vision of reality and reality as it appears to the reader, to a series of more specific antitheses: Venturas-versus-natural phenomena; Venturas-versus-natural emotions; Venturas-versus-natives; adults-versus-children; masters-versus-servants; Mayor-domo-versus-Juan Pérez; and so on.

A further feature of the novel is that each of these linked oppositions radiates outwards a series of inter-connected symbolic associations. Taking as an example the Venturas' use of the legend of the cannibals to keep in check their children, there are various levels of interpretation to be extracted from this single motif: it simultaneously refers to the dominance of reason over instinct, the imposition of a bourgeois social system upon individuals who do not necessarily share its values, the specifically political exploitation of fear of communism in order to exercise repression, the effect of religion upon freedom of conscience, and man's futile development of constructs to disguise his existential terror. Indeed the entire story of Casa de campo bears no direct relation to the outside world as we know it: any interpretation must be based on the suggestive, symbolic planes which are present on a level beyond the mere arrangement of lexical units within the text. But whichever layer of interpretation the critic chooses to emphasise, the binary order-versus-chaos opposition must always be an integral element: despite the absence of any direct metaphysical comment, the author's fears and apprehensions are always lurking behind the pages of the narrative.

An examination of the novel's possible levels of symbolic interpretation at this point would be to repeat

my earlier comments on this aspect of the text. The essence of my reading was to bring out a basic dualism of outlook in Donoso: there is a continuing emphasis on the falsity of the construct (represented by the Venturas' illusion of order), the sense of disillusionment being reinforced by a further symbolic application of the novel's gloomy political allegory; but also a positive element in the lightness of tone and in the apparent expression of the hope of political change - which may be indicative of a more open attitude to life as a whole. It is this latter feature which - as in Tres novelitas burguesas - is a determining factor in the novel's structure. The diminution of complexity suggests a moderation in outlook. At the same time though, the author wishes to remind the reader that he is reading fiction, mere artifice: the novel's highly symmetrical structure draws attention to its primary existence as a literary artefact rather than as an autonomous representation of real life. The reader is presented with few difficulties. As Lipski has said: "This is the basic narrative distinction between El obsceno pájaro de la noche and Casa de Campo, the exalted epistemological perspective afforded by the latter and thereby the greatly reduced participation of the reader in giving structure and meaning to the work".

The book is simply divided into two parts, each of seven chapters: both parts are evenly balanced (one dealing with the "partida", the other with the "regreso"), while each chapter has a similar sort of clear, demonstrative noun-title such as "La excursión", "Los nativos", "Las lanzas", "La Marquesa", "El oro" and so on. Each chapter is itself divided into numbered sections, themselves subdivided into sub-sections. This, together with the wide range of characters (for whom the author, in his desire to simplify, provides a check-list), allows him to introduce a varied spectrum of entertaining semi-humorous episodes.

The range of material to be used up in the course

of such a long novel of so many short sections and so many characters could potentially create confusion. However, Donoso's skilful grouping of each chapter around a basic character or idea avoids the potential monotony of a consistently linear plot. He aligns characters and episodes together using material from the present and the past, thus eliminating the cumbersome complexity that would ensue from an attempt to relate so many diverse tales as a straight chronological narrative.

The first chapter is dominated by Wenceslao (appropriately enough for he is, as Donoso admits, the hero who will re-emerge towards the end). This chapter introduces us to the Venturas, their children and their servants. It captures our attention straight away with its artificial or deliberately exaggerated style, and prepares us for the plot by emphasising from the start the family excursion and Wenceslao's desire to free his father. The remainder of the first part only covers the period up to the dusk of the day on which the Venturas leave in the first chapter. Donoso's technique is to intrigue his readers by presenting them with the essential dilemma posed by the Venturas' departure and the tension that follows it, zig-zagging back in time to provide us with the appropriate information to explain present events and occasionally focusing on the hopes and aspirations of individual characters in the present. Not only does this avoid the aforementioned difficulties of a linear plot; the systematic use of foreshadowing and postponement devices engages the reader's interest and expectations.

We are put on the alert from the outset when Wenceslao casts doubt upon the Venturas' assertion that they will only be away for the day: "Estoy convencido de que partieron con el propósito de no volver nunca más" (p.15). Such apprehensions are fuelled by repeated references to the possibility of attack by the "antropófagos". It is suggested that this is why the adults leave: "huyeron porque tienen miedo que los antropófagos asalten esta

casa"(p.17). This would give the cannibals an opportunity to attack the children: "entonces los antropófagos... entrarán en esta casa para comernos"(p.18). Even before the adults departed the children feared that "en cuanto los grandes los abandonaran con el fin de poner a salvo sus pellejos, (los antropófagos) los iban a atacar"(p.24).

However, the second chapter associates the "antropófagos" with Adriano Gomara: this suggests that the coming of the natives will in fact herald the coming of a species of revolution. Thus the emphasis on the "antropófagos" actually raises the expectations embodied in Adriano. The build-up towards Adriano's "revolution" is another aspect of the plot foreshadowed in the first part of the novel. Wenceslao expresses his hopes in the first chapter. The second deals with his father's liberal relations with the natives. There is a clear parallel with Allende here: Adriano is a doctor; Allende was Minister of Health in the Popular Front coalition of 1938. Allende eventually came to power: the implication is that Adriano will too. The story of Mauro reinforces the possibility of solidarity with the natives and the chaos of the first two sub-sections of the part's final chapter hints strongly at the inevitability of the "revolution". The climactic seventh chapter's title - "El tío" - stresses the point: Adriano must emerge as a new leader.

The excitement of this process is added to by Donoso's use of postponement techniques. Although the resurrection of Adriano and the coming of the natives are possibilities projected in the first chapter it is not until the end of the first part that these possibilities are climactically realized. After the opening chapter (set largely on the day of the Venturas' journey) the second takes us back in time. Though this chapter creates an aura of suspense around Adriano the emphasis changes in the next: Mauro is now the central figure, the action turning to his past in the middle section. However, as we have seen, Mauro's tale - through the motif of the "lanzas" - also represents the hope of reconciliation

with the natives; but again this eventuality is suspended as the plot concentrates on Celeste and Juvenal the night before the day-trip in Chapter 4. Casilda's hopes for the future are outlined in the opening section of the next chapter, though once more the narrative goes back in time to explain the character's motivation; the process is repeated in the following chapter with Malvina. The technique of postponement is even continued in the final chapter of Part I: although it is entitled "El tío", most of the first two sections do not deal with Adriano but the crumbling order that Juvenal and Melania try to maintain.

The effect of these devices is to dramatise the triumphant, revolutionary appearance of Adriano and the natives towards the end of the first part. But of course, if the reader is expecting great things from Adriano he is to be disappointed. This is already foreshadowed to some extent by the patterning of the first part. Each chapter is centred around a different character or group of characters; but each of these corresponds to an increasingly negative vision. The first chapter opens with Wenceslao: his honesty, integrity and faith in his father hints at the possibility of real justice and freedom. The next chapter concentrates on Adriano himself: despite his liberal values, the prospect of indecisiveness and failure is gently hinted at by his sometimes comic treatment and his hysterical reaction to Mignon's roasting of Aída's head (an action which he, in a sense, provoked by taking the children to see the sacrifice of the pig). The third chapter concentrates on Mauro - another revolutionary, but one who will turn to fierce oppression to achieve his ends. The fourth chapter meanwhile switches the emphasis away from revolution back to two representatives of the old order: Celeste (who is blind but pretends she can see) is the most damning embodiment of her class's devious mentality; her son Juvenal is equally lacking in probity. He belongs to the world of youth (potential freedom) but is also equated with the unscrupu-

lous world of adulthood: he therefore functions as a symbolic reminder of the futility of the attempt to replace negative, adult values with positive, childhood ones. The next chapter continues the downward movement: Casilda takes advantage of the revolutionary movement, but only for her own ends - personal revenge. The case of Malvina (documented in the following chapter) is even worse: she also abuses the revolutionary process, for she is a corrupt opportunist who uses it to get rich. Even Adriano's victorious intervention in the final chapter is to some extent counteracted by Wenceslao's feeling that his father's plan is "torpe" and "injusta" (p. 235).

Nevertheless, the fraternal embrace which ends the chapter, makes Wenceslao forget his criticisms, closing the first part on a positive note of harmony and brotherhood. But despite the dramatic build-up to this point, the reader's hopes will be frustrated. This is underlined by the fact that the action returns to the Venturas in the first chapter of a second section entitled "El regreso". The anti-climax accentuates the failure of Adriano and, by extension, the disappointing performance of Allende's government. The plot of the second part as a whole is more or less defined by its opening chapter. The servants are despatched to re-take Marulanda. They do so in the following chapter, while the next chapter, the tenth, deals with the destructive aftermath of the coup. After these three chapters on the reactionary activities of the servants Donoso sandwiches a chapter on Wenceslao, Amadeo, Agapito and Arabela - the hopeful new order - between three chapters charting the decline of the Venturas' power base. The first of these three chapters deals with the foreigners, the second with the new middle-classes represented by Malvina; these two groups join forces and escape with the servants. The first half of the final chapter shows Marulanda in tatters: but the second half is more hopeful, looking forward to the possibility of a new future for the survivors.

The symmetry of this plan is self-evident. The arrange-

ment of this second section is every bit as precise as that of the first despite the absence of easy character groupings. This can be seen in Donoso's systematic use of suspense (often deliberately tongue-in-cheek to highlight the novel's artificiality). Each chapter, section and sub-section is perfectly rounded, usually breaking off at a point which concludes one small episode but simultaneously prepares us for the next. This is the case in Chapter 9. Donoso ends the first section, describing the attack on the huts, with these words:

Los acontecimientos que he narrado más arriba no duraron más que media hora pese a que podrían parecer más prolongados por la minuciosidad con que he hecho el relato. En todo caso, puedo asegurar a mis lectores que no constituyeron más que un incidente preliminar, sin importancia, sólo digno de olvidarse, dentro de la gesta heroica de la toma de Marulanda por los sirvientes, que ahora me propongo escribir para edificación de todos los que lean estas páginas (p.289).

The next sub-section takes us up to the point at which the attack is about to begin, but the action is suspended until the next sub-section before the assault takes place. The sub-section ends with the Mayordomo ordering Juan Pérez to deal with Adriano Gomara. Again the sub-section is brought to a close with the killing of Adriano coming in the next sub-section. A similar use of suspense comes at the end of Chapter 11 when Wenceslao spots the Venturas returning and calls to his mother. The first section of the following chapter goes back in time as Donoso intervenes to describe first his meeting with Silvestre and then the plans made by the Venturas for their return to Marulanda. It is only in the first sub-section of Section 2 that we see the Venturas arriving again (this time through the eyes of Juan Pérez), while we do not hear Wenceslao calling for his mother again until the second sub-section.

Information on Adriano's rule is furnished through the occasional thought or comment from the characters. However, there is also a sub-section of Chapter 13 de-

voted to a detailed description of conditions under him. The information is kept from the reader until this point partly because it fits in logically with the story of Malvina, who is the central figure of the chapter; but equally its placing at this stage in the story allows the reader to compare Adriano Gomara's government with the régime of the servants (described in the previous chapter) and with the new order hinted at in the following chapter. By describing it after the Mayordomo's reign but before the harmonious brotherhood depicted at the novel's close, Donoso suggests that Adriano (or Allende) fell between two stools: he may have failed in the practicalities of his task but the nobility of his ideals should be an example to us all.

The careful construction of Casa de campo is a clear indication of Donoso's intelligent organisation of his narrative material for maximum effect. However, the exaggerated, stylistic language, the obvious structural symmetry and the self-conscious foregrounding of the suspense all serve to remind us of the presence of the author manipulating the tale. In keeping with the conventions of the modern novel, Donoso's writing, up to El obsceno pájaro, was characterised by a quest for autonomous narrative in which the figure of the author withdraws completely. Now the opposite is the case, with the author constantly intervening in the text. The intention is to remind the reader that traditional realism cannot possibly hope to capture a fluid, ambiguous reality on paper: fiction is not reality - fiction is, simply, fiction. Constant authorial intervention underscores this point by repeatedly making the reader aware that literature is merely artifice.

Donoso tells the reader to treat his book "como un artificio", not as "la simulación de un área real" but as "un área en que la aparencia de lo real sea constantemente aceptada como apariencia, con una autoridad propia muy distinta a la de la novela que aspira a crear, por medio de la verosimilitud, otra realidad, homóloga pero

siempre accesible como realidad"(pp.53-4). We should not, he insists, "confundir lo literario con lo real"(p.492). He goes on to emphasise the point by his constant intervention, especially at dramatic moments when the story is at a stage of great momentum. For example, when he is describing the grave dangers facing Wenceslao, Agapito, Amadeo and Arabela, he suddenly writes:

En todo caso, que mis lectores estén tranquilos, porque Wenceslao, que en cierto sentido es mi héroe, no puede morir hasta el final de mi relato, si es que muere... (p.372).

Another good example comes when they hide from Juan Pérez's men in the animal trap. This is a moment of great tension, but Donoso breaks down the atmosphere with these words:

La escena que siguió no la presenciaron los que se ocultaban dentro del agujero. Pero es breve y en un párrafo el autor puede relatar la pantomina a sus lectores (p.377).

Similarly, when describing the heroic group's climactic decision to eat Amadeo, he breaks off the narrative to tell us what happened "en una versión anterior de esta novela"(p.391). The most obvious example comes in the twelfth chapter when Donoso leaves behind the drama of the Venturas' return to give a lengthy account of a chance meeting with Silvestre: this encounter between the author and one of his characters, reminiscent of Unamuno's Niebla, constitutes a complete invalidation of the conventions of traditional realism.

Furthermore, Donoso constantly reminds us of the technical machinations of the author, who tries to manipulate his reader. Commenting on the use of a 'deus ex machina', he states that "no tengo problemas para echar mano de este artificio, que me parece de la misma solvencia que cualquier artificio literario que puede no parecer artificio"(p.392). He later refers back to the story of Malvina's flight, revealing that "no sólo me serví de ella como deus ex machina para precipitar los acontecimientos narrados en este momento, sino que la introduje con el fin de que actuara más tarde como una

especie de vehículo para lo que ahora me propongo narrar" (p.457). He admits to holding back deliberately the reason for Mauro's conflict with his brothers, because "la verdad es que me he propuesto arrastrarlo hasta este punto del relato para descubrir ahora, dando al hecho toda su magnitud, aquello que quiero colocar como símbolo al centro de mi historia" (p.104). He later witholds the story of Cosme's fate because "prefiero dejar a mis lectores en 'suspense', como se dice ahora, sin respuesta a su curiosidad, para que se den cuenta más tarde, cuando yo vaya relatando las cosas a medida que sucedieron, cuál fue esta idea" (pp.339-40).

Other techniques employed to underline the novel's artificiality include the systematic use of exaggeration. This is evident in many of the descriptions of the characters (who, the author openly admits, are symbolic, emblematic figures). One example is Juan Pérez - a villain who is blacker than black. Equally exaggerated is the highly stylised language of the children. The author's own language is deliberately rhetorical too, with phrases like: "mi mano tiembla al comenzar a describir los horrores de esta última versión de la mascarada" (p.229). The falseness and exaggeration is underlined by Donoso's repeated use of theatrical imagery. The acting in the game *La Marquesa Salió A Las Cinco* is a symbol of the hopeless gap between reality and the art forms that attempt to portray it. Wenceslao thinks that his parents' farewell "tuvo una apariencia ficticia de lo más sospechosa, como la escena final de una ópera", while Mauro feels that "en nuestra vida aquí, todo parece una ópera" (p.15). When confronted by the unpleasant reality of the ragged Fabio and Casilda on their way home:

Los grandes rieron al unísono, como con un chiste bien ensayado en una obra de teatro. Poco les faltó para aplaudir. Entonces, siguiendo el ejemplo de Adelaida, tomaron asiento en la primera fila de bancos de la capilla para contemplar la escena que transcurría en el presbiterio adornado con restos de columnas salomónicas y molduras doradas como en un decorado de ópera (pp.253-4).

When Casilda harangues the adults, "se afirmaba en la balaustrada del presbiterio imprecando al público aposentado en las butacas"(p.254). At the height of his anger, the Mayordomo takes a "pausa teatral" before he speaks (p.330). At the end of the novel Donoso sadly concedes that "el telón tiene ahora que caer y las luces apagarse: mis personajes se quitarán las máscaras, desmontaré los escenarios, guardaré la utilería"(p.492). The theatre imagery is another way of underlining the artificiality of fiction and the falsity of the claims of realism.

It is interesting to note that several of the above examples expose the Venturas' falseness and hypocrisy as well as that of conventional realism. Once again we see a link between ideas on more than one symbolic plane. This is a fundamental aspect of the novel's narrative unity: the constant authorial intervention is not separate from the story of the Venturas - they are in fact deeply interrelated, for Donoso's description of the Venturas' lifestyle is a symbolic indictment of the workings of realist literature. The identification between the Venturas and the narrow outlook of realism is made evident by Celeste's reaction to the idea of an open-air meal:

-¡Qué idea más bohemia, más absolutamente encantadora! - arrulló Celeste -. "Dejeuner sur l'herbe". Pero, claro, manteniendo todas las formalidades y convenciones que en esa cuestionable obra de arte desgraciadamente no se observan (p.251).

Juvenal is worried at Mauro's histrionic performance in La Marquesa Salió A Las Cinco because it is:

fábula, leyenda, cuento en vez de novela con cuyos personajes les fuera fácil identificarse, porque eran Ventura y, como tal, les gustaba que el arte verosímil y esclavo reflejara sus complacencias (p.226).

Indeed the Venturas cannot accept anything that might constitute "la negación del sano realismo que gobernaba sus vidas"(p.261).

When the family returns to Marulanda they make the

futile gesture of entering via the now pointless gate:

significaba ni más ni menos que los Ventura se proponían no ver nada, apelar una vez más al tupido velo familiar, no concederle rango alguno al tiempo pasado y a lo pasado en el tiempo, sino moldearlo según las reglas clásicas a las que ellos...eran adeptos (pp.416-7).

Their falsification of reality corresponds to the traditional realists' falsification of it in their attempts to transfer it to the written page. The limitations of realism are matched by the limitations of the Venturas' outlook. As the foreign woman says:

El subjetivismo con que ustedes acostumbran a juzgar todo lo que pertenece a la familia nada tiene que ver con la realidad vista desde fuera y con otra perspectiva (p.448).

The mendacity of conventional realism and the "honesty" of Donoso's approach in Casa de campo is echoed by the actions of the servants when they assume control of Marulanda. When the Mayordomo orders the boarding-up of windows and the alteration of meal schedules in order to create a sense of timelessness, he realises that this is a "realidad que él estaba inventando" and that "son las leyes las que crean la realidad, y no la inversa" (p.331). He says that Juan Pérez "será mi principal colaborador para detener la historia donde queremos y donde debemos detenerla" (p.332). It is significant that Juan Pérez is made to paint over the 'trompe l'oeil' fresco. The fresco is an image of art as artifice. Earlier on in the novel Juvenal has an unfortunate experience with the servants he confuses with the figures from the 'trompe l'oeil' painting; as he is leaving the lackeys' shadows "restablecieron de una vez por todas la diferencia entre el espacio real y el espacio del arte. Ahora, desde las puertas del artificio las miradas de los personajes volvieron a ser fijas" (p.164). Juan Pérez's subtle repainting of the fresco with its "perspectivas mentirosas" (p.333) shows how art is not necessarily an accurate reflection of reality as others see it, demonstrating equally the artist's deliberate and essen-

tially artificial manipulation of art for his own ends.

However, there is more to the novel's literary level than a mere attack on traditional realism. As we have seen, its various symbolic levels are all intricately intertwined. The story of Andriano Gomara's failure not only parallels the collapse of Allende's government: the demise of both figures echoes the state of the modern Latin American novel. Mauro fears the creation of "otra ortodoxia, tan inflexible como la de nuestros padres" (p.104). This is Donoso's view of the Latin American novel at the end, as he sees it, of the 'boom': the new novel, he feels, has developed its own system of conventions just as rigid as those it was supposed to replace. The novel's various levels - psychological, social, political, religious, literary - combine in their anti-dogmatic character: so the whole story of Casa de campo contributes to Donoso's expression of the need for artistic change. As Martínez explains, "Casa de campo inaugura un metatexto por el que la novela se mira a sí misma, se auto-cuestiona, se desconstruye pero sólo para reconstruirse"². In other words it constitutes "una desconstrucción reestructora"³. Donoso explains his position in an interview with the same critic:

lo que me interesa... es hacer una batida contra la aceptada novela clásica: no la novela clásica antigua sino la contemporánea. Digamos, la novela del buen gusto contemporáneo. Es decir la novela que bajo el disfraz de una libertad narrativa forja una serie de reglas de las cuales no es posible prescindir. Por ejemplo, todas las reglas terribles que me parece que usa Cortázar: Rayuela es un muestrario de reglas encubiertas que forjan toda una teoría de la novela: esta teoría pretende destruir la novela clásica pero forja otra novela clásica⁴

Donoso now turns his back on what he calls in Casa de campo "la hipócrita no-ficción de las ficciones en que el autor pretende eliminarse siguiendo reglas pre-establecidas por otras novelas, o buscando fórmulas narrativas novedosas" (p.54). He abandons the use of structural fragmentation, deliberate distortion and so on as a means of questioning reality and traditional realism's

perceptions of it: now he turns to artifice in order to challenge realism's assumptions about the order and stability of our world. It is significant that in interviews Donoso tends to speak of Casa de campo in terms of the contrast it forms with El obsceno pájaro:

En El obsceno pájaro de la noche hay toda una deformación de la realidad hacia lo negro, hacia lo terrible, hacia lo esperpéntico. Toda la novela es un esperpento. También El lugar sin límites es un esperpento. Pero en Casa de campo ocurre otra cosa. Aquí la deformación de la realidad no es sólo la deformación negra, se da también la deformación rosa, la deformación burguesa.

He makes the same contrast in an interview for the Chilean magazine Hoy:

En El obsceno pájaro de la noche... yo jugué con lo monstruoso, lo esperpéntico, lo negro, lo miserable. Era un tipo de fuga del realismo. Aquí también me escapo de él, a través del artificio. Para mí la fuga del realismo no es lo fantástico, sino lo artificial. Es otra forma de deformación, de irrealidad. El narrador de la anterior novela se perdía en la conciencia de los personajes, aquí en cambio tenía que hacer a un gran director de escena, que se plantara en el escenario y ordenara la acción. ¿Por qué hacerlo? Porque yo no creo en los dogmatismos de las posiciones literarias. Creo que se puede narrar de cualquier manera, siempre que se haga bien.

Donoso makes his intentions clear during his conversation with Silvestre in the actual text of Casa de campo:

El feísmo extremado de algunos de mis anteriores libros pudo ser absorbidos por gente como los Ventura porque toda intención de ser "real", aunque caiga en lo desagradable, cae dentro de lo aprobado, ya que en último término es útil, enseña, señala, condena. Yo no he podido resistir la tentación - le explico a Silvestre Ventura que me escucha con interés - de cambiar mi registro, y utilizar en el presente relato un preciosismo también extremado como corolario de ese feísmo y ver si me sirve para inaugurar un universo también portentoso ... (pp.400-1).

The purpose of the new techniques employed is to renovate the modern novel by moving away from the complex conventions of Latin American writing of the 1960s

towards the deliberate use of artifice as a means of repudiating the premises of traditional realism. The novel's various symbolic levels are shown to be ultimately inter-related, coming together as a powerful protest against dogmatism of any kind. Realism is based on the assumption of a stable world which can be easily depicted by the written word. In attacking a literary notion Donoso is demonstrating the essentially artificial, fictional nature of art.

However, Donoso's position is rather problematical. The Russian Formalists based their study of narrative on the distinction between the events on the one hand and the construction on the other, between fabula and syuzet. Viktor Shklovsky applied the theory to Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy - a novel in which, like Casa de campo, the author self-consciously points out his own techniques. Ann Jefferson, summarising Shklovsky's study, concludes that: "in Tristram Shandy... the devices are laid bare to such an extent that there remains hardly any motivation for the much diminished fabula".⁷ In other words, the deliberately artificial form invalidates the relevancy of the content. But this is clearly not Donoso's intention in Casa de campo: as we have seen, he has repeatedly made it clear that he intended the novel to function as a direct political allegory. Pérez Blanco even suggests that the novel is a re-working of the ancient form of the fable, its aim being to "enseñar deleitando".⁸ Yet this would appear to be contradicted by the artificial format discussed earlier which seems to deny the relationship between art and reality. Donoso's intentions are quite ambiguous. As María A. Salgado points out: "he wants to know if it is possible to write a text that is valid in itself, a text that without having to create parallelisms with a conventional reality will still offer answers to those concerned with social problems".⁹

Casa de campo constantly stresses the idea of ambiguity. As we have seen, the novel's symbolism refers simul-

taneously to a number of different forms of human construct. The use of artifice undermines such a mythical sense of order. All methods of structuring reality are called into question. Martínez, using the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Tel Quel group, associates the book's historical level with "el ámbito de la cultura de Occidente en su totalidad", concluding that:

Acertadamente, el autor homologa el imperialismo capitalista con los otros imperialismos que signan nuestra cultura y, al así hacerlo, enjuicia la tiranía y represión que entraña al raigal logocentrismo de nuestra tradición... Donoso condena, en suma, la metafísica que el Occidente ha elaborado en torno al Logos: fundamentada en la ontoología, aquélla exalta el Centro, el Verbo, el significado trascendente, la Presencia plenamente presente.¹⁰

The novel finds its unity in Donoso's multiple attack on dogma of all kinds: psychological, social, political, religious and literary. Just as his intervention in the text is a gesture against the maxims of realism or the prevalent conventions of the modern novel, so the novel, as a whole is a reaction against all forms of orthodoxy - and, by extension, against the need to develop an artificial order which falsely guarantees stability.

These ideas are brought out in the narrative itself. The relationship between the text and any external referent is shown to be highly ambivalent. This aspect of the novel's ambiguity has been studied closely by Salgado. She lists the various and numerous names used by the narrator to refer to himself and his creation, concluding that:

the vocabulary used by the narrator has been chosen specifically to force the reader to distrust the accuracy of language at the purely declarative level. And, of course, it goes without saying that if one may not trust the language that shapes the action, that action becomes even more suspect.¹¹

She also comments on the narrator's constant interventions: "the main purpose of all intrusions is to destroy the reader's confidence in his critical capacity¹² for reading and judging novels and, by extension, life".

The problem is further compounded by the narrator's own uncertainty regarding the events he is describing. He refers, for example, to earlier versions of the novel: in one he included a long interior monologue by Arabela; in another Wenceslao, Agapito and Arabela disappear after eating Amadeo. There is no certain fictional reality (and by implication no certain external reality to which it can correspond). Pérez Blanco's idea of a "creador todopoderoso y omnisciente" is not quite accurate.¹³ This point is dramatised by the author's encounter with one of his own characters, Silvestre. The finished manuscript of Casa de campo Donoso claims to be carrying clearly cannot be the final version for it could not include the scene with Silvestre: again the fluidity of the text is stressed. Also, the Silvestre Donoso meets bears little relation to the Silvestre of the main story: this is a point hinted at by Silvestre himself who complains that the novel bears no comparison to reality as he sees it. Moreover, it is Silvestre who asks Donoso for a drink, thus preventing him from getting on with more important business: in Salgado's words this "dramatises the tyranny of the creation over its creator",¹⁴ not as Pérez Blanco would have it, "la tiranía del creador".¹⁵

The problem is how we reconcile this mistrust of the mimetic properties of narrative with Donoso's avowed intention of writing a political novel. It is clearly insufficient to dismiss the contradiction as does Rilda L. Baker:

La lectura alegórica implica, pues, la clásica suspensión voluntaria de nuestra incredulidad (o sea, "willing suspension of disbelief") de que hablaba Coleridge a principios del siglo pasado. En Casa de campo tal conversión de incredulidad en creencia se hace imposible - mejor dicho, se socava - debido a la presencia intrusiva de un narrador equívoco.¹⁶

It is equally unsatisfactory simply to resort to references to the novel's self-referentiality like Gutiérrez Mouat:

En el libro de Donoso... la cuestión de los valores se trata de modo carnavalesco, sus-

pendiéndose todo juicio absoluto y entregándose la narrativa a un juego de vaivenes y ambigüedades sin resolución.⁷

El carnaval, al convertirse en mundo, invalida todo punto de referencia externo a la vez que instituye la primacía de la ficción!⁸

How then do we explain this apparent dichotomy in Casa de campo? Two possible answers come to mind. The first concerns the inherent relationship between literature and society. Terry Eagleton has studied this phenomenon quite closely, concluding:

not only that literature does not exist in the sense that insects do, and that the value-judgements by which it is constituted are historically variable, but that these value-judgements themselves have a close relation to social ideologies. They refer in the end not simply to private taste, but to the assumptions by which certain social groups exercise and maintain power over others.⁹

It follows from this that any attack on accepted literary values is also an attack on the prevalent social system. This is a point made by Salgado:

In Casa de campo his (Donoso's) imagination goes hand-in-hand with his social commitment: he creates what appears to be an artificial verbal world of fiction simply because he believes that social reality is also artificial... It is, therefore, logical and normal that the breakdown of the bourgeois system of values should be followed by the breakdown of the artistic mode it favored... In order to survive, this new language must kill the old one by destroying also the social order which gave it meaning - both must be killed so that the new ways may live.²⁰

In other words, narrative artifice actually reinforces the political allegory: both are means of subverting a bourgeois social order. As Cortázar has said, "la novela revolucionaria no es solamente la que tiene un 'contenido' revolucionario, sino la que procura revolucionar la novela misma"²¹. This reminds us of my earlier point that Casa de campo renovates the conventions not only of the traditional novel, but also those of the modern novel: this aim is in no way undermined by the existence of a level of political allegory.

There is another point too, which relates to the question of Donoso's developing existential outlook. It has already been noted that at this stage in his intellectual evolution there is an unresolved tension in the author's outlook: a continuing awareness of absurdity is balanced by a somewhat more complacent attitude to life. This conflict is illustrated in the artifice/allegory dialectic. The systematic questioning of fiction's ability to reflect the outside world implies a negation of the coherence of any external reality: the writer cannot accurately portray an incomprehensible, chaotic universe. This aspect of the novel may be therefore taken to indicate Donoso's continuing rejection of the concepts of order and meaning in life. At the same time, however, the clarity and simplicity of the novel's direct allegorical style represents a new sense of calm and resignation: the opposite to El obsceno pájaro where structural chaos served as an embodiment of terror and despair. Not only does Casa de campo show Donoso to be a continuing stylistic innovator: it also demonstrates a conflict of inner attitudes. The artifice of the human construct is again debunked, but with a renewed literary artifice emerging as a possible means of imposing order upon chaos.

CHAPTER FOUR

LA MISTERIOSA DESAPARICIÓN DE LA MARQUESITA DE LORIA : REALISM UNDER ATTACK FROM THE INSIDE!

The apparent simplicity of content in La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria is matched by an equally apparent simplicity of style and form. The linear plot, chronological sequences, and standard third person omniscient narration conspire to give the effect of a traditional novel - with all its implications of comfort and order. The gentle nostalgia, the inoffensive eroticism and the element of intrigue also contribute to the impression of a straightforward "good read". Indeed, despite the occasional piece of comic exaggeration, the style of the novel is overwhelmingly realistic in tone - in that it presents us with an amusing tale which the reader accepts as "true" - within the fictional context - and which does not at first appear to question his attitudes too scathingly. This sensation of security is strengthened by the presentation of the story of the marquesita de Loria as a kind of case history, with the author clearly borrowing from the conventions of the detective story. This is evident from the precise nature of the title which also evokes the vocabulary of traditional mystery stories: "The strange case of...". The documentary style also adds to this sense of being involved in a relaxing, familiar format. This can be seen in the novel's opening line: "La joven marquesa viuda de Loria, nacida Blanca Arias en Managua, Nicaragua, era..." (p.11). The tone is repeated in the account of Paquito's death:

Ese invierno andaba mucha difteria por Madrid: falleció dos días después del miércoles de carnaval, Francisco Javier Anacleto Quiñones, marqués de Loria, antes de cumplir los veintiún años, dejando a toda su parentela desconsolada, muy especialmente a su joven viuda - nacida Blanca Arias, hija del recortado diplomático nicaragüense... (pp.40-1).

The feeling of the veracity of the documentary style is reinforced also by a number of minor interventions by

the imaginary compiler of this chronicle: "si queremos ser rigurosos hay que precisar que..."(p.13); "lo menos que se diga sobre la boda misma, mejor"(p.31); "sería demasiado tedioso describir las ocasiones en que..."(p.35); and, with reference to the phantom dog, "todavía corre por Madrid la leyenda...de que..."(p.173):

However, many of these interventions seem to have a tongue-in-cheek quality about them: the allusion to the "marquesito de Loria, cuyo lamentable fallecimiento..."(p. 13); to "el banquete - si de banquete puede calificarse a tan rústico ágape"(p.31); to Almanza's vulgar "retazos de fandangos absolutamente irrepetibles"(p.155); to the difficulties of today's police-force who "con las cosas como ahora están, claro, deben preocuparse de problemas más serios"(p.174); and to phrases like, "Pero no se puede pasar por alto aquella memorable tarde de invierno..."(p.35), or, "Este propósito tuvo el lamentable fin que se conoce"(p. 51). Furthermore, as in Casa de campo, Donoso often takes stock narrative styles to their extremes, indulging in a kind of deliberate exaggeration. The artificial language describing the ardour of Blanca's romance with Archibaldo Arenas simply highlights the folly of her fleeting faith in love:

Lo besó tan prolongada y dulcemente, allí donde estaban, entregada tan sin urgencia a esa caricia elemental, que era como leer sólo el título de un libro del cual se podía inferir algo de su contenido. Tenían toda la vida, volúmenes enteros, por delante: este beso pulsaba el primer resorte del placer que los haría - como lo aseguraban todos los novelistas - vibrar al unísono.

Cuando después de un siglo terminó el dulce beso que parecía haber encendido otra luz en el estudio, Archibaldo y Blanca se enlazaron por la cintura...(p.123).

A similar effect is achieved by the last five pages of the novel. They comprise a species of post-script or epilogue, a traditional summing-up of the fates of the other characters. Once again, the language is deliberately self-mocking, as, for example, when Donoso writes: "Y para terminar con otra nota alegre..."(p.197).

Such interventions are clearly intended to satirise

the very style the novel purports to employ; that of the realistic documentary. The point is impressed upon the reader by the blatant intrusion of the author-Donoso when he is recounting the chauffeur's reaction to Blanca's disappearance: "...montó en el Isotta-Fraschini para ir a toda velocidad al puesto de policía más cercano, donde contó lo que el autor de esta historia acaba de contar en este capítulo y que está a punto de terminar" (pp.193-4). This technique - a constant in Casa de campo - is even more shocking here because it appears in such striking isolation. As with Donoso's previous novel, it emphasises the fact that realism cannot hope to depict reality, for man himself is incapable of comprehending that reality. Thus the novel's simplicity, far from postulating the idea of a structured universe, actually undermines the traditional concept of order by questioning the assumptions on which the novel itself is based.

The entire novel is, in a sense, reliant upon the principle of deconstruction, for it lacks the "colle logique" which Barthes sees as fundamental to the readerly text.² The effect of the title is to set forward an enigma: what is the reason for and the nature of the young marquis's disappearance? The answer is never given in the text (we can only deduce answers via a symbolic analysis). We are faced with an incomplete hermeneutic code, an open-ended enigma. The detective or mystery story format is also broken down: the pleasure of reading such tales usually relies upon a gradual evolution towards the resolution of the puzzle. However, just as Borges's detective stories confront the protagonist with the futility of detection, so too does Donoso deny the reader the comfort and satisfaction of a logical conclusion to his tale. The author's technique is to dupe the reader into the false security of the realist novel, only to weaken that sense of security by systematically questioning the presuppositions upon which the text itself appears to be based.

This is reflected in the very plot, which asks more questions than it answers. A cheery account of youthful

sexuality gives way to the opaque symbolism of Luna's eyes and the imperspicuity of Blanca's apparent evanescence. This gradual introduction of an abstruse, uncertain motif and the disturbing distortion of the climax - both within a pseudo-realistic context - is even more discomfoting than the hallucinatory complexities of El obsceno pájaro de la noche. In that novel the reader is plunged into a nightmarish world from the start; in La marquesita de Loria the shock is even greater, for the reader is projected from one extreme to the other - he is allowed to experience a sense of order, only to be then confronted with the falsity of that position and faced with the reality of chaos. This tension of opposites is dramatised in the novel's closing pages. The account of the other characters' settled lives may be reassuring, but Donoso stabs at the reader's smugness in the last line: Archibaldo and Charo are always "seguidos por Luna, su gran y fiel perro gris" (p.198). This raises all sorts of questions, for Luna, after, apparently abandoning his master, faded out of the action at the time of Blanca's disappearance. What is he now doing with Archibaldo? The answer is that we simply do not know. Donoso allows his readers to relax, but only to re-introduce the enigma of the dog on the very last line. We are thus made to close our copies of La marquesita de Loria in a mood of confusion and disquiet.

The essential structural principle of the text, then, is to overturn its own internal logic. This results in the creation of an up-down, rising-sinking, ascending-descending pattern. The two poles of this contraposition are, on the one hand, Blanca's search for fulfilment through materialism and sexuality, and, on the other, her relationship with Luna. The two sides of the antithesis correspond respectively to order and chaos. The fact that the latter movement displaces the former indicates the predominance of chaos.

The sexual quest is a fundamental factor in the determination of the novel's form. It is presented via

eight basic stages. The first is the pre-marital state: Blanca's adolescent masturbation constitutes a series of "ejercicios preparatorios para lo verdadero: el futuro sin duda le reservaba esa plenitud..." (p.13). Then comes her marriage with Paquito, after which there is a third phase in the development of her physical desire: this is that detailed in the third chapter, in which Blanca articulates her general urge to "dar aterrora riendo suelta a sus fantasías" (p.48). This indefinite carnality soon gives way to a group of more concrete materialisations of her proclivities: don Mamerto (and his male relatives to whom she also feels attracted); Almanza; Archibaldo (who represents the most important stage, cutting across all the others); group sex with Almanza and Tere Castillo; and finally Mario.

However, the value of the quest is consistently neutralised. This is reflected in the novel's very structure. The first four chapters, after all, are each marked by the shadow of death. In the first Blanca is a widow; the second tells of Paquito's death; don Mamerto expires in the third; and his funeral takes place in the fourth. This juxtaposition of death and sexuality invalidates the hope inherent in eroticism. A further series of juxtapositions lend force to the point: these involve the punctuation of scenes of copulation by the introduction of the characters of Almanza and Casilda (both of whom, despite their voracious sexual appetites, represent sterility because of the emptiness of their materialistic life-styles). This occurs during the opera scene of the first chapter. Donoso constantly switches the attention from Blanca and Paquito's surreptitiously effected erotic activities to the hollow, hypocritical conventionalism of Casilda. At several moments, Casilda mistakes Blanca's ecstatic gaze for a primitive form of artistic pleasure; she prefers to play cards than to stay in her box; when Paquito sniffs his fingers (signalling to Blanca the delight he takes in her odor di femina) his mother accuses him of picking his nose. As the young couple

approach orgasm Donoso turns to focus on Almanza; aroused by the sight of the pair the count begins to masturbate, making for a contrast between his age-worn perversity and the fresh, youthful spontaneity of the lovers. The isolation of masturbation is ironically set against his memory of a parallel episode of shared enjoyment: namely his sexual exchanges with Casilda in front of her husband, in the same box, during a performance of La judía. A system of "vasos comunicantes" - to use Vargas Llosa's phrase - is at work here. The juxtaposition of the present and the past means that the one inevitably colours the other: the implication therefore is that his relationship with Casilda is just another form of the sterile sexual confinement of masturbation. Furthermore, the parallel with the relationship of Paquito and Blanca hints at the ineffectuality of eroticism as a means of achieving satisfaction. The threatening figures of Almanza and Casilda are re-introduced on a number of subsequent occasions to press the point: Almanza interrupts Blanca's love-making with Paquito in the second chapter; thoughts of Almanza dampen the development of her sexual day-dreams in Chapter 3; the thrill of seducing don Mamerto is nullified by his death - "esta pérdida que la dejaba sin defensa contra esas hienas que eran su suegra y el conde de Almanza" (pp. 65-6); her erotic fantasies about the Mamertos in Chapter 4 are brought to a sudden halt by the news of the count's plundering of the family fortune.

Another layer of ironic parallelism conveys the futility of the sexual quest. This is evident when Paquito and Blanca go to the opera Lohengrin in the opening chapter. There is a relationship between the opera's main characters and those of the novel: Paquito is Lohengrin; Blanca is Elsa; Casilda is Ortruda; and Almanza is Telramondo. The intentional association between opera and fictional reality is visible in Donoso's deliberate mixing of the two levels, as when Paquito ventures a furtive kiss:

... Paquito no pudo resistir la tentación de arriesgarse a besarle el lóbulo. Ortruda se puso de pie con ademán furioso... (p.21).

The interesting aspect of the parallel though is the one not stated by the author. The chapter ends before we reach the opera's finale: the unhappy outcome of Lohengrin is still to come. This forebodes Paquito's tragic fate, accentuating the hopelessness of the sexual quest. The feeling is reinforced by another symbol - that of Icarus. Paquito is to go to the fancy-dress party dressed as Icarus: but the informed reader knows that Icarus fell to his death when his wings melted - thus the tragedy is hinted at again. Wings are usually symbols of hope (as in "Gaspard de la nuit" where the image of the swallow suggested the possibility of transcendence). Here, however, they represent the opposite: "las malhadadas alas sin estrenar colgaban del respaldo de la silla como la esperanza de algo que jamás se llegaría a cumplir" (p.49).

Despite such factors though, there is an overall pattern of growing sexual/spiritual desire running throughout the bulk of the novel. The first expository chapter, as well as introducing the characters, supplying background information and setting the plot in action, also introduces the search theme. It goes on to chart the courtship of Paquito and Blanca. Social convention restricts them from attaining total sexual satisfaction, but:

se consolaban de que las circunstancias no fueran propicias para pasar más allá diciéndose que era todo un estupendo simulacro para que cuando llegara el momento en que el amor total pudiera atravesarlos, tanto amago realzara lo que sin duda sería un asombroso premio (p.16).

However, the conclusion of this proairetic sequence is never reached.³ The text suggests that sexual fulfilment will arrive with marriage: but this is not the case. Thus the idea of the deceptive nature of the human construct is embedded in the very structure of the text itself.

The process is continued in the following chapters as the rising-falling/hope-frustration/order-chaos movement is initiated. Chapter 2 starts with the wedding,

another stage in the proairetic sequence describing the young couple's relationship. However, there is a twist here: weddings are usually associated with joy, but this chapter begins with the sentence, "Lo menos que se diga sobre la boda misma, mejor" (p. 31), continuing with an account of the frugality of the reception. The next stage in the sequence is marriage: but again the normal pattern is inverted for "el matrimonio, en su sentido más estricto, fue una cruel desilusión para Blanca" (p. 32). Paquito is unable to achieve orgasm and the reader expectations raised in the first chapter are shattered. Blanca attempts to stimulate him, but to no avail: this is dramatised by one exemplary passage in which the sudden change in the prose serves as a reflection of sexual (and, by implication, spiritual) frustration:

Blanca, enhiesto el tronco otra vez, los párpados húmedos de amor, hundía lenta, sabiamente su ligero cuerpo sobre el de Paquito en posición decúbito dorsal, insinuando, con un levísimo va y viene que percibían sólo las papilas más sensibles del marqués, el ritmo del fox-trot del gramófono. Paquito, para tocar por fin fondo y hacer total su delirio, se aferró de los glúteos de Blanca, abriendo desmesuradamente los ojos con la sorpresa de su maravillosa hazaña. Por desgracia su vista tropezó con la mirada permisivísima del conde disimulando su deleite detrás de los crisantemos, inclinando igual al perro de la RCA Víctor junto a la corneta del gramófono. Le bastó ver esa complacencia, sentir esa complicidad para que de pronto todo él se replegara, cayendo derrotado allí mismo cuando tenía ya lubricado su camino hacia el triunfo sin sentir siquiera la descarga inútil que de ordinario empapaba a Blanca (p. 38).

Paquito's death underlines the collapse of the upwards sexuality movement, a point further emphasised by the astonishing brevity and matter-of-fact tone of the previously quoted account of his demise at the end of Chapter 2. Nevertheless, a new positive movement is set up again immediately; this is to be inferred from the references to Blanca's beauty in the last lines of the chapter:

falleció dos días después del miércoles del carnaval..., dejando a toda su parentela des-

consolada, muy especialmente a su joven viuda
..., cuya belleza, todos lo observaron en las
gradas de los Jerónimos de donde por cierto
partió el cortejo fúnebre, se veía realzada
por el luto (p.41).

However, this movement (developed in the following chapter) is again brought to a halt, this time with the death of don Mamerto. The juxtaposition of death and sexuality in this way recalls the interference of Peta Ponce or the yellow bitch into Humberto Peñaloza's fantasies about Inés in El obsceno pájaro. Here, as there, the clash of opposites highlights the hopelessness of man's quest for meaning, as reflected symbolically in his sexual frustration. The difference is that in La marquesita de Loria the conflict is presented in a comic light. Comic exaggeration (as in "Átomo verde número cinco") is a means of demonstrating the absurdity of life. The humour merely conceals the author's tragic vision. Its appearance in Donoso's post-1970 work marks his attempt to come to terms with despair by laughing at life's manifestations of its own futility.

Blanca meanwhile presses on with her search for sexual fulfilment. The most significant figure in this respect is Archibaldo Arenas. Her affair with him is the novel's most striking portrayal of the sexuality/frustration duality. The couple do not actually make love until Chapter 6: yet Archibaldo has appeared in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, cutting across her previous affairs. The significance of the delay between the two poles of the proairetic sequence (sexual attraction and sexual intercourse) is that it draws the reader's attention to Archibaldo, suggesting that after all her searching Blanca has eventually found, in this man, her passport to fulfilment. Each of the three chapters previous to their erotic encounter systematically puts off that moment of pleasure. Chapter 3 stresses the attraction she feels towards him. This feeling is supported by the break in the prose between Blanca's thoughts and Tere's words, the implication being that Archibaldo has swept Blanca off her feet:

Blanca, al intentar ponerse a charlar como cualquier señora civilizada fue incapaz de decir ni una palabra, sobrecogida por su fantasía del asalto de esa barba sumida entre sus muslos, del vigor de esa lengua hurgando en vértice hasta el delirio, de esos dientes mordiéndole cruelmente el vello empapado del pubis, del calor de esos resoplidos para dominar el cachorro juguete que tensaba la cadena, sintiendo hervir todo su ser femenino concentrado en el canal jugoso que llegaba hasta el fondo mismo de su identidad.

-... el retrato que Archibaldo me está pintando es con trapo en la cabeza y con una cesta de besugos, como si fuera una pescadora gallega y mira que soy andaluza ... - eran retazos de la charla de Tere que la atención de Blanca apenas podía recoger porque con el corazón encogido de terror sentía que su tierno vértice se iba humedeciendo (p.57).

But the scene breaks off, heightening the impact of this new stage of increasing sexuality. On the one hand, by changing the thrust of the narrative at this point Donoso plays on the reader's growing sense of sexual excitement: he is forced to wait for further erotic delights and is thus engaged even more deeply into the story. Equally, the suspension of the action throws Archibaldo into higher relief, tricking the reader into believing he holds the answer to Blanca's needs. The process is continued in the next chapter where we are presented with two more significant links in the proairetic code: the first kiss and the arrangement of a time for the consummation of their mutual desire. But again Donoso suspends the action: it is only two chapters later that the meeting takes place. He fuels our expectations once more though in Chapter 5, with an account of Blanca's masturbatory fantasies concerning the painter.

However, Donoso's technique is again to undermine the reader's assumptions. Despite the thrilling spontaneity of their coition, Archibaldo does not afford Blanca the liberation she seeks. Indeed, she feels let down as soon as she arrives at the flat. After his extensive documentation of Blanca's excitement, the author begins the passage on her visit with the words:

Fue tan cordial la bienvenida de Archibaldo que Blanca no dejó de sentir cierta desilusión

ante la ausencia de un ataque sexual instantáneo ... La sencilla cortesía del pintor fue tal, en cambio, que hasta llevaba cierto dejo de timidez que Blanca no estaba muy segura si le gustaba o no (p.119).

It transpires that the presentation of Archibaldo is totally ironic: he is not a great painter but a humble portrait artist, a favourite who obtains commissions by ingratiating himself with the wealthy, middle-aged, female circles; despite "un aparente desorden" his life is determined by an "estructura interna" (p.121) - he is not a paragon of vitality but an extremely conventional being whose main aspirations in life are marriage and children. By the end of the chapter Blanca already mistrusts Archibaldo: by Chapter 7 she has rejected him completely.

It is her relationship with Archibaldo which forms the axis of the overall rising-falling sexuality/hope pattern. He represents the ultimate hope of the material world: but the novel builds up towards a climax that never materialises. The movement away from order to chaos is then initiated, with Blanca's obsession with Luna becoming the dominant feature of the latter part of the book. Archibaldo is a pivotal figure because he not only signifies the deception of the construct of love - he also provides Luna, the symbolic key to the novel's downward movement.

The arrival of Luna at Blanca's house introduces the thematisation of a new hermeneutic code: the enigma is - who sent Luna? Blanca presumes that Archibaldo is responsible: "Porque lo desesperaba estar separado de ella le había enviado a Luna: el perro no había huido, era su mensajero" (p.114). This corresponds to what Barthes would call "le leurre", the snare: Blanca (and perhaps the reader) are tricked by a false assumption. When she arrives at Archibaldo's flat another stage is introduced, "la réponse suspendue": "¿O sería vergüenza por haber dejado escapar el perro? Se propuso no preguntarle nada sobre él: que él se lo explicara todo como parte de su gran amor por ella" (p.119). However, the final stage of the sequence

does not emerge - what Barthes describes as "le dévoilement, le déchiffrement". When Blanca mentions the word "Luna", Archibaldo does not respond:

Pero Archibaldo no reaccionó como esperaba que lo hiciera, lamentándose que se había escapado, al oír la palabra luna. ¿Por qué lo callaba? ¿Qué secreto le escondía? Ella no se lo iba a preguntar. Si la amaba de verdad, entonces él, sin que ella se lo preguntara, tenía que explicarle la inexplicable ... ausencia de Luna (p.132).

She mentally voices her irritation at the absence of any explanation on two more occasions in the chapter (pp.135,137). The reader shares her confusion, for the answer to the enigma is suspended indefinitely: there is no conclusion to the hermeneutic sequence. The effect of this is to associate Luna with the mysterious, inexplicable forces of chaos, to delineate his independence of his master, and to suggest that he is the answer to Blanca's pursuit of fulfilment.

This final point is reinforced by the general symbolism surrounding Luna: it shows him to be the only valid alternative to Archibaldo and to the sexual/spiritual quest as a whole. Such is the implication of the textual juxtapositions of Chapter 5. Blanca's memories of the previous night's session of sexuality with the count are constantly interrupted by the barking of a dog; later revealed to be Luna. She turns her thoughts to Archibaldo, masturbating with satisfaction as she contemplates the future with him. However, the lengthy, luxurious crescendo of the prose, paralleling the growth of her sexual desire, is brought to an abrupt halt:

... Archibaldo la esperaba, amante, bello, divertido. Iba a llevarla más allá del simple placer con el fin de que éste fuera completo. Evocando la figura del pintor junto al agua gris-limón del crepúsculo reflejada en sus ojos, Blanca, casi sin moverse, sin tocarse, llegó como nunca antes justo al borde y estaba a punto de zumbullirse en el agua de esos ojos cuando los insoportables ladridos se alzaron como una llamarada justo al pie de su ventana, insistentes, dementes, exigentes. Rabiosa, Blanca saltó de su cama y abrió la ventana. Abajo, en la calle oscura, reconoció por entre las rejas una forma animal más oscura que la noche, que caracoleaba y gemía. Dos ojos color

gris-limón brillaban mirándola por entre los barrotes.

- Luna ... - exclamó muy bajo y se escondió tras el postigo (p.102).

The juxtaposition and the climactic build-up suggest that it is not Archibaldo but his dog who will provide fulfilment. This is also the effect of the contrasts within the novel's pattern of eye imagery. As Blanca observes Luna's eyes her urge to masturbate returns:

ella y Archibaldo eran como dos lunas que eran dos ojos, pero una sola luna, una sola mirada, un solo placer. Quiso incorporar la fantasía de Archibaldo a su juego solitario pero justo en el momento de proponérselo las dos lunas se extinguieron porque el perro las cubrió con sus párpados y ella se quedó dormida hasta la mañana siguiente (p.106).

When Blanca's fantasies become reality and she makes love with the artist, the couple become "un sólo animal ..., una bestia cariñosa pero frenética" (p.129), "el maravilloso animal bicéfalo y bisexuado del placer compartido" (p.131). But this recalls the eye imagery of the above quote, the implication of which was that the apparent unity of her relationship with Archibaldo is merely illusory. Moreover, the symbol of "un sólo animal" (by association with Donoso's other novels: Este domingo, El lugar sin límites and El obsceno pájaro) connotes chaos and destruction. The play on the contrast in eye imagery is also developed in relation to colour. Early on in the novel, Blanca "vio que los ojos del pintor no eran en absoluto negros como había creído, sino transparentes, grises o color limón..., exactamente del mismo color de los ojos del perro" (p.77). But when she visits Archibaldo, "los ojos de ella, tan cerca de los suyos, vieron que los ojos del pintor no eran gris-limón porque se los había enviado de regalo a ella con su perro. Vio, en cambio, sonriéndole, los ojos negros del primer día" (p.120). Yet the painter does not admit to having sent the dog: Luna thus emerges, not as "una extensión del espíritu de (Archibaldo)"⁴ - as Rivas would have it - , but as a separate entity to his master, the reverse of what his

owner represents. The suggestion is again that the goal of Blanca's quest is not the artist but his canine companion. Hence the marquess asks of Archibaldo: "¿Quería arrebatarme la fiebre de los pálidos ojos inalterables, con los que fascinaba y luego traicionaba al presentar unos simples, aunque bellos y vivaces ojos negros?... ¿Qué podía comprender él de ese perro terrible y maravilloso en cuyas pupilas ella podía hundirse como no podía hundirse en las pupilas negras del pintor ni en ningunas otras?" (p.166). Archibaldo's eyes soon come to have no meaning for her: "sintió tal aburrimiento al ver sus negros ojos implorantes a los que faltaba lo esencial" (p.168).

The text clearly sets forward, via a number of techniques, the idea that Luna offers an alternative to the sexuality of Archibaldo and others. The significance of this alternative is made evident through a series of symbolic interrelationships. The symbol of the dog relates back to that of the yellow bitch in El obsceno pájaro. The opening paragraph of Chapter 8 is an account of the legend of a dog who interrupts the sexual activities of young lovers stationed in their cars in the Retiro - a situation which echoes the yellow bitch motif. In El obsceno pájaro, the bitch represented the intervention of death and chaos in a world of apparent order (sexuality corresponding to the search for meaning and harmony). It is natural to assume therefore that in this novel Luna is also to be associated with the forces of chaos. Blanca's attraction to the dog is symbolic of her growing acceptance of the absurdity of life - a more honest and consequently more satisfying outlook.

Blanca's situation is dramatised by the system of order-versus-chaos symbolism associated with Luna. The dog is repeatedly paired with the recurring motif of the blacks, indians, and half-castes of the Caribbean. These women (who read tarot cards and cling to strange superstitions) are typically Donosian characters: outcasts, old women, servants and witches - the very embodiment of chaos.

When the dog refuses to leave Blanca alone after an early meeting with Archibaldo, the following exchange takes place:

- ¿Qué te pasa, Luna, corazón?
- Quiere irse contigo.
- ¡Pobre...!
- ¿Por qué lo compadeces?
- Los que se encariñan conmigo, sufren.
- Paquito. Don Mamerto. Pero riendo, el pintor la desafió:
- No éste.
- Podría ser la excepción.
- Podría...
- En todo caso, si no sufre uno, sufre el otro.
- Eran cosas que le habían dicho las negras... (p.81).

This passage is of great pivotal importance. By linking the dog and the negresses it suggests that Luna too is an image of chaos. It also implies that in this relationship it will not be Blanca who is the dominant figure but her partner, Luna: chaos will triumph. Yet the bond between the dog and the legends of the Caribbean indicate the preferability of this option. Blanca thinks back to her childhood: "la carne demasiado hermosa, como la suya, era cuestión de la hechicería, susurraban las oscuras viejas de su infancia en la noche cuando ella era una niña que no podía dormir porque no salía la luna" (p.85). This ties Blanca to the forces of witchcraft and chaos, intimating that she will suffer a dark, mysterious destiny; equally the "double entendre" of the suggestion that "la luna" brings her calm, infers that the dog Luna will lead her to an inner peace through her acceptance of chaos. Contemplating Luna's eyes after returning to the wreck of her room, she thinks:

las mestizas de su niñez en las noches de miedo le señalaban las dos lunas idénticas en el horizonte para calmarla. ¿Pero por qué había producido esta hecatombe doméstica, Luna, su Luna, su perro querido a quien, ahora se daba cuenta, había echado de menos durante todo el día, sobre todo a sus ojos suspendidos en el horizonte mismo de su imaginación (pp.141-2).

Clearly, she feels drawn towards the salvation these eyes represent. The fact that they are her only hope is made apparent by her earlier thoughts on "esas dos lunas

castas y gemelas que la observaban - una luna muy baja, allá en el cielo junto al horizonte; otra luna reflejada en el caluroso mar del nocturno caribeño, dos lunas que eran una sola - como estos dos ojos que conformaban una sola mirada mirándola sin comprender pero yendo más allá de toda comprensión" (p.106). The moon and its reflection in the sea appear as two moons but are really one. Similarly, Luna's eyes form a single entity. Unlike the false unity of her relationship with Archibaldo, they offer Blanca a kind of wholeness, totality of fulfilment: the idea that man can only attain completion if he accepts the terrifying reality of a senseless life in an anarchic universe.

Inherent in the symbolism discussed above is the binary order-versus-chaos distinction so typical of Donoso's work. This adds an extra dimension to the sexuality-Luna conflict, the order-chaos pivot around which the novel is based. The quest for order (via eroticism) is counteracted by the intervention of chaos in the form of Luna. As has already been stated, Luna is associated with the witches of the tropics. This backward region represents chaos, while the civilisation of Europe corresponds to the illusion of order. The difference is much more than a mere attempt by the author, as Pérez Blanco suggests, to "denunciar que el fracaso de la sociedad chilena...viene motivado por dar más importancia a lo que se sueña en torno a Europa (y en especial a una Europa que no tiene con ella vinculación de mestizaje) que a su propia esencia"⁵. Blanca claims to enjoy life in Europe because she is glad to escape "las oscuras hembras de la infancia y la luna en el Caribe" (p.132). But, in effect she rejects Europe (order) for the attractions of her native land (chaos). This is why, at the end of the novel, when she abandons the material world to join Luna, she feels - despite being in the Retiro - as if she is back "en la noche vegetada y salvaje como la del trópico" (p.191). It is significant in this respect that the author sets up a series of contrasts between

the two continents. In the opening chapter Casilda makes a number of comparisons between the barbarism of Latin Americans and the polished refinement of the Europeans. But Blanca's fiery Latin American temperament is always ready to sprout up from beneath the surface. She does not lose "la sencillez americana" which distinguishes her from the Spaniards (p.35); she realises that deep down "ella, al fin y al cabo, era una bravía hembra del continente nuevo, del que no se avergonzaba pese a que eligiera cubrirlo con un barniz de civilización, barniz que estaba dispuesta a romper en cuanto le conviniera" (p.74). Thus her propensity to give herself over to chaos is symbolically established.

Blanca's partial fear of the black servants and her native land finds an echo in another order-chaos opposition, that of rich and poor. She clearly mistrusts the poor; this is shown by her embarrassment at wetting the bed: "son cochinas, cosas que hacen los pobres..." (p.134). This ties up in turn with the masters-servants polarity: Blanca discourages the relationship of Hortensia and Mario - "guardaba siniestros recuerdos infantiles de la excesiva familiaridad con los criados" (p.117). The fact that she allows Mario to seduce her at the end suggests that she is now prepared to abandon herself to the forces of chaos. Another link in the chain of binarisms is provided by the adults-versus-children motif, for Blanca repeatedly associates the old servants with her childhood. It is notable that she still feels like a child, regarding the civilised "madrileños" as "grown-ups": she makes love with her husband while "allá, alrededor de la mesa de bridge, los grandes reían a veces entre los largos silencios de su estéril concentración" (p.36). This antithesis is reflected in the wider instinct-versus-convention thread running throughout the novel: the traditions of society nights out, proper dress, marriage, periods of mourning and so on (coupled with Blanca's instinct to rebel against them), are constant features of the narrative. Casilda, clinging to the artifice of her

construct, admits that "detesto a la naturaleza" (p. 54). This goes back to the Europe-Latin America conflict, for Casilda is ashamed of the social ineptitude - as she perceives it - of her coarse companions from across the Atlantic. Yet she cannot understand why Blanca is so beautiful: "No comprendo de dónde habrá sacado esa chica su piel tan clara, su belleza..." (p. 17). This links up with the superstitions of the women of the Caribbean mentioned earlier; Blanca's mysterious beauty is an indication of the dark, inexplicable fate that awaits her; despite the ugliness of her background, there is some kind of beauty in the chaos it represents - this beauty is to be found in the very acceptance of that chaos.

The inter-penetrating pattern of binary symbolism is an evocative portrayal of the path Blanca takes to freedom, for it simultaneously brings out her desire for order and her progression towards chaos. The duality of the hope-hopelessness movement is summed up in the power-weakness binarism, present here as in Donoso's previous work. The equation between sexuality and strength is made evident in her first two erotic encounters: both Paquito, and don Mamerto in particular, die following their relationships with her. Despite the apparent virility of Almanza and Archibaldo both men are soon shown to be fawning weakly after her favours (as indeed are Tere and Casilda). However, with Luna the positions change. Blanca feels that "las heridas y rasguños causados por sus patas y sus dientes le dolían mucho ahora, como si su carne lozana, que en otro tiempo tuvo pretensiones asesinas, comenzara a descomponerse y a morir" (p. 176). Her sexuality has no power over him: hence her reference to "ese cuerpo al que no podía satisfacer con su sexo capaz de saciar, hasta de matar, a cualquiera" (p. 143). Her attempt to train him is a complete failure, for she is now submissive to him. The dog pins her to the floor but does not rape her: "los que son verdaderamente dueños de una situación no tienen para qué ser crueles ni despóticos: bastaba tener esos ojos pálidos, quietos" (p. 143). Donoso

does not, as Rivas suggests, simply avoid a scene of bestiality so as not to break up the story's jocular tone: this is a climactic illustration that the key to understanding lies not with sexuality (the hope of spiritual fulfilment) but with Luna (the acknowledgement of the absurdity of life).

The movement towards this final recognition begins with the introduction of Luna. The downward spiral is presented through several stages, the first part running parallel with the falsely optimistic upwards sexuality movement. The development of the symbolism surrounding the dog commences in Chapter 4. It is here that Blanca is struck by the colour of the animal's eyes, similar to that of the moon. The chapter hints at some kind of mysterious affinity between the two:

Luna, como acudiendo a su auxilio porque la entendía, comenzó a caracolear como un loco de nuevo, poseído de una frenética compulsión que Blanca prefirió no descifrar para no tener que descifrarla en sí misma (p.78).

Furthermore, the dog howls as she leaves, for it does not want her to go.

The next chapter introduces a new stage, with Luna arriving at her house. Donoso now evolves the eye imagery even further, suggesting that the dog is demanding something of Blanca:

vio brillar en la oscuridad al pie de su lecho esos dos ojos pálidos, gris-limón líquidos. ¿Por qué la miraban así? ¿Qué querían? Algo querían esos ojos acuosos que no se apagaban como se habían apagado sus ladridos. ¿Cómo apagarlos? ¿O para qué apagarlos? (p.106).

This brings in another hermeneutic code, the enigma being: what is it that Luna wants of Blanca? As with the other similar sequences, no answer is given in the text itself: the reader is therefore left with a sense of unease, finding himself forced to re-assess his expectations of fiction and, by extension, of reality.

By the next chapter Blanca actually wants Luna, "su perro querido a quien...había echado de menos todo el día" (p.142). We read that in the "dormitorio nupcial re-

constituido después de la muerte de Paquito como para otra boda, (Luna) se quedó mirándola fija toda la noche, con la intención de incluirla para siempre en la órbita de sus pálidos satélites gemelos" (p.144). The new wedding referred to is her strange, metaphysical union with Luna. This passage comes at the end of the sixth chapter, preparing us for the final two stages of the downward movement in Chapters 7 and 8. In the seventh the action moves from a symbolic to a concrete level with Blanca cutting off her once beautiful hair and rejecting Archibaldo to his face, while the eighth describes her disappearance into the night.

Parallel with the process of her attraction to Luna is an account of the destruction the animal effects in her room. This begins in Chapter 5 when the dog urinates and defecates over her splendid furnishings. This is the start of the materialisation of Blanca's growing inner sense of chaos. The idea that this chaos offers a form of fulfilment is brought out by a clever double contrast in the next chapter. Blanca returns in a state of confusion after her visit to Archibaldo. Her bewilderment is expressed over several pages, but is set against the peace offered by Luna. Then there is another switch in the tone of the prose, which now goes on to highlight the havoc Luna has wrought in the room:

Y cerró la puerta en las narices de su doncella.

Las dos lunas la miraban desde la oscuridad, desde su nido de raso al pie de la cama. Eran dos nítidas redomas gris-oro, gris-crepúsculo, a esa hora que, en el Retiro, no se sabe si las personas son árboles secos, o figuraciones de la fantasía. Tenían algo de sacramentales esas dos redondelas fijas que le devolvieron la serenidad que hacía media hora creía haber perdido para siempre. Hubiera querido permanecer por el resto de sus días en esa oscuridad, observada por esas dos lunas distintas que constituían una sola mirada. Pero para poder avanzar debía encender.

Cuando lo hizo lanzó un grito. Todo estaba destrozado, la ropa de la cama hecha jirones, las butacas destripadas, las mesas con espejos y cristales derrumbadas, su bata de brocato hecha tirillas, sus chinelas mordisqueadas, chupadas, desfiguradas, era una inmundicia, un mundo co-

chambroso que nada tenía que ver con ella...
(p.140).

The effect of this double juxtaposition is to suggest, on the one hand, that there is an alternative to Archibaldo; and, on the other hand, that that alternative involves an admission of chaos.

With Chapter 6 having finally debunked the myth of the hope embodied in Archibaldo, the next two chapters accelerate the movement towards chaos. Chapter 7 significantly starts with a description of the devastation caused to Blanca's room and to her person. She is now openly referring to "ese caos" (p.148). She has lost her sense of time; due to her forgetting to wind her watch she finds herself disorientated in a temporal void. The loss of order is underlined by the contrast her present world forms with that of the rooms Luna has not touched: "En el limpio y fresco cuarto de vestir adyacente, era posible pensar en un mundo en que los indescifrables ojos del perro aún no existían" (p.150). When she later withdraws to the toilet, Luna "estaba al otro lado de la puerta, habitante de la destrucción y el caos y lo desconocido donde campeaba como rey" (p.164).

The process is continued as Chapter 7 develops. Blanca's erotic encounter with Almanza and Tere Castillo is the sort of adventure that would have excited her in the first part of the novel. But, with the downward spiral in full movement, the reader is presented with a contrary reaction. Sexuality is no longer seen as a way out: "Cuando entró en el dormitorio oscuro de Almanza creyó - esperó - por un momento, encontrar los ojos luminosos de Luna guiándola hacia lo anhelado" (p.154). She has no interest in anything her lovers can offer her: "lo que acababa de inferir sobre la conducta de Archibaldo... no la conmovía en lo más mínimo, ni para bien ni para mal, y que todo lo que estos personajes pudieran proporcionarle - fuera de divertirla - simplemente no existía" (p.159). This is in complete opposition to the upwards sexuality movement of the novel's earlier stages: she now rejects the hope implicit in Archibaldo and in sexual activity

as a whole.

The emphasis is now increasingly on boredom and destruction. Almanza covers her body with "caricias que llegaron a fatigar un poco a Blanca" (p.154). Blanca "permanecía totalmente helada..., sin interés... Era como si algo en ella se hubiera agotado para siempre, o estuviera en otra parte, tal vez en un frío astro remoto" (p. 155). With Tere, Blanca can only take in the physical sensations of eroticism: "no gozar, se dijo un poco aburrida" (p.156). The accent on boredom continues until she decides to leave, at which point there is another pivotal contrast within the prose:

...Cerró la puerta de calle compadeciéndoles, pero, sobre todo, mortalmente aburrida.

Al abrir, en cambio, la puerta de su dormitorio oscuro sintió que su corazón daba tal brinco de sobresalto en su pecho que casi le cortó la respiración; allá estaban los dos ojos como dos lunas nadando en ese infinito espacio oscuro y caliente y aromado (pp.162-3).

The suppression of the numerous possible proairetisms between the two stages of the sequence (leaving/arriving) lends greater immediacy and power to the juxtaposition. She has clearly left one side of life behind in favour of another. She becomes more and more bored with life, withdrawing even further as she hacks at her once pretty hair and dresses her scarred, bruised body with the simplest and drabest of garments. The last line of the chapter makes plain her position:

- ¡Qué pitorreo! - se dijo al abrir la puerta de su dormitorio que fue tan hermoso en un tiempo y que ahora era esa fétida ruina que la satisfacía (p.170).

This closing line of Chapter 7 reflects the entire structural system of the novel. It contrasts the beauty and elegance of Blanca's life as depicted in the first part of the novel with the accelerating pattern of chaos in the second, emphasising that this second movement contains her only chance of satisfaction. The quest for fulfilment through wealth and sexuality was based on the principle of hope. The displacement of this movement by

an evolution towards union with primeval chaos suggests the idea of an inverted quest: the paradox that chaos brings fulfilment. This is confirmed by yet another contrast in the prose, this time in the final chapter. Casilda offers Blanca both riches and eros:

Blanca cerró sus muslos porque nada de todo esto le importaba absolutamente nada. Quería ir a ver a Luna (p.184).

Blanca has now completely rejected the artificial structures men impose upon life; she therefore follows Luna into "la oscuridad total" (p.189). The climactic moment of chaos and destruction has arrived: the descending phase of the dualistic pattern has been completed.

The order-chaos (sexuality-Luna) structure of the text, backed up by an interrelating system of corresponding binary symbolism, situates La marquesita de Loria firmly within the tradition of Donoso's writing as a whole. Its concentration on eroticism does not make it a surprising departure from his usual vein, as initial reactions to the novel suggested. It lacks the implied optimism of "Gaspard de la nuit" and Casa de campo (despite the epilogue's grudging acknowledgement of the partial value of the human construct): in many ways it marks a return to the spirit of Donoso's earlier work. But the main difference is in the way the subject matter is treated. Although the new techniques do indicate a more relaxed approach, the humour, eroticism, directness of style and linear structure hide the basic sense of existential angst which underlies the novel on a symbolic plane. The anguish is brought out by the author's deliberate overturning of the literary conventions within which he appears to be writing: his main weapons being the neutralisation of the story's natural progression towards sexual fulfilment, and the repeated indefinite suspension of the final sequences of the hermeneutic codes. Thus Donoso continues the process of evolution in his writing initiated after El obsceno pájaro. The main achievement of La marquesita de Loria is that it goes beyond the conventions of the 'nouveau roman'. The author

is no longer attacking the realist tradition by means
of an alternative narrative structure; the post-boom
Donoso is subverting realism from within.

CHAPTER FIVE

EL JARDÍN DE AL LADO : NOVEL AND ANTI-NOVEL

At first sight El jardín de al lado seems Donoso's most 'realistic' work to date. Juan Andrés Piña has written that:

El jardín de al lado desvía la narración tradicional de Donoso, habitada por la desfiguración, el esperpento y lo paródico, para acercarse a un nivel más realista y simple. ... Hay un retorno a la escritura simple, directa, la narración lineal y la simbolización sin pretensiones!

Rosendo Gómez Palmeiro's observations are of a similar nature:

El jardín de al lado está construido de forma aparentemente clásica... con una intención conscientemente psicologista y con un lenguaje directo, confesional, escasamente espectacular; es una novela de personajes en el sentido más tradicional del término?

It is undoubtedly true that the tone of El jardín de al lado is predominantly that of traditional psychological realism. However, as was seen in relation to Donoso's other post-1970 works, realism can be adapted to perform an experimental function. Furthermore, there are a number of factors which contradict the apparently realistic mode: most notably the hallucinatory quality of the final pages of Chapter 5 and the unexpected change in narrator in the last chapter (which Gómez Palmeiro does admit he finds somewhat surprising). As with La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria the realist pattern is broken down and inverted: here the inversion is, if anything, more dramatic. But despite this similarity of technique, its effect in the two novels is rather different. In the previous work the overturning of the expected process of narrative development served to highlight the futility of faith in an ordered meaningful reality: an essentially negative outlook. In El jardín de al lado, on the other hand, there is a dualistic intention: the reader feels the effect of both realist and anti-realist techniques. This novel does not proclaim the absurdity

of life - full stop. It also suggests the possibility of achieving comfort and satisfaction through a resigned acceptance of the nature of life. The duality of outlook is reflected in a duality of technique: the subversive aspect of the text questions the validity of our assumptions about the nature of reality, while the traditional aspect (though itself performing an experimental, interrogative function) also puts across a mood of new-found calm and quietude.

As has been suggested in previous chapters, Donoso's return to traditional forms is itself a method of renovating what he sees as the spent forces of the new novel. In a comment to Martínez, mentioned previously in our discussion of Casa de campo, he expresses his desire to launch an attack on the modern novel whose complexity "pretende destruir la novela pero forja otra novela clásica"³. He explains the nature of his new literary rebellion in another interview:

Hay por lo menos en la generación nuestra un deseo de no hacer ya novelas herméticas, más bien al contrario: novelas bien construidas y transparentes. Se ha producido un agotamiento de los experimentalismos novelísticos⁴

Just as the non-conformism of the 'hippy' community described in El jardín de al lado has, through time, become a kind of conformism, so too have the techniques of the new novel - though introduced to attack literary conventionalism - become themselves conventional. By employing a traditional, psychological realist style in El jardín de al lado, Donoso has created, to quote Pérez Blanco, "una contranovela del 'boom'".⁵

Donoso's ideas are reflected in the text itself. A number of references here (and elsewhere) make clear his view that the 'boom' is over, that it has reached the stage of merely reproducing stereotypes. At one stage Julio suggests that the publishers like Nuria Monclús will only accept a book if it falls within the tried and tested, marketable 'new novel' formula:

¿Qué quería que hiciera con mi novela? ¿Un guiso de nouveau roman, de telquelismo de barrocos

adjetivos y una pedantería indigesta de citas de autores prestigiosísimos por antiguos y desconocidos, condimentado con la pimienta de un "compromiso social", o un "compromiso político", epidérmico, frívolo, pero que serviría de anzuelo para los compradores? (pp.29-30).

However, there are other reasons for this return to a more traditional form of writing. It is part of the quest for inner peace. El jardín de al lado is clearly a very personal novel; this is evident from the biographical content alone. The two epigraphs also relate to Donoso's personal situation in 1980, the importance of which is underlined by the dedication to Mauricio Wacquez: "...un instant encore, regardons ensemble les rives familières...". This desire to narrow the scope of the modern novel, to personalize it, has become one of Donoso's fundamental concerns:

La obra de arte es la anti-totalidad. La obra de arte es la existencia. La esencia de la obra de arte es lo particular. Implica particularidad. La obra de arte que pretende ser lo general, ser todas las cosas; que se plantea a sí misma como la historia de la humanidad, es una mierda.

In a recent article he argues that the time is ripe for "el momento del cambio", "un momento de ruptura para la novela latinoamericana contemporánea". He writes with great admiration about low-key North American novels such as John Updike's Rabbit is rich, John Irving's The world according to Garp and John Casey's An American romance, concluding that:

Yo, por mi parte, siento vientos de cambio que vienen del norte con estas nuevas novelas: dejar de lado mi super-ego pedagógico y explorador, para hundirme, como los jóvenes americanos, en el mundo de lo personal, de lo pasional que puede contener - o no - lo general.

Again Donoso's personal literary evolution is dramatised in the text. When Julio finishes his novel he feels relief: "siento que me he extirpado algo maligno que era necesario extirpar, y que el dolor de antes, el de la enfermedad, sólo ha tomado otra dimensión al sacármelo de adentro" (pp.211-2). This reflects Donoso's own position after the completion of El obsceno pájaro de

la noche: a feeling of deliverance having liberated his obsessions or "fantasmas", but tinged by a residual element of angst. The achievement of inner peace by turning to more traditional, personal literature is personified by Gloria's change of rôle. She says that, unlike herself, Julio's problem is that he is "un ser que sólo sabe vivir dentro de estructuras que le llegan desde afuera, incapaz de crear el mundo ingrávido que sólo responde a leyes propias, que es el de un artista" (p.250). As for herself: "asumir el 'tono menor' fue, tal vez, mi salvación" (p.263). If chaotic structures (as in El obscuro pájaro) are seen to exemplify the terror of life and the chaos of the universe, then the more gentle, more orthodox style of El jardín de al lado is seen to embody a calmer, more resigned attitude. Gloria's own words sum up the way in which the change in narrative technique heralds a new development in attitude; she says that writing:

no es solución: me sirve, en todo caso, para seguir adelante y no pensar continuamente en lo corrosiva que es la inutilidad. Eso ya es bastante (p.262).

The construct of art is, if not a passport to fulfilment, then at least a means of evading anguish.

But despite the novel's apparently traditionalist orientation, there are several references which actually appear to question the reliability of realist narrative. When Gloria locks herself in the bathroom, Julio raps the door:

- ¡Abre! - grité.
No. No es verdad. No grité. Tampoco golpeé la puerta. Sólo moví la manilla, murmurando:
- Gloria, por favor... (p.25).

After Julio's subsequent diatribe against his wife, he confesses:

Puedo, o puedo no haber dicho estas cosas - me inclino a creer más bien que no -, junto a la puerta del cuarto de baño... Quizás haya dicho algunas, pero no expuestas como aquí, sino fragmentadas, interjecciones apenas emblemáticas de mi zozobra (p.27).

After giving Carlos Minelbaum an account of his telephone conversation with his mother, Julio admits: "Y

aunque quizás no me lo dijo con estas palabras, lo intentó decir, a su manera..."(p.87).

There are a number of allusions to the limitations of any individual's point of view. Julio says he cannot know if his outlook is right or wrong - "lo que puede señalarme como un ser limitado"(p.116) - and refers to "mi deber de pacotilla de organizar certezas discutibles en los folios de mi novela"(p.116). Indeed he himself is often shown to have misinterpreted events. Shortly after their arrival in Madrid he mentally criticises Gloria for failing to walk the dog or complete her other household chores. However, when the concierge Beltrán informs him that she has in fact walked the dog Julio feels embarrassment: "me avergüenzo de haber pensado mal de ella: sí, cuando está contenta, como parece estarlo en Madrid, cumple con todos sus deberes domésticos sin chistar, y más aún, con gracia..."(p.93). The effect of such instances as this is to cast doubt upon the writer's ability to observe reality accurately.

This scepticism towards 'realism' is reflected, not in the creation of an alternative labyrinthine or chaotic structure, but in the deliberate subversion of what appears to be a traditional, 'realist' structure. The bulk of the novel employs a familiar, orthodox first-person narrator and develops in a normal linear pattern. However, everything changes in the last chapter. It transpires that the narrator is not who we thought it was but, in fact, his wife: thus everything in the first five chapters is called into question; the novel has undermined the realist principles on which it appeared to be based. This sudden structural turn-about comes as even more of a surprise than the disappearance of Blanca in La marquesita de Loria: indeed it is its very unexpectedness that is its most subversive quality. Once again, Donoso is seen to negate the omniscient claims of traditional realism - not via the methods normally associated with the new novel - but via a form of internal structural inversion.

Thus the novel's structural-thematic duality emerges

quite clearly. On the one hand, radical techniques invalidate the suppositions upon which realism is based (that is, the notion of ordered reality, a structured, meaningful existence). At the same time, realist techniques are themselves employed to demonstrate man's eventual need to adopt a construct and come to terms with the nature of life.

This duality can be seen in the novel's overall structural patterning. The key section of the opening chapter is the third. The incident at La Cala powerfully illustrates Julio's problems of age and frustration. Interestingly, the third section of every chapter (except the last) contains a similar dramatic episode which highlights the apparent hopelessness of Julio's situation: the tense, illegal telephone call home, made with the aid of Bijou in Chapter 2; the humiliating encounter with Marcelo Chiriboga in Chapter 3; the fiasco of their attempt to paint over the offensive "ROJOS CULIAOS" slogan in Chapter 4; and the rejection of Julio's book and his consequent stealing and selling of one of Pancho Salvatierra's paintings in Chapter 5. Furthermore, Chapters 4 and 5 have only four sections in each. In both of these chapters the fourth section also contains an unfortunate occurrence: Bijou's theft of a painting and Gloria's suicide attempt in Chapter 4; and the beggar episode in Tangiers in Chapter 5. Thus the novel's patterning repeatedly hammers home the theme of frustration, culminating climactically in the final two chapters of the sequence with a double helping of pessimism. Yet despite all of this, the final chapter overturns the pattern: the negative structure (and therefore the negative outlook) is seen to disintegrate. The fact that the last is the only chapter not to be fragmented into sections implies a unity of attitude that was missing in the previous ones: the confusion of Chapters 1 to 5 has given way to a dominant mood of measured philosophic resignation in the sixth.

This dualism is also visible in the contrasts of

patterning from chapter to chapter. The first is expository and has only three sections. Almost all of the major characters are introduced here, together with outlines of the principal features of their personalities. The relevant background information is provided concerning Julio and Gloria's lifestyle as Latin American exiles in Europe. The pessimistic mood is set and the theme of frustration - romantic, financial, literary and political - is launched. The chapter is also used to grasp the reader's interest: this is the effect of the second and third sections, for while the couple's quarrel in Section 2 exemplifies the general comments of Section 1, the forceful episode of when Julio strikes Bijou at La Gala in Section 3 (an event to which the last two sections have been building up) poignantly dramatises the problems of age and frustration discussed in the previous sections. Furthermore, Pancho's telephone call at the start of the text - in which he offers Julio and Gloria the chance of spending the summer at his flat in Madrid - sets the scene for the entire novel, providing the link with the central symbol of the "jardín de al lado".

The next two chapters have five sections each (the largest number in the book): this is to allow for expansion upon the expository material of the opening chapter. The action has now turned largely to Madrid, where their isolation in a city abandoned by its inhabitants for the summer serves as a symbolic parallel for their position as exiles: Chapter 2 concentrates on the first day, emphasising the importance of the garden symbolism, to which we shall return; after this emblematic introduction to Madrid, Chapter 3 - though centred around the trip to the Rastro for organizational convenience - gives us a more general description of events. However, if the first chapter got the novel off to a very gloomy start, this impression is contradicted by the sleepy, dreamy, almost idyllic opening of the second. Apart from the middle section, this chapter deals with Julio's growing

fascination with the beautiful garden next door; a sense of calm somewhat displaces the previously agitated tone. This mood is then shattered completely in the next chapter when the crushing embarrassment of his meeting with Marcelo Chiriboga and Nuria Monclús drives home the painful reality of Julio's literary failure. But there is another change in the final section of the chapter - which plays down the importance of the attractive Countess Pinell de Bray to the benefit of Gloria. The couple make love and the writer acknowledges the affection he feels for his wife. He still associates her, as he used to, with the beauty of Ingres's Odalisque. The dualism of his attitude reflects the importance of resigning oneself to life:

las proporciones todavía perfectas, las masas aún correctas, pero la línea satinada y modulada, que era pura poesía sugiriendo redondeces e invitando a penetrar al animal admirado, falta ahora; es menester mirarla desde nuestra historia compartida para resucitar la sensualidad. Deja el libro. Me besa. Apaga la luz. La Odalisca dormida; ahora imperfecta, pero aún la Odalisca (p.155).

But the note of calm on which Chapter 3 ends is overturned in the following chapter. Julio's mother dies; they quarrel over his refusal to sell the house in Santiago; they fail to wipe out the "ROJOS CULIAOS" slogan; Bijou steals a painting; and Gloria makes a half-hearted suicide attempt. The chapter ends with a single line paragraph:

¿Pueden ser tan totales las derrotas en una mañana como ésta? (p.199).

The "ROJOS CULIAOS" incident is particularly important. This slogan forms a striking contrast with the other examples of political graffiti mentioned in the text, for this is a Chilean expression which they take as a personal attack. Their sense of national solidarity is stirred: "para Gloria y para mí se hace urgente eliminar esta pintada, salvamos, salvar a los chilenos que pueden quedar manchados por esas letras" (p.187). In their drunken stupor, they botch their attempt to obliterate the slogan, spilling the white paint on to the pavement. They are

thereby confronted with "la fantasmagoría de la idiotez, que es una forma más de la traición y de la derrota" (p. 188). They are "los ineficaces soldados de una causa perdida", left to contemplate "el muro sucio con las huellas de nuestro fracaso" (p. 189). This climactically illustrates the futility of any efforts to achieve fulfilment through political activity or, by extension, through literature of political protest: it is therefore an important stage in the movement towards the couple's recognition of the need to attain inner peace through a deeper acceptance of the nature of life.

But the extreme pessimism of this chapter is replaced by another more tranquil phase in the next. The description of Julio's reaction to Gloria's gradual recovery is not sentimental - as was the account of Sylvia's response to the new Mauricio in "Gaspard de la nuit" - but it is touching. The new-found stability of their relationship enables Julio to finish his novel: it satisfies him and pleases Gloria. But once again this is the calm before the storm: Julio's book is rejected in the third section, while he abandons Gloria to try to exchange identities with the beggar in the fourth. But, as we have seen, the atmosphere changes again in the final chapter: Julio is living contentedly as a university teacher and Gloria is a successful novelist. The build-up of the final two sections of the penultimate chapter prepares us for Julio's disappearance - following the example of the crescendo towards a violent climax in Este domingo, El lugar sin límites and "Átomo verde número cinco". However, the pattern is inverted: the novel undermines its natural structural progression so that a new outlook may be seen to displace Donoso's former attitude. The duality of structure is therefore maintained until the end where the balance between negativity and positiveness reaches a synthesis in the form of a peaceful sense of resignation.

This binary pattern is reflected even more clearly in the novel's internal symbolism. The central symbol

around which it is based is the garden of the title. As we have seen, there is a very close relationship between the garden next door to Pancho Salvatierra's flat in Madrid and the garden of Julio's home in Santiago. Julio explains the nature of the association:

Uno sueña con el regreso a su país, abstracción materializada más que por lo fortuito del lugar de nacimiento, porque el sueño del regreso se refiere a cierta ventana que da a cierto jardín, a un tapiz de verdes entrelazados de historias privadas que iluminan relaciones de seres y lugares: éstos configuran el cosmos que hice nacer en el jardín al que ahora me asomo, hace ya más de medio siglo (p.66).

Julio projects his memories of the Santiago garden and his desire to return there on to the Madrid garden. The Spanish garden next door therefore emerges as a symbol of Chile, the exile's native land. Consequently, the two locations are repeatedly fused together, with time and place overlapping and interchanging freely, as above, to underline the extent of Julio's obsession. In Chapter 2, for example, he imagines he awakens in Madrid to the sound of Pato waking him for his bus fare. He watches the light filtering through the "celosía", but eventually realises that "aquí y ahora es persiana, no celosía, como allá y entonces" (p.65). He opens the curtains in the Madrid flat and sees his dead father in Santiago:

Abro las cortinas de mi dormitorio. Entre las hojas que la brisa conmueve, el sol, un segundo, brilla directo y me enceguece: bajo el palto del jardín de al lado mi padre ya inválido chasquea sus dedos para convencer al perro que venga a echarse a sus pies... (p.71).

When the Austrian baroness's daughter sings "Guten morgen, /Margarette", Julio hears his mother asking her niece Andrea why she is singing in German. He then sees his father sitting the child on his knee. Furthermore, the voices of his mother and father regularly punctuate the narrative even though one is dying in Santiago and the other is already dead. These interventions of the Chilean past into the Spanish present are related literally, as if actually happening: the effect of this narrative freedom is to enhance, for the reader, the immediacy of Julio's

internal emotions and to emphasise how deep-rooted his desires are.

Back in 1973, a long time before he wrote El jardín de al lado, Donoso spoke of the importance of the garden in Santiago: "Only when that garden no longer exists shall I feel finally and really on my own"⁸. This comment has strong existential overtones. The garden is much more than a simple symbol of exile. It is, as Gómez Palmeiro rightly suggests, "el jardín perdido de la infancia"⁹. The garden not only represents exile from Chile, but also man's inner exile - exile from a past that cannot be regained. Thus when the garden provokes memories of Julio's Santiago youth, it is in effect reminding him of his age, his proximity to death, and his hopeless nostalgia for an ideal lost paradise. Julio voices this connection when he recalls the early days of his marriage with Gloria: "el verde jardín de nuestra juventud, recién casados y éramos..., ay, éramos todo lo que ya no somos y ya no volveremos a ser" (p. 230). The point is also pressed when he wakes up one morning locked in an inexplicable embrace with his wife: "Ya no existe el jardín de al lado. Lo vendieron. Liquidado. Nada: sólo este abrazo, que era jardín, pero ahora es otra cosa" (p. 174). The garden is associated here with Julio's lost passion for Gloria: the embrace is now merely habit - the garden symbolising the lost paradise of youth and love.

This is the main importance of the garden: the fact that it is populated by young people reminds Julio of his failure to make anything of his life - he is old and has wasted his youth. Nevertheless, it also cruelly instills in him an impossible desire to be young again. He sees the garden as a fantasy world which liberates him from the sordid realities of his existence. Watching it allows him to escape "el mezquino desorden de la desesperanza" (p. 70). The sight of the beautiful Baroness Monika Pinell de Bray has a similar effect on him:

Quiero volver, estar allí cuando aparezca la muchacha de la melena pesada como una campana de oro, pasando de la sombra a la luz para

exhibirse como una deslumbrante contradicción de la muerte (p.119).

He seems to wish that the ageing Gloria would somehow re-incarnate herself in the form of his youthful neighbour: "¿Cómo invocar ese cuerpo con las caricias de los transitados caminos del placer en el cuerpo de mi mujer?" (p.152). The feeling returns later: "mi mano palpa esa cadera que no es la cadera de la vecina que se fue sino la amplia cadera de Gloria" (p.167).

Unfortunately though, this is a world to which he has no access: "un mundo en que el placer puro es aquello con que se cuenta. No tengo acceso a ese mundo..." (p.68). This hard fact is dramatised in a key passage towards the end of the second chapter. He watches six young people enjoying a night-time party in the garden next door. They do just what they feel like - even dancing naked. This is why Julio associates them with figures created by the Rumanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși: just as Brâncuși stripped his sculptures down to their elemental, essential qualities, so too these people totally lack the superfluous conventionalism of Julio's generation - they represent raw, uninhibited freedom. They inspire in Julio:

¡...la vieja nostalgia desgarradora de tiempos y cuerpos imposibles!; La parte Gatsby, Scott Fitzgerald, del mundo de acceso imposible, la terrible fiesta a la que no fui invitado y que sólo es posible soñarla desde afuera! (p.106).

He makes his position plain: "quiero ser ellos, no yo" (p.107). But this is an impossible dream. As he contemplates them dancing slowly in the darkened garden, he associates them with the figures of L'après-midi d'un faune. However, when he opens the window he hears the music of Glenn Miller and the mood is shattered:

Cierro el vidrio, y, humillado, clausuro la fragancia del agua que cae en las hojas, los sonidos entremezclados con que con sus gestos ellos ridiculizan mi nostalgia, mi realidad (p.107).

The garden, then, emphasises Julio's acute sense of existential dissatisfaction. But again, there is a duality in the presentation of this motif. It not only serves to

increase his awareness of the futility of life: it also shows him the path towards a more positive attitude. Julio spends several days watching the marchioness sunbathe: the beauty of this scene causes him to project idealistically on to her his own hopes of recapturing his lost youth. However, Julio's grandiose, romantic imaginings are proved wrong: she has merely been working on her sun-tan for social reasons, namely her invitation to a dinner in honour of the Spanish monarchs. Julio rather confusedly concludes: "el dorado de su piel, entonces, durante tan largos días trabajado por el sol, tuvo motivos heráldicos más que pasionales" (p.156). The apparent splendour of Monika Pinell de Bray is later further negated by the revelation that she has committed suicide. The perfection Julio saw in her is not real: he therefore recognises that there is no value in the dreamy option she represented (a point later reiterated by Gloria who, it transpires, feels the same way). This recognition helps them to forget the anguish implicit in the garden's constant reminder of lost youth. This process is already underway in the fifth chapter. The neighbours have been away for the summer and their return is actually a source of irritation:

Una mañana casi me cae el manuscrito de la mano con la sorpresa de ladridos agitadísimos en el jardín de al lado, donde irrumpen niños, sirvientes, gente joven, la muchacha rubia, su marido de gafas, personas que traen maletas y el prado vuelve a animarse con una vida ajena, a perder el carácter de espacio en blanco propicio a nuestros fantasmas. ¡Debemos irnos! ¡No soporto esta intrusión en mi territorio! (p.214).

The marchioness has now cut her hair: this change of identity corresponds to Julio's rejection of the illusory opportunities she once seemed to epitomize. He says:

Es otra persona. Han pasado demasiadas cosas. No necesito su amor para terminar mi novela: el espacio usurpado por su presencia y la de los suyos es mi pérdida mayor (p.215).

Of course, this is Gloria speaking not Julio. As she tells Nuria Monclús in the final chapter, she has merely been projecting her own obsessions concerning the garden on

to the character of her husband: this explains Julio's return to a defeatist attitude later on in the fifth chapter. Gloria is the one who is really seen to triumph over despair - and it is the garden that leads her to the realization of this possibility: as she states, quite simply, "le debo mucho a la pobre Monika Pinell de Bray" (p.259):

Another fundamental, underlying feature of the novel's symbolic structure is Julio's quest for identity. He is clearly dissatisfied with his own, as is shown by the following comparison he makes between himself and his wife:

ella puede darse el lujo de "ponerse la cara" que quiera, distinta cada día si se le antoja, con potingues y coloretos imitando los maquillajes de las modelos de las revistas como una tarde la vi hacerlo con Katy, ambas muertas de risa jugando como dos niñas ante el espejo. Yo, en cambio, cada día debo enfrentarme con mi cara permanente ... (p.117).

Julio's disenchantment with his identity is related to his age and frustration. This is reflected in the chain of other identities he wishes to assume: Bijou - the "guapo-feo" - the baroness's guests - the beggar. His relationship with Bijou in particular is of great significance in the novel's overall plan. The importance of Bijou's rôle is evident from the way Donoso chooses to introduce him. He appears for the first time in the La Cala episode in the third section of Chapter 1; but the episode is anticipated in Section 2. Julio says: "la noche de que estoy hablando Pancho no nos había despertado, porque el incidente del amigo de Pato nos hizo abandonar La Cala cerca de las once" (pp.23-4). Thus Donoso initiates an enigmatic hermeneutic sequence to attract the reader's interest - Who is this friend of Pato? What happened at La Cala? The build-up to Bijou's appearance continues in this section. After a long passage in which Julio details the problems of exile, he concludes: "fue todo esto...lo que determinó mi violencia con el amigo de Pato" (p.33). The suspense of the sequence is

maintained: we still do not know what happened nor who was involved.

Bijou is introduced in the next section. However, the first twelve pages of the section appear to be leading up to an encounter between Julio and the hypocritical artist Adriaola. But when Julio approaches the painter, the focus is immediately turned from Adriaola to the striking figure of Bijou (p. 50). A long description of him follows and he quickly becomes the central character of the section. His appearance - especially his eyes - has an attractive, fascinating quality. The drama surrounding his apparent disappearance and the violent reactions he provokes in both Adriaola and Julio increase our interest in him. Furthermore, there is considerable emphasis on the fact that neither Julio nor Gloria can remember his name, even though he is the son of good friends of theirs. This adds to the boy's mysterious, enigmatic aura. The note of suspense is held until the third section of Chapter 2, in which his name is finally revealed.

Bijou's introduction in this way strongly hints that he will form an important part of Julio's story. But what is the exact nature of their relationship? It is not just that Julio sees the boy as "un lector que desea y no logra conquistar", as Oscar Montero suggests.¹⁰ The answer is that Julio is jealous of Bijou's youth. The extent of the contrast he forms with this young, free, bisexual underlines the fact that he belongs to another, older generation: Bijou simply reminds him of his estrangement and alienation. Julio's confusion becomes even greater when the barman from the "Sandra" tells him that Bijou has paid for his drinks at the end of the third section of Chapter 2. This constitutes an inversion of the normal adult-child rôle: Julio is again reminded of his failure - old, isolated and living in reduced circumstances. The fact that Bijou is identified with Julio's son Pato gives the inversion an even greater impact, for it introduces a father-son/son-father dimension.

Julio therefore comes to envy Bijou. When he spots him at the Rastro he says:

quiero ser él, quiero vestir sus harapos y su suciedad de Rimbaud y sentirme "bien dentro de mi piel", como diría él traduciendo del francés, aquí en este mundo que para él es coherente, pero que para mí es caos, porque me doy cuenta de que para mí el único mundo coherente es el del fracaso, y este niño no ha fracasado... (p.128).

This is the same feeling he has for the "guapo-feo" from the garden next door:

siento el peligro de su atracción, y quisiera meterme dentro de él, ser él, ... sí, ser él para cambiar mis códigos y mis problemas, ... sí, borrar mis huellas y huir en busca de otro superego o, mejor, ninguno, sólo el placer (p.106).

What Julio's desire constitutes is - again - a lust for the lost paradise of youth. Youth represents an idyllic state of having faith in life: Julio's angst is rooted in the loss of a faith that cannot be regained.

This line of symbolism undergoes an interesting change in the penultimate chapter when Julio's obsessions turn towards a wretched Moroccan beggar. The filth and poverty of Tangiers is seen as an embodiment of the dark side of life, of chaos. Julio wants to give himself over to this, to "hundirme para siempre en esa callejuela tenebrosa, empujada, angosta, torcida, perdiéndome para siempre en la noche vertiginosa de los bazares para renacer al otro lado, con una moral inversa" (p.236), to "borrar mis huellas para convertirme en otro" (p.240). He sees in the beggar "la opción de la miseria y la desesperanza, la más seductora y terrible de todas" (p.240). He now envies the hopelessness of this beggar the same way he once envied the freedom of Bijou:

Envidia: quiero ser ese hombre, meterme dentro de su piel enfermiza y de su hambre para así no tener esperanza de nada (p.239).

Up until now Julio's wishes have been for positive change: now the situation is reversed - he now wants an identity that will bring total despair, thus relieving him, like Japonésita of El lugar sin límites, of any sense of need or hope, and thereby eliminating the anguish that

comes from the futility of maintaining hopes that can never be fulfilled. This is why the symbol of the garden is inverted here: he rejects its inherent temptation of hope. He says:

no puedo dejar de sufrir el tirón de lo repulsivo de estas calles que me sacude con el ansia de desdoblamiento: es idéntica aunque inversa, a aquella ansia que sentí frente a una remotísima ventana verde sobre la piscina de un palacete, donde muchachas y muchachos diseñados por Brancusi - especialmente una, su cabeza estilizada en la forma de una campana de oro - bailaron junto al agua, bajo el cirprés, aquella noche (p.236).

He also expresses his wish to "acudir al sitio donde me espera el mendigo para hundirme en sus ojos amarillos, como quise hundirme en otros ojos de oro, en otro abrazo disimulado en una chilaba más sofisticada que ésta porque era invención de Klimt" (p.246). He was once foolish enough to nurse an illusory hope: now he realises he must give himself over to despair.

This is his intention at the end of the chapter:

Encontraré al mendigo que de ahora en adelante seré yo porque le meteré un cuchillo por donde se le escapará el alma, de la cual me apoderaré cargándolo con la mía llena de lacras y ansias y esperanzas y humillaciones (p.246).

But this is not what he does. Instead he goes back to bed with Gloria. The inversion of the imagery is only apparent. It is therefore inaccurate, in my view, for Montero to assert that Julio does achieve a "cambio de piel", thereby committing a "suicidio simbólico"! This is evident from the symbolic presence of Bijou in this chapter. Julio feels attracted to Tangiers because "todo, incluso nosotros, pierde sus señas de identidad" (p.234). However, this is the same phrase he used earlier in the novel to describe Bijou's generation: as he watches the young, fun-seeking passers-by one evening in Sitges, he enjoys "la película que era esa calle atestada y calurosa donde se confundían todas las señas de identidad" (p.88). The repetition of the phrase in Tangiers suggests that Julio cannot rid himself of the sense of hope embodied in youth. It is significant in this respect that he sees Bijou as his

guide through the labyrinthine streets of Tangiers:

"Bijou, mi cómplice, me espera para guiarme: bajo su cogulla veo sus ojos azules que guiñan para que lo siga" (p.244). But Bijou represents lost youth, an age of optimism: how can he be Julio's guide on the path to despair? The implication is that deep down Julio really does not wish to assume the beggar's identity at all. Gloria later intuitively points to the same point:

Quizás esa imagen de Bijou, rubio, sin moral, duro, mucho más duro a su edad que Julio y yo a la nuestra, su ambigua figura de adolescente, señalando una infinitud de posibilidades a las que el ser está abierto, sería lo que tentó a Julio a salir en busca de esa quimera o algún peligroso sustituto que lo llevara a perderse en una, o varias, de las laberínticas posibilidades que hay en todo ser (p.260).

This double symbolic inversion is a re-assertion of the novel's rejection of the notion of total despair. Obviously, Julio cannot attain the sense of fulfilment represented by Bijou. But nor does he choose the nihilistic option offered by the beggar. The Bijou/"guapo-feo" aspect of the identity quest symbolism recalls the relative optimism of "Gaspard de la nuit". However, in "Gaspard de la nuit" the advantageous change of identity is achieved: here it is not. The desire to exchange identities with the beggar is also reminiscent of the ending of "Gaspard de la nuit": though here there would be no positive outcome. This aspect of Julio's identity quest is more akin to Blanca's desire for withdrawal in La marquesita de Loria. However, Blanca does disappear into the night: Julio does not. El jardín de al lado represents a fusion of the positive outlook of "Gaspard de la nuit" and the negative outlook of La marquesita de Loria: an acceptance of the absurdity of life coupled with a determination to nevertheless live that life as fruitfully as possible.

The final judgement on El jardín de al lado comes from one of its own characters, Nuria Monclús. Her comment on Gloria's book is also a fitting reflection upon Donoso's career up to his departure from Spain in 1981:

¡Qué irónico final feliz para una novela tan amarga! (p.264).

CONCLUSION

McMurray describes Donoso as an "eclectic"¹ - and certainly there is an element of eclecticism in his work, incorporating as it does a variety of levels of meaning and a number of different approaches to narrative method. However, Donoso's writings are not a mere pastiche of contradictory trends: there is, as we have seen, a consistent pattern of development which allows us to perceive an overall unity in the process of evolution. The growing sense of existential despair comes gradually under control, tapering off into an attitude of stoic resignation. By a parallel process, the early progression towards complexity is gradually replaced by a corresponding movement in the direction of simplicity. But of course, the simplicity is only relative: it is a new form of complexity, a means of subversion from within rather than from without. Thus Donoso's work up to 1981 culminates in a combination of traditionalism and anti-traditionalism, of disenchantment tempered by acceptance.

This pattern of evolution is in some ways a paradigm of the growth of the novel in Latin America. Donoso himself describes Coronación as a tale written "bajo la presión de estos cánones de sencillez, verosimilitud, crítica social, ironía, que la hacen caer dentro de un tipo de novela intimista, muy característicamente chilena"²; yet he feels that, in the same novel, "por primera vez me asomé por encima de las barreras de la sencillez y del realismo, como destino único de nuestra literatura"³. Thus, the beginnings of Donoso's literary career dramatise the moment of the break between the traditional or realist novel and the new novel of the "boom". His next two novels also exemplify the general drift towards ambiguity and experimentation that characterized the 1960s, while El obsceno pájaro de la noche serves as a dazzling illustration of the daring spirit of innovation embodied in the new novelists.

Interestingly, El obsceno pájaro was published at

the end of the 60s :at the time of the split within the Seix Barral publishing house which probably prevented Donoso from receiving the Premio Biblioteca Breve and which, in his view, is one of the factors which marks the end of the "boom". It is significant too that after 1970 there is a notable change in Donoso's style of narrative: distortion and complex structures are now abandoned in favour of fantasy, deliberate artificiality or a modified form of realism. It would be simplistic to suggest that the "boom" ended with the appearance of El obsceno pájaro (after all El recurso del método, Yo el supremo, El otoño del patriarca and Terra Nostra, among others, all appeared in the mid-70s). Nevertheless, a transition of sorts clearly was underway round about the turn of the decade of the 60s, a transition not confined to the work of Donoso. On the one hand, a new group of young writers was beginning to emerge (figures like Reynaldo Arenas, Alfredo Bryce Echenique, Salvador Elizondo, Manuel Puig, Gustavo Sáinz, Néstor Sánchez and Severo Sarduy); but at the same time certain changes were taking place in the work of many established writers such as Borges, Vargas Llosa and later Carpentier and Fuentes.

Let us examine the parallels a little more closely. In his Historia personal del "boom", Donoso asserts that "los cambios más significativos de la novela hispanoamericana de los últimos tiempos están ligados a un proceso de internacionalización llevado a cabo a varios niveles"⁴. However, in his comments since the early 70s he has revealed a contrary attitude which is essentially "anti-totalizador". In a recent article he calls for more importance to be attached to "la experiencia personal, no generalizadora, no totalizadora, no teorizante": the mark of a good novel is not given "por generalizaciones ni volteretas formales, sino por su precisión de detalles y observación de la realidad, y su pasión por lo personal de sus personajes"⁵. This transformation is reflected in his novels and also perhaps in his personal behaviour. It is noteworthy that having repeatedly claimed he would

not return to Chile, Donoso changed his mind in 1981. When asked about this in a recent interview he replied:

Well, I wouldn't give an awful lot of very intelligent excuses. The truth is that I was beginning to feel old, I am plain fifty-six and I have been away for so many years.⁶

This implies that some of the fire and the passion may have gone from Donoso. It does not mean - as Schwartz suggests of him and Cortázar⁷ - that he is living off the fat of past success; but it may be a pointer to the way the dust has settled on the "boom" following the explosion of literary activity in the 60s.

The same process can be seen in the modification of the author's metaphysical outlook. In Donoso's own words his early work is a "protest against the fact that we are here on earth and given consciousness and can do nothing about it..., a spiritual awareness that makes us protest against this terrible hoax of having been placed by an enemy in this ridiculous, absurd situation"⁸. Shaw has observed that a major feature of post-realist Latin American fiction is "la emergencia de la novela 'metafísica'"⁹. This transformation is exemplified by Donoso. But as we have seen, Donoso's pessimism has modified considerably: this may be an indication of one of the directions of "post-boom" literature.

A particularly striking development in this respect is the emergence of humour in the Latin American novel. Donoso himself has complained about what he describes - perhaps not altogether fairly - as "la seriedad didáctica de mi generación (que) es de una pesadez consumada"¹⁰. In a recent round table discussion he exhorts critics to notice "that a lot of what I write has a sort of very funny side to it"¹¹. This humour is mainly to be found in his work after El obscuro pájaro (for up till then his novels were on the whole very gloomy indeed). One has but to think of Anselmo's dilemma in "Chatanooga Choochoo", the visit of the evangelists in "Átomo verde número cinco", the comic exaggeration of Casa de campo, the seduction of don Mamerto in La marquesita de Loria and the

hilarious "ROJOS CULIAOS" episode of El jardín de al lado. While it is plain that such humour often serves to underline the grotesque or tragic aspects of life it nevertheless does point to a more restrained, resigned way of looking at existence. A similar development can be seen, for example, in the later work of Vargas Llosa. This author often voiced the opinion that literature was too serious to accommodate humour: but things changed radically in 1973 with the publication of his amusing Pantaleón y las visitadoras. Though Vargas Llosa's comedy primarily takes the form of social satire, the greater accessibility of his later work does remind us of the changes in Donoso's writing. Furthermore, a whole range of other writers were beginning to produce a kind of pure, escapist humour often free of any social or existential purpose: one thinks, for example, of Arenas, Cabrera Infante, del Paso and Sáinz. The advent of humour may well be indicative of one of the fundamental links between the "boom" and the "post-boom".

A similar evolution can be seen in narrative technique. In his book on the new novel Shaw quotes Ángel Ganivet: "cuando un escritor cambia de punto de vista ha de cambiar también de procedimiento"¹². This is of course true: the changes in attitude to reality are matched by changes in technique in Donoso as well as in the other writers of the "boom". At the end of his book Shaw lists the five principal features of technical innovation associated with the "boom": the abandonment of linear structure; the breakdown of chronological time; the rejection of realistic settings in favour of imaginary ones; the replacement of a traditional narrator; and a greater use of symbolism. In the case of Donoso, most of these categories - with the exception of the final one - are either disregarded or modified considerably in many of the later works. Similar adjustments can be noted - to differing degrees - in the work of some of his contemporaries: consider for example, the relative simplicity of Carpentier's La consagración de la primavera, Fuentes's

La cabeza de la hidra, García Márquez's Crónica de una muerte anunciada, the later works of Vargas Llosa, Puig and even Borges. Once more the indications are that a new phase of the Latin American novel is underway.

One concomitant of this possible transition is an increased awareness of the fictional process. Jorge Ruffinelli sees Macedonio Fernández as the great precursor of the new novel.¹³ However, with the possible and only partial exception of Rayuela, most of the characteristic novels of the "boom" do not systematically question the workings of fiction directly, from within. In this sense Donoso's Casa de campo - a "post-boom" novel - is nearer to Macedonio's Museo de la novela de la Eterna. This desire to lay bare the mechanisms of fictional technique is reflected in other "post-boom" narratives. Salvador Elizondo's Farabeuf does not describe events developing in time but gives us a "crónica de un instante". El hipogeo secreto meanwhile is actually a description of how a character called Elizondo writes a novel of the same title. It is significant too that Vargas Llosa quotes the notorious "escribo que escribo" passage from Elizondo's third novel El grafógrafo as the epigraph to La tía Julia y el escribidor: a novel very plainly concerned with the fictional process - a preoccupation made explicit in the introductions to his two recent plays La señorita de Tacna and Kathie y el hipopótamo. An extreme manifestation of this highly contemporary concern with the nature of expression can be found in the work of Severo Sarduy where, according to D.P. Gallagher, "the word aggressively takes over: action is dictated by phonetic association, and in general by the internal logic of language".¹⁴

However, the changes in Donoso's technique go further than this. Lipski comments on the evolution from El obsceno pájaro to Casa de campo:

In El obsceno pájaro the reader could not remain passive, awaiting explanations for the anomalies of the text; he had to constantly sort out the ambiguities and create a total meaning for himself

which precluded the existence or at least attainability of any meta-level from which all ambiguity and insufficient information would vanish...Casa de campo presents a diametrically opposed achievement: the text, through the possibility of explicitly observing a bifurcation of time and the parallel existence of two universes, places the reader in a position of meta-knowledge that in and of itself defines a work of fiction.¹⁵

Or, in Donoso's own words:

la novela contemporánea tiende a pedirle al lector que se incorpore en la narración. En Casa de campo, yo he hecho lo inverso: distanciar al lector y me he puesto yo en el proscenio explicando la novela.¹⁶

This recalls Barthes's distinction between the "scriptible" and the "lisible", or Cortázar's between the "lector-mácho" and the "lector-hembra". The implication is that with El obsceno pájaro the reader actively reconstructs his own text on reading, whereas with Casa de campo he simply passively accepts whatever information the author presents him with. But as we have seen, the latter novel is not as straightforward as it seems. Donoso himself has said that "Casa de campo... está planteada como novela que se entrega, como novela hembra, pero inmediatamente se ve que no es novela hembra".¹⁷ The point is that Donoso's post-1970 work continues to attack the assumptions of the realist novel - but in a different way from texts like Rayuela and his own El obsceno pájaro de la noche. Discussing Puig's La traición de Rita Hayworth Lois Parkinson Zamora suggests that the serial structure plays upon the reader's expectations in so far as the natural sequence of time is interrupted.¹⁸ But Donoso's technique in works like La marquesita de Loria and El jardín de al lado goes far beyond this: he undermines reader expectations much more fundamentally. He does not attempt to break down chronological time sequences: what he does is to contradict totally the apparently developing pattern of the stories. The essential technical feature of Donoso's later, post-1970 work is the rejection of structural fragmentation in favour of a deliberate manipulation of familiar, realist forms that can be subverted

from within. This may well indicate a way forward for the Latin American novel after the "boom".

NOTES

NOTES

Surnames and initials only will be given in the notes. Full names will be provided (where known) in the bibliography.

PART I

Chapter One

1. An earlier version of this chapter has been published as "Concerning the criticism of the work of José Donoso", Revista interamericana de bibliografía, 33,3 (1983), 355-65.
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58. C. Kostopulos, "Man's search for liberty and authenticity in the fictional microcosm of José Donoso - an existential perspective", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, op.cit., p.67.
59. Hassett, op.cit., p.29.
60. Ibid., p.30.
61. I. Goldemberg, "Coronación de José Donoso o los límites del aislamiento", Mundo nuevo, 36 (1969), 74-80.
62. Caviglia, op.cit., p.43.
63. L.B. Eyzaguirre, El héroe en la novela hispanoamericana del siglo XX. Santiago de Chile, 1973, p.277.
64. J. Marco, Nueva literatura en España y América. Barcelona, 1972, p.318.
65. R. Gutiérrez Mouat, José Donoso: impostura e impostación. La modelización lúdica y carnavalesca de una producción literaria. Gaithersburg, 1983, p.274.
66. C. Goić, "Coronación: la espectacularidad de lo grotesco", in Cornejo Polar, op.cit., 43-57.

67. G.I. Castillo-Feliú, "Reflexiones sobre el perspectivismo en Coronación de José Donoso", Hispania, 63, 4 (1980), 699-705.
68. Gutiérrez Mouat, op.cit., p. 54.
69. Achugar, op.cit., p. 73.
70. J.R. Boorman, La estructura del narrador en la novela hispanoamericana contemporánea. Madrid-Miami-New York-San Juan, 1976, 111-24.
71. M. del C. Cerezo, "La simetría en Este domingo", Explicación de textos literarios, 8 (1979-80), 201-8.
72. M. Solotorevsky, "Fluidez y estatismo en El obsceno pájaro de la noche", Texto crítico, 15 (1979), 193-208; - "Configuraciones espaciales en El obsceno pájaro de la noche de José Donoso", Bulletin hispanique, 82 (1980), 150-88; - "A transmutation device in certain texts of José Donoso", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, op.cit., 118-28.
73. Z. Gertel, "Metamorphosis as a metaphor of the world", Review, 9 (Fall 1973), 20-3; - "El obsceno pájaro de la noche: des-encarnación, transformación, inexistencia", Chasgui, 6, 1 (1976), 5-16.
74. P.A. Georgescu, "Ernesto Sábato y el estructuralismo", Nueva estafeta, 41 (1982), 47-58.
75. Cornejo Polar, op.cit., p. 109.
76. A. Valdés, "El 'imbunche'. Estudio de un motivo en El obsceno pájaro de la noche", in Cornejo Polar, op.cit., 124-60.
77. R. Bueno Chávez, "Este domingo: la autenticidad del relato novelesco", in Cornejo Polar, op.cit., 59-72.
78. F. Moreno Turner, "La inversión como norma. A propósito de El lugar sin límites", in Cornejo Polar, op.cit., 73-100.

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1. F.W.J. Hemmings, "Coronation", The new statesman (June 18, 1965), p. 971.
2. F. Alegría, La literatura chilena del siglo XX. Santiago, 1970, p. 94.
3. R. Conte, Lenguaje y violencia: introducción a la nueva novela hispanoamericana. Madrid, 1972, p. 274.
4. H. Poblete Varas, "Novelistas de hoy", Atenea, 389 (1960), pp. 176-7.
5. R.A. Latcham, "Coronación", Carnet crítico. Montevideo, 1962, pp. 192-3.
6. V.H. Díaz Arrieta ("Alone"), Historia personal de la literatura chilena. Santiago, 1962, 248-9.
7. A. Arroyo, Narrativa hispanoamericana actual. Barcelona, 1980, p. 295.
8. E. Anderson Imbert, Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana, Vol. II. México, 1964, p. 315.
9. C. Goić, La novela chilena: los mitos degradados. Santiago, 1968, p. 169.
10. Quinteros, op.cit., and Castillo-Feliú, "Reflexiones sobre el perspectivismo en Coronación", op.cit.

11. Vidal, op.cit., p.34.
12. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., pp.70-1.
13. Gutiérrez Mouat, op.cit., p.54.
14. Rodríguez Monegal, op.cit., p.77.
15. A. Cornejo Polar, "José Donoso y los problemas de la nueva narrativa hispanoamericana", Acta litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 17, 1-2 (1975), p.216.
16. Achugar, op.cit., p.73.
17. Ibid.
18. Anderson Imbert, op.cit., p.315.
19. Eyzaguirre, op.cit., p.270.
20. Guerra Cunningham, op.cit., p.421.
21. Y. Moretic and C. Orellana, El nuevo cuento realista chileno. Santiago, 1976, p.54.
22. R. Chacel, "José Donoso: Coronación", Sur, 258 (1959), 86-90.
23. A. Arias and N.L. Rezende, "Coronación: étude idéologique de ses éléments symboliques", in L. Bocaz, op.cit., p.242.
24. E. Godoy, "Diálogo con José Donoso", Signos, 5, 2 (1971), p.27.
25. Promis Ojeda, op.cit.
26. Quinteros, op.cit., p.86.
27. Godoy, op.cit., p.27.
28. J. Donoso, Coronación. Barcelona, 1981, p.183. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.
29. T.E. Lyon, "Orderly observation to symbolic imagination: the Latin American novel from 1920 to 1960", Hispania, 54, 3 (1971), p.446.
30. Promis Ojeda, op.cit., p.23.
31. Vidal, op.cit., p.38.
32. Ibid.
33. Promis Ojeda, op.cit., p.20.
34. Ibid., p.21.
35. Quinteros, op.cit., p.103.
36. Lagos offers a very strange interpretation of the symbolic value of Andrés' sticks. She thinks Andrés suffers from a "complejo de castración" and refers to the sticks as a "símbolo fálico que el protagonista colecciona y usa, uniéndose en una relación simbólica de realización sexual con los hombres que los usaron en su vida...". Lagos, op.cit., p.301.
37. Goić, La novela chilena, op.cit., p.176.
38. Ibid.
39. Promis Ojeda, op.cit., p.18.
40. Ibid., p.20.
41. Vidal, op.cit., p.38.
42. Ibid., p.48.
43. Ibid., pp.49-50.
44. Ibid., p.77.
45. Ibid.
46. Achugar, op.cit., p.46.
47. C. Goić, Historia de la novela hispanoamericana. Valparaíso, 1973, p.261.
48. Goldemberg, op.cit., p.80.
49. P. Vansittart, "Coronation", The spectator, 7147 (June 18, 1965), p.791.

50. Cornejo Polar, op.cit., p.9.
51. Ibid., p.11.
52. Castillo-Feliú, "José Donoso y su última novela", op.cit., p.958.
53. McMurray, "Interview with José Donoso", op.cit., p.391.
54. Ibid.
55. J. Higgins, "Cien años de soledad. Historia del hombre occidental", Cuadernos del Sur, 11 (1972), p.309.
56. Promis Ojeda, op.cit., pp.17-8.
57. Gutiérrez Mouat, op.cit., p.48.
58. M.C. Axtmann, "Les personnages féminins dans Coronación: leur référentialité sociale", in Bocaz, op.cit., p.236.
59. Gutiérrez Mouat sees the bridge/abyss motif in socio-psychological terms: "el abismo que recurre en las pesadillas de don Andrés se refiere a un no poder estar, o a un existir en un desplazamiento de roles (señor burgués/amante de una sirvienta) en ninguno de los cuales puede creer". Gutiérrez Mouat, op.cit., p.47.
60. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.64.
61. Ibid., p.159.
62. P.R. Hill, "José Donoso: old narrators, new narrators", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, op.cit., p.59.
63. Promis Ojeda, op.cit., p.18.
64. Ibid., p.19.
65. Quinteros, op.cit., p.93.
66. Axtmann, op.cit., p.235.
67. Guerra Cunningham, op.cit., pp.421-2.
68. Promis Ojeda, op.cit., pp.22-3. See also McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.69.
69. J. Oyarzun, "Puta and ladrona: twin epithets in the creation and definition of reality in José Donoso's Coronación", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, op.cit., p.52.
70. Moretic and Orellana, op.cit., p.54.
71. Goić, La novela chilena, op.cit., pp.167-8.
72. Ibid., p.175.
73. Quinteros, op.cit., p.107.
74. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.70.
75. Promis Ojeda, op.cit., p.23.
76. G. Hicks, "Death would not wait on feeling: Coronation", Saturday review, New York, 48 (March 13, 1965), p.28.
77. Lagos, op.cit., p.297.
78. Ibid., p.304.
79. Shaw, op.cit., p.143.
80. Hicks, op.cit., p.28.
81. Poblete Varas, op.cit., p.177.
82. Chacel, op.cit., p.90.
83. F. Alegría, Las fronteras del realismo. Santiago, 1962, p.128.
84. Guerra Cunningham, op.cit., p.422.
85. Shaw, op.cit., p.144.
86. Quinteros, op.cit., p.110.
87. Ibid., p.111.
88. Promis Ojeda, op.cit., p.21.

89. Lagos, *op.cit.*, p.296.
90. *Ibid.*, p.297.
91. Rodríguez Monegal, *op.cit.*, p.79.
92. McMurray, "Interview with José Donoso", *op.cit.*, p.392.
93. Goic, La novela chilena, *op.cit.*, p.165.
94. *Ibid.*, p.166.
95. *Ibid.*, p.167.
96. Castillo-Feliú, "Reflexiones sobre el perspectivismo en Coronación", *op.cit.*, p.704.
97. Quinteros, *op.cit.*, pp.67-8.
98. Goic, La novela chilena, *op.cit.*, p.165.
99. Quinteros, *op.cit.*, pp.67-8.
100. Castillo-Feliú, "Reflexiones sobre el perspectivismo en Coronación", *op.cit.*, p.703.
101. Achugar, *op.cit.*, p.77.
102. *Ibid.*, p.79.
103. Tatum, "Los medallones de piedra", *op.cit.*, p.47.
104. Goic, La novela chilena, *op.cit.*, p.176.
105. Vidal, *op.cit.*, p.43.
106. McMurray, José Donoso, *op.cit.*, p.68.
107. Achugar, *op.cit.*, p.78.
108. Vidal, *op.cit.*, p.44.
109. E. Rodríguez Monegal, "José Donoso: la novela como happening", Revista iberoamericana, 37 (1971), p.526.
110. Cornejo Polar, Bueno Chávez, Moreno Turner, *op.cit.*
111. Achugar, *op.cit.*, p.83.
112. *Ibid.*, p.90.
113. *Ibid.*, p.91.
114. *Ibid.*, p.101.
115. *Ibid.*, pp.86-7.
116. J. Donoso, Historia personal del "boom". Barcelona, 1972, p.37.

PART II

Chapter One

1. McMurray, "Interview with José Donoso", *op.cit.*, p.1.
2. J. Donoso, Este domingo. Barcelona, 1981, p.19. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.
3. Bueno Chávez, *op.cit.*, p.62.
4. *Ibid.*, p.70.
5. C.M. Tatum, "The child point of view in Donoso's fiction", Journal of Spanish studies: twentieth century, 1,3 (1973), p.190.
6. Achugar, *op.cit.*, p.221. This is curious, for in his chapter on Coronación, Achugar suggests that "la concreción de los sueños o de la imaginación es la única solución posible" (p.105). By contrast he asserts of Este domingo that: "lejos se está de una glorificación del hombre de imaginación y, en cambio, muy cerca de los infiernos en que sucumbirá Humberto Peñaloza en El obsceno pájaro de la noche" (pp.226-7).
7. Vidal, *op.cit.*, p.111.
8. Eyzaguirre, *op.cit.*, p.272.

9. Quinteros, op.cit., p.125.
10. Shaw, op.cit., p.145.
11. Vidal, op.cit., p.90.
12. Gutiérrez Mouat, op.cit., p.110.
13. Quinteros, op.cit., p.137.
14. Ibid., p.139.
15. Vidal, op.cit., p.103.
16. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.79.
17. Shaw, op.cit., p.145.
18. This image recurs in El lugar sin límites and El obscuro pájaro. It suggests the idea of an inversion of norms, a hell on earth, a total existential collapse.
19. This term appears to be a symbolic invention of Donoso's. Native Spanish and Chilean sources have been unable to identify it as a specific illness or disease.
20. Sarduy, op.cit., p.31.
21. J. Donoso, El lugar sin límites. Barcelona, 1981, p.24. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.
22. Nigro, op.cit., p.22.
23. Quinteros, op.cit., p.167. Like Rodríguez Monegal, Quinteros sees precedents for sexual inversion in many characters from Donoso's earlier work: homosexuality in Andrés of Coronación and Álvaro of Este domingo; incestuous desires in Maya of Este domingo and Alberto of "Fiesta en grande"; and general sexual aberration in the main character of "Santelices". Although there is ambiguity in Donoso's previous work, such suggestions as these take the argument too far, in my view. It seems that these ideas have emerged not from analyses of Donoso's other works in their own right, but from retrospective analyses coloured by a reading of El lugar sin límites.
24. Moreno Turner, op.cit., p.93.
25. Vidal, op.cit., pp.148-9.
26. Ibid., p.169.
27. Achugar, op.cit., p.180.
28. Ibid., p.187.
29. Ibid., p.189.
30. Nigro, op.cit., p.227.
31. Agüera, op.cit., p.70.
32. D.L. Shaw, "Notes on the presentation of sexuality in the modern Spanish American novel", Bulletin of Hispanic studies, 59, 3 (1982), p.278.
33. Shaw, Nueva narrativa, op.cit., p.148.
34. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.107.
35. His full name, Alejandro Cruz, has clear religious overtones.
36. L. Pearson, for example, associates them with the destructive image of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Gutiérrez Mouat, on the other hand, appears to miss the point: he suggests that the dogs "se transforman en Pancho y Octavio". L. Pearson, "Dogs white, black, yellow and gray: José Donoso's creative process as seen through his use of dogs", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, op.cit., pp.152-3. Gutiérrez Mouat, op.cit., p.131.

37. It is also significant that Donoso describes the sight of Octavio and Pancho murdering Manuela as if "como un animal fantástico de tres cabezas"(p.132): this clear allusion to Cerberus, the three-headed canine guardian of the gateway to Hell, reinforces the impact of the novel's inverted Christian imagery.
38. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.95.
39. Achugar, op.cit., p.177.
40. Vidal, op.cit., p.138.
41. Ibid., p.177.
42. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.97.
43. Ibid., p.102.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p.107.
46. McMurray, "Interview with José Donoso", op.cit., p.392.
47. Vidal, op.cit., p.171.
48. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.94.
49. Solotorevsky, "Configuraciones espaciales en El obsceno pájaro de la noche", op.cit., pp.150-1.
50. J. Donoso, El obsceno pájaro de la noche. Barcelona, 1979, p.155. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.
51. Scott, op.cit., p.135.
52. Pujals, op.cit., p.71.
53. F. Wyers Weber, "La dinámica de la alegoría: El obsceno pájaro de la noche de José Donoso", Hispanoamérica, 4, 11-2 (1975), p.27.
54. San Martín, op.cit., p.198.
55. Ibid., p.197.
56. Kostopulos, op.cit., p.68.

Chapter Two

1. Shaw, op.cit., pp.144-5.
2. J. Cruickshank, The novelist as philosopher. Studies in French fiction 1935-1960. London, 1962, p.218.
3. Bueno Chávez, op.cit., p.67.
4. Ibid., p.64.
5. Ibid., p.70.
6. Ibid., p.62.
7. Ibid., p.66.
8. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.84.
9. Cruickshank, op.cit., pp.212-3.
10. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.84.
11. Quinteros, op.cit., p.115.
12. Boorman, op.cit., p.113.
13. Vidal offers an interesting explanation of the relationship between Parts I and II and the italicized sections. He sees Part I (dealing with the negative Álvaro) as the thesis, Part II (dealing with the sometimes positive, sometimes negative Chepa) as the antithesis. The synthesis is the narrator of the italicized sections who learns from the example of his grand-parents and emerges as a renovator of his class. Unfortunately, Vi-

dal's analysis fails to take full enough account of Donoso's ambiguous presentation of his characters and is based on the assumption that the grand-son actually is a "renovador de su clase": as we have seen, the evidence of the text itself seems to dispute this message of hope. Vidal, *op.cit.*, pp. 82-3.

14. McMurray, José Donoso, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

15. Promis Ojeda, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

16. Achugar, *op.cit.*, p. 212.

17. R. Jakobson, "Poetry of grammar and grammar of poetry", Selected writings III. The Hague, 1981, p. 93.

18. Tatum, "The child point of view...", *op.cit.*, p. 188.

19. Rodríguez Monegal, "El mundo de José Donoso", *op.cit.*, pp. 82-3.

20. Cerezo, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

21. Cornejo Polar, "El obsceno pájaro de la noche: la reversibilidad de la metáfora", *op.cit.*

22. Bueno Chávez, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

24. P. E. Mason, "Indetermination in Alejo Carpentier's 'El derecho de asilo'", Kentucky romance quarterly, 28 (1981), p. 388.

25. Boorman, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

26. McMurray, José Donoso, *op.cit.* p. 82.

27. Cornejo Polar, José Donoso..., *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

29. Promis Ojeda, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

30. Morell, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

31. McMurray, José Donoso, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

32. Nigro, *op.cit.*, p. 229.

33. Gutiérrez Mouat, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

35. Gutiérrez Mouat claims, rather unconvincingly, that Manuela makes this suggestion in order that Pancho can possess him through Japonesita. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

37. Rodríguez Monegal, "La novela como happening", *op.cit.*, p. 527.

38. Moreno Turner, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

39. McMurray, José Donoso, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

40. Gutiérrez Mouat, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

Chapter Three

1. H. Biancotti and S. Sarduy, "José Donoso: le roman? Un instrument pour se connaître", La quinzaine littéraire, Paris (March 1-15, 1972), p. 8.

2. San Martín, *op.cit.*, pp. 202-3.

3. S. Magnarelli, "The Baroque, the Picaresque and El obsceno pájaro de la noche", Hispanic journal, 2, 2 (1981), p. 91.

4. Solotarevsky, "Configuraciones espaciales...", *op.cit.*, p. 159.

5. Valdés, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

6. San Martín, *op.cit.*, p. 201.

7. Gutiérrez Mouat, *op.cit.*, pp. 157-8.

8. Achugar, op.cit., p.266.
9. M.S. Stabb, "The erotic mask: notes on Donoso and the new novel", Symposium, 30,3 (1976), p.177.
10. Gutiérrez Mouat, op.cit., p.147.
11. Goić, Historia de la novela..., op.cit., p.262.
12. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.134.
13. Solotorevsky, "Configuraciones espaciales...", op.cit., p.161.
14. Vidal, op.cit., p.217.
15. Achugar, op.cit., p.295. Achugar sees this as the significance of the novel's epigraph although, in my view, a reading based on the idea of existential anguish would be more acceptable. There are a number of other suggestions as to its meaning. Magnarelli sees it as a metaphor for her view of the neo-baroque: "the wolf howls and the bird chatters, but no mention is made of their ability to communicate anything via this howling and chattering. All they produce are sounds, communicative gestures, frills, supplemental, purposeless ornamentation, which echoes and reflects itself - seeming to communicate as does baroque art, but finally merely parodying the possibility of communication" ("The Baroque, the Picaresque...", op.cit., p.90). Martínez D'Acosta meanwhile sees the epigraph in social/psychological terms: "el obsceno pájaro de la noche parece simbolizar aquellas fuerzas de maldad que tratan de subyugar y de anular al ser humano (las injustias sociales o también a las madres absorbentes que anulan la personalidad de sus hijos)" (op.cit., p.83). Pujals, however, sees the "pájaro" of the title as "el símbolo de la trascendencia", representing the Jungian idea of the union of the conscious and subconscious (op.cit., p.66). Solotorevsky's reading is the closest to my own: "el epígrafe plasma el predominio de lo oscuro, femenino, inconsciente" ("Configuraciones espaciales...", op.cit., p.170) - the triumph of chaos, the prevalence of metaphysical angst.
16. Bacarisse, op.cit., p.31.
17. Gertel, "Metamorphosis...", op.cit., p.21.
18. Cornejo Polar, "El obsceno pájaro...", op.cit., p.109.
19. Hasset, op.cit., p.29.
20. G.I. Castillo-Feliú, "El obsceno pájaro de la noche: un ejercicio en punto de vista", Revista de estudios hispánicos, 16,1 (1982), p.82.
21. Vidal, op.cit., p.225.
22. Although the novel opens with Brígida's funeral, the action then moves back in time. Brígida's death actually occurs in the fourth chapter.
23. D.W. Foster, "El obsceno pájaro de la noche", Hispania, 55,2 (1972), p.392.
24. Caviglia, op.cit., p.42.
25. Lipski, op.cit., p.39.
26. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.125.
27. R. Coover, "The obscene bird of night", New York Times book review (June 17, 1973), p.2.
28. Pujals, op.cit., p.24.
29. Quinteros, op.cit., p.190.
30. Rodríguez Monegal, "La novela como happening", op.cit., pp.527-8.

31. Gazarian Gautier, *op.cit.*, p.5.

PART III

Preface

1. Promis Ojeda, *op.cit.*, p.31.
2. H. Rivas, "Un divertimento de José Donoso. Una marquesita no encontrada", La semana de bellas artes, 152 (October 29, 1980), p.9.
3. Shaw, Nueva narrativa, *op.cit.*, p.152.
4. *Ibid.*
5. E. Bendezú, "Donoso: fabulación y realidad", in Cornejo Polar, José Donoso..., *op.cit.*, p.165.
6. J. Donoso, "Dos mundos americanos", El mercurio, Santiago (November 14, 1982), p.1.
7. R. Schwartz, Nomads, exiles and emigrés. The rebirth of Latin American narrative, 1960-80. Metuchen-London, 1980, p.106.

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1. Schwartz, *op.cit.*, p.106.
2. J. Donoso, Tres novelitas burguesas. Barcelona, 1980, p.24. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.
3. Calae de Agüera, *op.cit.*, p.478.
4. S. Magnarelli, "Tres novelitas burguesas: writing about writing", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, *op.cit.*, p.83.
5. McMurray, José Donoso, *op.cit.*, p.138.
6. Schwartz, *op.cit.*, p.107.
7. Magnarelli, "Tres novelitas...", *op.cit.*, p.85.
8. Calae de Agüera, *op.cit.*, p.482.
9. Cruickshank, *op.cit.*, p.21.
10. Magnarelli, "Tres novelitas...", *op.cit.*, p.86.
11. J. Donoso, Casa de campo. Barcelona, 1980, p.28. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.
12. P. Bacarisse, "Donoso and social commitment: Casa de campo", Bulletin of hispanic studies, 60, 4 (1983), p.329.
13. San Martín, *op.cit.*, p.197.
14. "La obra literaria del novelista José Donoso", *op.cit.*, p.106.
15. L.I. Madrigal, "Alegoría, historia, novela: a propósito de Casa de campo de José Donoso", Hispanamérica, 25-6 (1980), p.7.
16. Of course, the allegorical level does not only refer to the politics of Chile. As Bacarisse has pointed out, there are also parallels with the régime of Castro and Madero. The element of socio-political protest is quite far-reaching, a point echoed by Donoso in a recent interview on Casa de campo: "en cuanto a si refleja estas determinadas estructuras y cambios, también le diré que

- sí. Aunque lo que describa en mis novelas es aplicable a cualquier parte y actividad del mundo" (G.R. McMurray, "Entrevista con José Donoso", Hispania, 65, 4 (1982), p. 645). In the light of such comments, it seems that Pérez Blanco's attempt to set the novel firmly in a specific time and place is to over-stress his point (L. Pérez Blanco, "Casa de campo de José Donoso, valoración de la fábula en la narrativa actual hispanoamericana", Anales de literatura hispanoamericana, 7 (1978), pp. 267, 275).
17. A.J. MacAdam, "José Donoso: Casa de campo", Revista iberoamericana, 47, 116-7 (1981), p. 260.
18. J. Donoso, La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria. Barcelona, 1980. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.
19. Rivas, op.cit.
20. L. Pérez Blanco, "Acercamiento a una novela de denuncia social. La misteriosa desaparición de la marquesita de Loria de José Donoso", Revista de estudios hispánicos, 16, 3 (1982), p. 399.
21. Ibid., p. 400.
22. E. Sábato, El escritor y sus fantasmas. Buenos Aires, 1964, p. 88.
23. Pérez Blanco, "Acercamiento a una novela de denuncia ...", op.cit., p. 400.
24. Gutiérrez Mouat, op.cit., p. 252.
25. Pearson, op.cit., p. 157.
26. Historia personal del "boom", op.cit., p. 57.
27. J. Donoso, El jardín de al lado. Barcelona, 1981, p. 40. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.
28. "A round table discussion with José Donoso", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, op.cit., p. 35.
29. Nuria Monclús may be modelled partially on one of his agents, Carmen Balcells. In Historia personal del "boom", he writes of a party in Luis Goytisolo's house on New Year's Eve, 1970: "Mientras tanto, nuestro agente literario, Carmen Balcells, reclinada sobre los pulposos cojines de un diván, se relamía revolviendo los ingredientes de este sabroso guiso literario, alimentando con la ayuda de Fernando Tola, Jorge Herralde y Sergio Pitoll, a los hambrientos peces fantásticos que en sus peceras iluminadas decoraban los muros de la habitación: Carmen Balcells parecía tener en sus manos las cuerdas que nos hacían bailar a todos como a marionetas, y nos contemplaba, quizás con admiración, quizás con hambre, quizás con una mezcla de ambas cosas, como contemplaba a los peces danzando en sus peceras" (op.cit., p. 115).
30. L. Pérez Blanco, "El jardín de al lado o del exilio al regreso", Cuadernos americanos, 40, 6 (1981), p. 203.

Chapter Two

1. C.M. Tatum, "Enajenación, desintegración y rebelión en Tres novelitas burguesas", The American hispanist, 2, 16 (1977), p. 13.

2. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.139.
3. Bendejú, op.cit., p.168.
4. Tatum, "Enajenación, desintegración y rebelión...", op.cit., p.14.
5. Magnarelli, "Tres novelitas...", op.cit., p.85.
6. R. Gutiérrez Mouat, "El disfraz figurado: Coronación y 'Gaspard de la nuit'", Hispanamérica, 22 (1979), p.95.
7. Callan also suggests that each movement of the music corresponds to the mood of each of the three novelas ("Gaspard de la nuit"...", op.cit., p.129).
8. Morell has noted quite a number of parallels between Mauricio and Ravel (H.R. Morell, "El doble en 'Gaspard de la nuit': José Donoso à la manière de Ravel, en imitación de Bertrand", Revista de estudios hispánicos, 15, 2 (1981), p.219). She also sees an interesting "premonición del triunfo del escarabajo sobre la ondina (in her view Sylvia" (Ibid., p.214) in this passage: "El sol avanzó sobre el brazo del sofá de fieltro escarlata, rozó la chilaba blanca y fue trepando como un escarabajo sigiloso como las frases musicales de pronto fluidas, de pronto angulosas que silbaba Mauricio, hasta que su silbido fue completándose, y tras mil estratagemas musicales el escarabajo reluciente trepó hasta su cara y le hirió los ojos en el momento que Mauricio terminó" (p.204). This passage is also examined by Callan who puts forward a curious Jungian interpretation based on the Egyptian myth of Osiris ("Gaspard de la nuit"...", op.cit.).
9. C.M. Tatum, "Tres novelitas burguesas", Journal of Spanish studies: twentieth century, 2, 2 (1974), p.116.
10. Tatum, "Enajenación, desintegración y rebelión...", op.cit., p.12.
11. R. Barthes, Critical essays. Evanston, 1972, pp.256-7.

Chapter Three

1. J.M. Lipski, "Evolution through paradox: El obsceno pájaro de la noche and Casa de campo", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, op.cit., p.43.
2. Z.N. Martínez, "Casa de campo de José Donoso: afán de descentralización y nostalgia de centro", Hispanic review, 50, 4 (1982), p.442.
3. Ibid., p.446.
4. Z.N. Martínez, "José Donoso", Hispanamérica, 21 (1978), p.53.
5. "La obra literaria del novelista José Donoso", op.cit., p.107.
6. J.A. Piña, "La fuga de Donoso", Hoy (May 30-June 5, 1979), pp.36-7.
7. A. Jefferson, "Russian formalism", Modern literary theory: a comparative introduction, eds. A. Jefferson and D. Robey. London, 1983, p.32.
8. Pérez Blanco, "Casa de campo...", op.cit., p.286.
9. M.A. Salgado, "The voice of the authorial narrator in Casa de campo", The creative process in the works of José Donoso, op.cit., p.101.

10. Martínez, "Casa de campo...", op.cit., p.444.
11. Salgado, op.cit., pp.101-2.
12. Ibid., p.103.
13. Pérez Blanco, "Casa de campo...", op.cit., p.269.
14. Salgado, op.cit., p.106.
15. Pérez Blanco, "Casa de campo...", op.cit., p.272.
16. R.L. Baker, "Perfil del narrador desenmascarado en Casa de campo", La Chispa '81: selected proceedings, February 26-8, 1981, ed. Gilbert Paolini. New Orleans, 1981, p.37.
17. Gutiérrez Mouat, José Donoso..., op.cit., p.209.
18. Ibid., p.223.
19. T. Eagleton, Literary theory: an introduction. Oxford, 1983, p.16.
20. Salgado, op.cit., p.109.
21. See O. Collazos, Literatura en la revolución y revolución en la literatura. Mexico City, 1970, p.73.

Chapter 4

1. A version of this chapter is to be published in a forthcoming number of the Bulletin of hispanic studies.
2. R. Barthes, S/Z. Paris, 1970, p.162.
3. The term 'proairetic' is simply used for a series of actions which together form a sequence (e.g. meeting-courtship-marriage-consummation-etc.). 'Proairetic' sequences differ from 'hermeneutic' ones in that the latter code refers to the ways in which an enigma is introduced, held in suspense and eventually disclosed. The technique of this novel is to break down each type of sequence or to withhold its final link.
4. Rivas, op.cit.
5. Pérez Blanco, "Acercamiento a una novela de denuncia...", op.cit., p.403.

Chapter 5

1. J.A. Piña, "Experiencia de afuera", Hoy (July 15-21, 1981), p.55.
2. R. Gómez Palmeiro, "José Donoso, el retorno de la novela psicológica", Nueva estafeta, 43-4 (1982), p.75.
3. Martínez, "José Donoso", op.cit., p.53.
4. Quoted from an interview with J.E. Ayala Dip, in Quimera, 6, by Gómez Palmeiro, op.cit., p.76.
5. Pérez Blanco, "El jardín de al lado...", op.cit., p.216.
6. Martínez, "José Donoso", op.cit., p.60.
7. "Dos mundos americanos", op.cit.
8. J. Donoso, "Chronology", Review, 9 (Fall 1973), p.14.
9. Gómez Palmeiro, op.cit., p.76.
10. O. Montero, "El jardín de al lado: la escritura y el fracaso del éxito", Revista iberoamericana, 49, 123-4 (1983), p.461.
11. Ibid., p.462.

Conclusion

1. McMurray, José Donoso, op.cit., p.150.
2. Historia personal del "boom", p.37.
3. Ibid., p.38.
4. Ibid., p.18.
5. "Dos mundos americanos", op.cit.
6. Gazarian Gautier, op.cit., p.3.
7. Schwartz, op.cit., p.112.
8. McMurray, "Interview with José Donoso", op.cit., p.391.
9. Shaw, Nueva narrativa, op.cit., p.218.
10. "Dos mundos americanos", op.cit.
11. "A round table discussion with José Donoso", op.cit., p.14.
12. Shaw, Nueva narrativa, op.cit., p.212.
13. J. Rufinelli, "La explosión del realismo", El lugar de Rulfo. Mexico, 1980, 121-32.
14. D.P. Gallagher, Modern Latin American literature. Oxford, 1973, p.93.
15. Lipski, "Evolution through paradox...", op.cit., p.44.
16. McMurray, "Entrevista con José Donoso", op.cit., p.644.
17. "La obra literaria del novelista José Donoso", op.cit., p.111.
18. L. Parkinson Zamora, "Synchronic narrative structures in contemporary Spanish American fiction", Latin American fiction today, ed. R.S. Minc. Montclair State Coll., 1979, p.192.

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I. MAJOR WORKS OF DONOSO

(a) Short stories

Almost all of Donoso's short stories can be found in Cuentos. First edition - Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1971.

Three other stories (in English) are not contained in any anthology:

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"The poisoned pastries", MSS, 3 (May, 1951), 3-8. Also in Chasqui, 2, 1 (1972), 67-72.

"Footsteps in the night", Américas, 5.11, 2 (1959), 21-3.

For details of all other appearances of the stories in previous anthologies and journals see the bibliography in Achugar (Section III).

(b) Novels and novellas

The following are all recent editions published by Seix Barral. The original date of publication is given in brackets where it differs to that of the edition quoted.

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(c) Poetry

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(d) Criticism

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