DONOSO, A NARRATIVE CYCLE OF FICTION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the first four novels (Coronación, Este domingo, El lugar sin límites, El obsceno pájaro de la noche) of the Chilean author José Donoso, born in 1924.

The thesis proposes that these four novels form a coherent narrative cycle of fiction which is linked together by a common theme of destruction. The thesis demonstrates that the theme of destruction is developed in each successive novel with increasing emphasis on fantasy, on the grotesque and on the irrational. Parallel to this increasing emphasis on the unreal, this study outlines Donoso's increased experimentation with innovative literary techniques as the novels move towards a total rejection of traditional realism and its attributes of verisimilitude. In terms of narrative technique, this study points out key literary influences on Donoso's writing: Henry James and William Faulkner are considered to be the most significant.

This study proposes that the archetypal structure of the novels from Coronación to El obsceno pájaro de la noche is vital to the thematic development in each novel and from one novel to the next, in a cyclical context. The thesis uses the analysis of the archetypal structure to demonstrate how the theme of destruction is organized and orchestrated. This study also outlines the main biographical, existential and psychoanalytical elements which are integrated into the broader archetypal structure.
The archetypal analysis largely follows the methodological approach of Northrop Frye. This analysis outlines Donoso's restating and reshaping of recurrent archetypes which are the basis of the biblical myths that bourgeois society has cultivated and which Donoso presents in a demonic inversion.

This thesis concludes that the Bible, as myth, provides a synthesizing archetypal structure to Donoso's narrative cycle of fiction and proposes that the mythical patterns in the novel are mainly organized by apocalyptic imagery and demonic parody, an inversion of Christian beliefs.

The study of Donoso's first four novels as a mytho-poetic presentation of the process of destruction and of the eternal fall demonstrates the aesthetic unity, beauty and the richness of significance which make Donoso a great writer.
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This thesis

is dedicated to

Sarah, Rachel, David and little Gabriel
José Donoso is recognized today by critics and by the reading public in South America and Europe and, to a lesser extent in North America, as a well established, successful, interesting Latin American writer. Although most critics consider the "boom" of the Latin American novel to be over, novelists such as Donoso are still alive and well and publishing new novels.

Donoso's fourth novel, *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* (1970) is clearly the book which stimulated publicity and brought recognition and success to the author. The novel is associated with the "boom" and counted as one of the period's outstanding works. Cedomil Goic appraises *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* in the following terms: "... esta novela se eleva como una de las creaciones más notables de la imaginación en la literatura hispanoamericana contemporánea"1. Philip Ward describes the book as "... one of the most powerful novels to emerge from Latin America."2 Many other critics have described *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* in similar terms (Emir Rodrigues Monegal, Hugo Achugar, Hernán Vidal, Zunilda Gertel, Isis Quinteros, Donald Shaw, Ronald Shwartz)3.

Donoso has written his own ironic interpretation and chronology of the "boom": *Historia personal del boom* (1972), in which he imitates the trend set by critics in categorizing and classifying Latin American writers of the period (which he situates as 1965 to 1970). Donoso's "ranking order" is similar or
identical to that found in most anthologies, critical essays and articles: an elite of superstars, referred to as the "gratin" by Donoso and composed of Fuentes, García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Cortázar, dominates this period. This "superboom" leaves the rest of the field to be divided among the "protoboom", followed by the "boom junior". Donoso, along with writers such as Rulfo, Roa Bastos, Lezama Lima, Cabrera Infante, Onetti, Sábat, Puig and Viñas, appears consistently in the second-file division and in fact in his Historia personal del boom he places himself in this category. The younger writers compose the third division or "boom junior": Salvador Garmendía, Nestor Sánchez, Gustavo Saínz, Severo Sarduy, Jorge Edwards and many others. Borges continues to defy classification and occupies his own special niche. Naturally there are variations among the last two categories and some overlapping occurs but Donoso's own particular standing and reputation appear firmly established. As Donoso wrote in Historia personal del boom, the boom will disappear; indeed it has already been reduced to a critical literary artifact for convenient classification and what will remain are a few excellent novels.

It is the originality of Donoso's creation, projected beyond and surpassing trends and categories, which has won him universal recognition.

Donoso's first four novels: Coronación (1957), Este domingo (1966), El lugar sin límites (1967), El obsceno pájaro de la noche (1970), create his personal image of the world in a coherent narrative process culminating in El obsceno pájaro de la
This last novel ends a narrative cycle of fiction which contains increasing emphasis on fantasy, on the grotesque, on the irrational. The four novels are linked together by the repetition and development of constant themes and dominated by the main theme of destruction. Parallel to the increasing emphasis on the unreal, the author develops and experiments with technical innovations as he moves towards total rejection of traditional realism and its attributes of verisimilitude.

The reason _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ completes and ends the narrative process begun in _Coronación_ and presaged in several of Donoso's early short stories is that the dominant theme of destruction is taken to its ultimate and logical conclusion and the narrator - in his character and in his function - destroys himself. The narrative itself is the object of destruction.

It is logical that after _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_, Donoso's fiction shows a distinct change. What changes is Donoso's technique in expressing his vision of the world - not his original vision. _Tres novelitas burguesas_ (1973) represents a new direction in Donoso's literary career; the novel returns to a more traditional technique, characterized by the realistic attributes of a fairly conventional narrative. As Ronald Schwartz surmises, perhaps this is an "anti anti-novel", that will mark a new direction for Latin American novelists and narrative in the 80's. Donoso's latest novels, _Casa de campo_ (1978), _La misteriosa desaparición de la Marquesita de Loria_ (1980), continue the trend set by _Tres novelitas burguesas_ and appear to confirm Schwartz's hypothesis.
In this thesis, viewing Donoso's four novels as a complete narrative cycle, the individual works will be studied and analyzed as constituting parts of a global unit. We have briefly mentioned the thematic unity in Donoso's narrative cycle provided by the repetition and development of constant themes. In turn, these themes are linked to a particular Chilean setting, another unifying element in the four novels - a world of decaying mansions, home to a moribund oligarchy nostalgic for the splendors of the past - the stage for the relationships that evolve between masters and servants. The four novels all explore various aspects of the constant themes that emerge from the Chilean scenario of Donoso's own past.

The main and constant theme of destruction is repeatedly expressed in the disintegration of Donoso's fictional characters, in the fragmentation of their personalities and in the collapse of the external order of reality erected by society around these characters. The progressive mutations, the repeated fragmentations and the eventual disintegration of Donoso's characters in their futile search to free their inner selves from the confines of a repressively rigid social order is repeated in all four novels in a continuous process of destruction through metamorphosis that corresponds to Donoso's personal vision of the ambiguous nature of reality. Donoso has stated that: "Al describir un personaje lo desintegro. Un personaje es, por decirlo así, treinta personajes y uno solo. Veo la realidad como un juego de disfraces, máscaras, trapos. La deshago violentamente."5
In Donoso's first four novels, the sexuality that is repressed and hidden under the conventions established by bourgeois society emerges from the characters' unconscious. Primitive instincts act as catalysts unleashing violence, death and madness. Madness, for Donoso's alienated characters, appears as the most authentic form of reality, which frees the self from the masks and disguises inherent to hierarchical social structures. In the stratified world of rich and poor, masters and servants, the play of masks evolves with the characters' mutations as they search for their "true" selves among another class in a danse macabre that inevitably leads to violence.

Donoso's characters express his vision of the ambiguity of human reality. They are alienated, leadinginauthentic lives and while primitive instincts represent a possible salvation from the limits of a repressive culture and offer an answer to their existential isolation in a meaningless universe, these primitive instincts and responses are ultimately the cause of chaos and destruction of the characters. This process of primitive mechanisms straining the characters' ties to apparent reality and destroying their masks, thereby creating a new reality of passion and hate and desire and conflicts resulting in madness and death, is a persistent motive in Donoso's first four novels. This motive of the destructive mechanism in the human psyche is part of the main theme of destruction, an element which sustains (paradoxically) all of Donoso's first four novels.

As the study of thematic unity and thematic development, in conjunction with the parallel development of Donoso's narrative
techniques in the author's first four novels, which are viewed as a narrative cycle, is the focus of this thesis, the salient points of an appropriate critical approach should be outlined.

The inevitable fall, the eternal fall, the lost paradise, the loss and corruption of innocence, the violence of sexuality, are all the biblical myths cultivated by bourgeois society and are the structural basis of the main themes developed in Donoso's first four novels. Of course his novels are not merely narrative structures based on a well defined and closed system of symbols which fit into neat allegorical patterns. On the contrary, Donoso's use of mythical elements is consistent with his perception of the ambiguous nature of reality. He uses the infinite possibilities of myth channeled through the irrational mechanisms of his characters' interior reality expressed in the metaphors of their unconscious. The archetypal organization of the novels from Coronación to El obsceno pájaro de la noche is vital to the thematic development in each novel and from one novel to the next, in a cyclical context.

A framework of psychoanalytical elements is another related structuring factor in Donoso's obsessive world. He uses psychoanalysis to explore the unconscious layers of interior reality, the subterranean flow of images, of dreams, of repressed desires. As Donoso often stated, his novels are a means of chasing away his own ghosts and in this sense, the creative process is a method of personal catharsis and liberation as the writer exorcises his own past. From this point of view, the biographical element, as part of the genesis of the creative
process, assumes more importance in Donoso than in other writers. In each novel, we see how Donoso surpasses the level of autopsychoanalysis and reaches greater levels of significance and of aesthetic value in the moment his past and innerworld of personal obsessions, nightmares and memories become fiction and are transformed into imaginary reality. The author's interpretation of this reality is communicated to us as he creates his own original language.

This study will also focus on the thematic links which are the configurating elements of Donoso's personal vision of social and human reality. It is the author's general concept of human beings in the world which is the foundation of his work and which determines the strong narrative coherence in his four novels.

The analysis of the key factors in the creative process and in Donoso's narrative itself that we have outlined - biographical, archetypal, psychoanalytical, as well as relevant historical, social, philosophical and literary contextual background information - provide a critical path to understanding how each novel in its synthesis of these multiple components into an original creation is rich in significance as it presents a profound reality, however disturbing this reality may be.

Donoso is not an author who offers us a message or who has an answer to resolve the themes he deals with. He is not an ideologically oriented author. As Donoso said: "... I am not interested in the novels of ideas. I neither believe in their validity nor their truth. I don't believe in their permanence, either. I believe that the field of literature is something more
oneiric, much more subconscious". Each work presents new aspects of the themes that preoccupy Donoso and each novel is a stage in the author's interior dialogue. By analyzing the unities and repetitions in the texts we can give order to the text but we can't assign to them any one definite meaning. Emir Rodrigues Monegal expresses the elusiveness of grasping a defined sense of meaning from _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_: "My experience while reading the novel was precisely that when I believed I was in possession of a meaning, it got immediately entangled with another that was as legitimate (or as illegitimate) as the previous one, and which in turn carried me to a third which again raised the theme in all its ambiguity".

Monegal's emphasis on the internal ambiguity in _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ represents a change in direction from earlier critical commentaries on Donoso. Ever since the publication of _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ there has been a flourishing of critical works on Donoso. The appearance of _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ coincided with the fact that most of the major novels of the "boom" had already been published and achieved international recognition, generating a whole new wave of critical activity and rereading of Latin American literature in general. Although by 1961, (when _Coronación_ received the William Faulkner Foundation Award) major Latin American novels such as _Al filo del agua_ by Yañez, _Pedro Páramo_ by Rulfo, _Hijo de hombre_ by Roa Bastos, _Los ríos profundos_ by José María Arguedas, _El astillero_ by Juan Carlos Onetti had already been published, these works were virtually unknown in Chile and in most of South America (other
than in their countries of origin). Therefore, the process of literary innovation that marked the genesis of the boom period, was not given as much critical attention in the fifties and early sixties as later critics would devote to it. Donoso's early critics were mainly Chileans, viewing him in a Chilean context.

The critical bibliography available on Donoso logically falls into two basic general categories. There are some exceptions but these two categories represent the main trends: 1) The more recent commentaries of the seventies and eighties in which critics tend to propose readings of Donoso's early production taking into account the process of the development of the "new" Latin American narrative as well as the novelistic development within Donoso's own production; 2) Earlier critical works of the fifties and early to mid-sixties emphasizing what they perceived to be Donoso's preoccupation with Chilean social reality and viewing his narrative within the context of traditional Chilean social realism. These early critics tend to constantly point out Donoso's skill in accurate portrayal of the decadent bourgeoisie, the psychological and sociological verisimilitude of his characters and situations, his linguistic competence in reproducing particular speech habits of different social classes. Perhaps it was Donoso's early association with the generation of 1950 which encouraged critics to typecast Donoso as a socially oriented writer. His first published short story in Spanish, "China", was included in Antología del nuevo cuento chileno published by Enrique Lafourcade in 1954, who referred to the authors in this anthology as the "generación del
In 1959, Lafourcade reissued the same anthology with the new title *Cuentos de la generación del 50*.

This generational label was itself a subject of much critical debate and a whole spate of articles tried to render a definite account of this generation's characteristics.10

Donoso's inclusion in this generational category (largely publicized and promoted by Lafourcade himself) became a "fait accompli" for subsequent critics and Donoso is standardly referred to as "a member of the generation of 50". The "generación del 50" is important in that it provides a framework of existing literary trends in which to situate Donoso and it focused an unusual amount of critical attention on Donoso as part of a new group of young writers who were presented as an answer to the generation of 38. More importantly, this category provided Donoso with both a sense of his own literary consciousness and with a degree of stimulation. Donoso expresses this in his *Personal History of the Boom* in Spanish American Literature (Center for Inter-American Relations, N.Y. 1977):

"Nearly all the other Chilean writers of my generation - the so-called generation of 50 that it is said to have been invented by Enrique Lafourcade, who was strongly criticized for this invention, which gave me my first real literary stimulus and a consciousness of what I was able to do - were in the same position as I." (p. 23)

By 1968, Cedomil Goic referred to Donoso as "la figura más destacada y prestigiosa de la generación actual". By then, Donoso was not only considered the major Chilean novelist of his generation, he was also achieving recognition in the larger orbit of Latin American literature. The William Faulkner Foundation
Prize was awarded to *Coronación* in 1961. Subsequently (due to Carlos Fuentes' efforts) the novel's English version was published in New York and later in London in 1965. An Italian version followed in 1966 and in 1968, Seix Barral distributed the novel in Spain. Wider critical recognition of Donoso was marked by reviews and commentaries in the *New York Times Book Review*, *Times* (of London) *Literary Supplement*, *Saturday Review*, *Observer*, *Studies in Short Fiction*, *Books Abroad*, *Hispania*, *Spectator*, etc.11

Donoso's second and third novels *Este domingo* and *El lugar sin límites* both published in 1966 (English versions 1967 and 1972) allowed critics a wider perspective from which to view Donoso's narrative. Emir Rodriguez Monegal's article on Donoso published in 1967 in *Mundo Nuevo*2 signals the end of the "social" reading of Donoso's previous critics. The critic emphasized the persistence of constant themes in Donoso's narrative world and the importance of Freudian elements in the structure of the author's novels.

In 1968, Cedomil Goic published an analysis of *Coronación*.13 In this article, Goic pointed out the technically innovative aspects of *Coronación* which made it representative of the "new" novel as opposed to the earlier readings of the novel within the canon of traditional realism. Goic used the term "existencia inauténtica" to refer to Andrés Abalos in his study which also concentrates on the existentialist aspects of *Coronación*.

Severo Sarduy in 1968 published an article on *El lugar sin límites* in which he develops Rodriguez Monegal's statement
that "El travestí real o simbólico, es la clave secreta de este mundo infernal"15. He writes that: "El significado de la novela (El lugar sin límites) más que el travestismo, es decir, la apariencia de inversión sexual, es la inversión en sí: una cadena metonímica de "vuelcos", de desenlaces transpuestos, domina la progresión narrativa". He concludes: "Cejas pintadas y barba: esa máscara enmascarada que es una máscara: ésa es la "realidad" (sin límites, puesto que todo es contaminado por ella) que el héroe de Donoso enuncia" (p.73). Sarduy's article is interesting in the context of the evolution of critical approaches to Donoso. Donoso had moved to Spain in 1967 and was therefore more part of the European literary "scene" which included a large contingent of Latin American exiles. Interviews with him appeared in Spanish and Italian newspapers, articles on him were published in Le Monde and other major European newspapers.16 Perhaps this partly explains Donoso's increased "fashionableness" in the world of new literary criticism. Sarduy's article uses the concepts and theories of Lacan, Derrida, Barthes, and Jean-Louis Baudry and places Donoso in the orbit of what could be called the "Tel Quel" clique.

The publication of El obsceno pájaro de la noche by Seix Barral in 1970 stimulated the appearance of numerous articles and books on Donoso's most recent novel as well as his previous literary production beginning with his earliest short stories.

Hernán Vidal's José Donoso, surrealismo y rebelión de los instintos (Ediciones Aubí, Gerona, Spain, 1972) was the first book completely dedicated to studying Donoso's novels. Vidal uses
Jungian theories of archetype and myth to interpret the unconscious conflicts of the characters in a period where society is in transformation.

In 1973, *Tres novelitas burguesas* was published and critics had yet another perspective from which to view Donoso's work. To many critics it was clear that this last novel represented a change of direction for Donoso. In *Donoso, La destrucción de un mundo* (edited by Antonio Cornejo Polar, Fernando García Cambeiro Ed., Buenos Aires, 1975), the emphasis is on the coherence of Donoso's narrative world from *Coronación* to *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*, which is seen as marking the end of a cycle. Antonio Cornejo Polar analyses the importance and the development of the theme of destruction in Donoso, referring to Donoso as "el novelista de la destrucción."

Isis Quinteros' book: *José Donoso, una insurrección contra la realidad* (Hispanova de Ediciones, Madrid, 1978) is a very comprehensive analysis of Donoso's first four novels within the framework of a narrative cycle rooted in Donoso's own Chilean background. She points out Donoso's enormous debt to psychoanalysis and links the progressively complex structural aspects of Donoso's novels to his development of mythical and psychoanalytical elements.

society expressed through the ideological models of myths, games (as in *Este domingo*) and the imagination.

George McMurray's *José Donoso*, (Twayne Series, Boston 1979) is aimed at a more general reading public than the previous books mentioned and presents a fairly straightforward survey of all of Donoso's fiction up to and including *Tres novelitas burguesas*, with particular emphasis on Donoso's use of Freudian elements and Sartrean existentialist elements.

The books of criticism by Vidal, Achugar, Quinteros, the essays and articles by Antonio Cornejo Polar, Emir Rodriguez Monegal, and Donald Shaw (in *Nueva Narrativa Hispanoamericana*, Ediciones Catedra, Madrid, 1981) have all provided useful and relevant insights and information on Donoso's fiction. I found them particularly helpful in achieving a better understanding of thematic unity and development in conjunction with the parallel development of Donoso's narrative technique in *Coronacion*, *Este domingo*, *El lugar sin límites*, and *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* which all of these critics viewed as a narrative cycle.

Other recent studies on Donoso are representative of different trends in current critical methodology. A multidisciplinary approach was used to analyse *Coronacion* by a group of historians, sociologists and literary critics. Their study (in *Littérature Latino Americaine D'Aujourd'hui*, Colloque de Cerisy, Paris, Union Générale D'Editions, 1980) with a strong sociological and ideological emphasis is a good example of a sociological reading of literature as it focusses on the relationship between the text and society.

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Pamela Bacarisse in her essay El obsceno pájaro de la noche: Willed Process of Evasion (in Contemporary Latin American Fiction, Seven Essays Edited by Salvador Bacarisse, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1980), suggests that the novel is "symbolically autobiographical" and she accounts for the internal contradictions in the novel in terms of a series of defence mechanisms used by the narrator which basically consists of a systematic process of autodestruction of his identity in order not to lose it. She quotes R.D. Laing's description of typical cases of "ontological insecurity", of schizophrenic patients who fear "engulfment", "petrification and depersonalization" and Bacarisse concludes that "El Mudito's life story - or more accurately, what he tells us - is a series of symptoms of schizophrenic ontological insecurity" (p.27). Laing says that "to be understood correctly is to be engulfed, to be enclosed, swallowed up, drowned, eaten up, smothered, stifled in or by another person's supposed all embracing comprehension."17 Pamela Bacarisse claims that Donoso's great originality lies in the process of evasion, not self-revelation one might expect in a work that she suggests is of autobiographical nature. In El obsceno pájaro de la noche, P. Bacarisse says that "The narrator is telling his story so that he will not be understood." (p.29). Pamela Bacarisse's explanation of the novel follows the basic outline of a case study of schizophrenia and uses Laing's pseudopsychoanalytical approach to reduce the novel to one level of significance rather than exploring other levels of significance.
Salvador Bacarisse states that there is really no way in which Donoso "could be said to reflect current social issues in their societies, at least not in an obvious way."18

Yet, a marxist critic, Ariel Dorfman says precisely that Donoso does reflect current Latin American social issues.19 Briefly, Dorfman's thesis is that Latin America is the product of "una violencia prolongada, de un saqueo continuo, de la guerra civil y fratricida en toda su geografía" (p.11). At present, Latin American violence "creada por un sistema social que fuerza al 90% de sus habitantes a no saber siquiera si viverá más allá de mañana" (p.15) is inevitably reflected in Latin American literature. Dorfman says that "en un mundo engendrado por la violencia, en que cada uno amenaza y es amenazado, parece imposible que los personajes la eviten. . .El personaje latinoamericano está condenado a la violencia. . ." (p.37). In Donoso's novels, the "autodestrucción de los personajes" is the result of the characters untenable position "en un mundo donde todo es imposiblemente difícil y enredado, todo es mediocre y se autolimita, cada hombre se siente culpable sin saber por qué y la violencia va atando y desatando a los hombres en una macabra danza de la destrucción. No saben que están bailando: buscan una salida sexual, la agresión pequeña, absurda, y cuando el personaje ya no soporta herir a los demás, su energía se dirige contra sí mismo. . ." (p.26). Dorfman's thesis offers an interesting explanation of the dominance of the theme of destruction repeatedly manifested in the disintegration of Donoso's fictional characters.
Zunilda Gertel explains Donoso's use of myth in algebraic terms: "Myths are expressed in algebraic form and are found at the boundaries of a logical supernature where the balance of the world undergoes a never ending mutation. Every transformation is ruled, however, by a recurring and ordered process: 1) opposition (vertical axis); 2) mediation (transit and passage, horizontal axis) and 3) transformation (new paradigmatic structure, vertical axis). Gertel claims that "the intermediary resolves the ambiguity" (p.23), but it remains ambiguous to me. Another Gertel formula states that: "The continual metamorphosis and dissolution of these figures implies inversion as a basic transformational category; the reverse is in turn the obverse of a new transformation" (p.22) (I am not sure what particular critical school this methodology belongs to).

Although some authors are misleading or unhelpful when discussing their works, Donoso is most enlightening and amusing. His *Chronology* and *Personal History of the Boom* as well as numerous interviews provide us with a wealth of biographical background and other useful information about the context in which his novels were written.

Different critical approaches to Donoso's novels can and should be used quite profitably to complement each other, although I shall refrain from algebraic equations. The novels themselves suggest several appropriate approaches which will be used in this study.

I have already mentioned the importance of archetypal organization and psychoanalytical elements in the thematic
development of Donoso's first four novels which are viewed as a narrative cycle. The importance of biographical elements has also been already mentioned as particularly relevant in an analysis of the novels under discussion.

These novels are cultural products appearing at specific moments in history and reflecting some factors of the socio-ideological process. The relationship between the text and society, the philosophical and political currents, the historical context are all elements enabling us to reach a clearer understanding of Donoso's vision of the world as expressed in a particular society and historical period.

Donoso's novels were written within a framework of past and existing literacy traditions and forces and in the analysis of each novel this framework will be discussed. The major influences can be briefly outlined. In the fifties and early sixties it seems clear that Donoso, like most of his generation, was influenced by the existentialism prevalent in the Chilean intellectual milieu. Donoso mentions in his Chronology that his father in the early twenties had already read Freud. Freudian influence, like existentialism, was also prevalent in Donoso's literary milieu. The influence of anglosaxon literature goes back to Donoso's youth (as in the case of Fuentes, Cortázar and Borges). Donoso learned English in childhood, wrote his first short stories in English, studied at Princeton, taught English and English literature in Chile and taught creative writing at the writer's workshop in Iowa. Donoso has often mentioned his admiration for Henry James and the links he recognizes with him.
Both Emir Rodriguez Monegal and Isis Quinteros refer to Donoso's use of specific symbols similarly used by Henry James and his creation of similar fictional characters (this will be discussed in the context of the individual novels). Donoso, in an interview with Emir Rodriguez Monegal, quotes a comment Eliot made about James: "He had a mind so fine that never a shadow of an idea violated it". Donoso says that he would like this applied to himself some day. Aside from specific similarity of symbols and characters in Donoso and James, a deeper similarity lies in their aversion to the novels of ideas and messages. To quote Donoso once again: "If I want to express practical ideas I am not going to express them in a novel. If I write a novel, it won't be to express an idea I saw in an essay. As Gertrude Stein once said: remarks are not literature" (p.39). The influences I have mentioned are useful in situating Donoso in a more exact context and in understanding and assessing his writing.

Finally, Donoso's novels are verbal structures: the writer communicates his personal vision and produces an aesthetic object in the moment he creates his own language. The analysis of how the writer manipulates and structures words, dialogue, symbols, themes, images leads to the heart of Donoso's artistic creation. The study of narrative technique and structure in the novels is vital and fundamental in determining the aesthetic value and significance of Donoso's fiction.
Chapter one notes


3. These critics' views will be discussed at greater length and exact bibliographical references provided.


6. Interview with José Donoso, by Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Review 73, Fall, Center for Inter-American Relations, N.Y. p. 39.


8. As might be expected, examples of early criticism are to be found primarily in reviews published in Chilean newspapers. Reviews by "Alone", pseudonym of Hernán Días Arrietas: "Dos cuentos", El Mercurio, Santiago, February 13, 1957; "Verano y otros cuentos", El Mercurio, Santiago, October 16, 1955. Other reviews of his short stories were published in El Diario Ilustrado, La Nación, Las Últimas Noticias, Atenea—all Chilean newspapers or magazines. Early Reviews of Coronación were published in Atenea (No. 378, October—November 1957), Ercilla (January 15, 1958), El Mercurio (January 19, 1958), La Gaceta
(March 9, 1958), El Siglo (March 9, 1958), Las Ultimas Noticias (March 15, 1958). The same publications also carried reviews in Este Domingo and Donoso's subsequent novels, but by the mid-sixties, Chilean newspapers, magazines and critics had been joined by a wide spectrum of European, North American and other Latin American critics and publications devoting articles to Donoso. (Mario Benedetti's review of Coronación in Marcha of Montevideo, March 1958 and Rosa Chacel's review in Sur, May - June 1959 are rare examples of early critical commentaries on Donoso outside of Chile). As late as 1970, Fernando Alegria en La literatura chilena del siglo XX, Santiago de Chile, Zigzag, still talked about the "gran fuerza realista con que se describía el ocaso de una clase" as the essential literary element in Coronación.

9. In this anthology published by Zigzag, Santiago de Chile, Lafourcade included the following authors: Margarita Aguirre, Fernando Balmaceda, Guillermo Blanco, Armando Cassigoli, José Donoso, Alfonso Echeverría, Jorge Edwards, Felix Emerich, Mario Espinosa, Pablo García, María Elena Gertner, Claudio Giaconi, Cesar Ricardo Guerra, Yolanda Gutierrez, Eugenio Guzman, Enrique Molleto, Gloria Montaldo, Herbert Muller, Alberto Rubio, María Eugenia Sanbueza. In a second anthology dedicated to the newly baptized "generación del 50", Enrique Lafourcade, Cuentos de la generación del 50, Santiago de Chile, Editorial del Nuevo Extremo, 1959, the following authors were included: Margarita Aguirre, Guillermo Blanco, Armando Cassigoli, José Donoso, Jorge Edwards, Mario Espinosa, Pablo García, María Elena Gertner, Luis
A. Heiremans, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Enrique Molleto, Herbert Muller, Waldo Vila, José Zanartu.

10. This debate is summarized by Lafourcade in "La nueva literatura chilena", Cuadernos Americanos, No. 19, 1959, an article in which one of the recurring points was the importance of existentialism in relation to the generation of 1950.


N.Y. Times Book Review, November 26, 1967, Section VII, p. 66

Times - London - Literary Supplement, July 1, 1965, 563
Saturday Review, N.Y., XLVII, March 13, 1965, p. 27
Observer, June 20, 1965, p. 791
Studies in Short Fiction, Winter 1971, pp. 55-58
Books Abroad, V. XVII, No. , Winter 1968
Hispania, LIV, No. 4, December 1979, pp. 957-959
Spectator, No. 7147, June 18, 1965

A sampling of other well-known publications to comment on Donoso:

La Quinzaine Littéraire, Paris No. 136, March 1-15, 1972

Paese Sera, Rome, January 1, 1973

Revista Iberoamericana, No. 76-77, July-December 1971, pp. 517-536

Le Monde (March 17, 1969)

Punch, CC XLVIII, June 23, 1965

Nuevo, No. 12, Paris, July 1967, pp. 77-85

(Although Rodriguez Monegal usually criticizes any "social reading of literature in general, in Donoso's case his position is justified). Monegal writes: "Si desde un punto de vista superficial las novelas de Donoso parecen reflejar simplemente una realidad familiar, una crónica de costumbres (anda por ahí un crítico que hasta habla de encantadores crónicas), para una lectura más honda el mundo que encumbren esas ficciones es un ámbito de violencia, de pesadilla, de terror." (p. 83).


15. Sarduy, p. 83.

16. See footnote No. 11.


23. Emir Rodriguez Monegal, _Mundo Nuevo_, No. 12, July 1967,
Paris, p. 78.


Chapter two

_Coronación_ was published in Chile in 1957. Prior to this first novel, Donoso published _Verano y otros cuentos_, a collection of six short stories in 1955 (Verano, China, Tocayos, Fiesta en Grande, El Guero, Dinamarquero, Dos Cartas). In these short stories we can already find the repeated use of dilapidated old houses as a setting and the thematic repetitions that will appear in _Coronación_ and in Donoso's subsequent short stories and novels. The stories in _Verano_ contain a nostalgic evocation of the past linked to the theme of the inevitable loss of innocence, the relations of domination and dependence between people in rigidly stratified social structures, the fusion of identities that can result from dependence, the repressive conformity of the upper classes, and the emergence of instinctive forms of existence, resulting in chaos and destruction. These are thematic obsessions which mark Donoso's work from his earliest published short stories. As Ana María Moixl has pointed out, Donoso's writing is not merely a description of these obsessions but rather a continuous creation of obsessions.

The characters in _Verano y otros cuentos_ go through many of the same processes that will appear in _Coronación_. They go through a process of mutations that is both a changing of disguises and masks and a simultaneous presentation of two facets of reality. Donoso's use of very old characters often expresses
this ambiguous perception of reality as the decomposing, senile personality of the very old allows the superimposing of their unconscious level of expression on top of their conscious reality and the two levels appear simultaneously. In this manner, the personality of the very old incarnates Donoso's ambiguous world where the real and the unreal appear as superimposed and interdependent in a process of disintegration.

In *Coronación*, Elisa Grey de Abalos, a senile old woman in her nineties is slowly dying in her decaying mansion. Andrés, her bachelor grandson is in his fifties. He does not have to work and lives a leisurely life occupied with French history, his collection of walking sticks, politics and visits to his grandmother. Andrés' superficially well ordered and placid existence is an avoidance of involvement, of emotions. At each visit to his grandmother, he is terrified of death although he has never really lived. The arrival of Estela, a young country girl who is imported into the decrepit household to care for the old woman stimulates Misía Elisa's already active sexual fantasies even farther. The old woman's maliciously obscene insights into Andrés' repressed desire for Estela gradually prod Andrés into an awareness of his futile existence. He becomes obsessed with Estela as the awareness of his wasted life makes him covet possession of her as a way of recapturing and redeeming his life and escaping the increasingly intolerable burden of his individual existence. Inevitably, Estela's needs and desires are quite different from those of Andrés. By the time he has pinned all his hopes of authenticating his life on possessing her, she
is already pregnant by Mario, a working class boy. The result of Estela's rejection of Andrés is part of the novels elaborately but effectively contrived climax. Mario, driven by the sordid values and the world of grinding poverty he shares with his brother and sister-in-law, agrees to use Estela in order to attempt to burglarize Misiá Elisa's house. The novel reaches its climax with the failure of the robbery due to Estela's rejection of Andrés. Andrés subsequently finds refuge in madness and Estela and Mario flee from the Abalos mansion towards an uncertain future. The tone of the climax is mordant and macabre rather than tragic as the novel closes with the grotesque coronation and death of Misiá Elisa as madness and destruction triumph.

In situating Coronación in the literary and the social context of its time, we must first see how the novel was initially received and interpreted. Early readers and critics of Coronación almost all found the same message in the novel: that of the decadence of the Chilean bourgeoisie brought about by its own vices and caught in the process of historical change. As Donoso recalls in Historia Personal del Boom: "Así la crítica chilena fue cuasi unánime al alabar la 'realidad' con que yo retrataba 'la decadencia de la clase alta', ya que para gran parte de los lectores ésa era mi meta, mi fin, y toda mi intención." In Historia Personal del Boom, Donoso describes the limitations of the Chilean critics who praised the layer of realism in Coronación, without understanding the world of ambiguous allusions which the novel develops parallel to the surface of "faithfully depicted reality". When Coronación was
published in 1957, most Chilean critics found in the novel a message, as the regionalism and social realism that had dominated literary production in Chile since "criollismo", was based on the conveyance of a message from the "escritor comprometido" who habitually denounced the exploitation of one social class by another. Because the structural axis of Coronación divides into a dichotomy as the two social levels of the haute bourgeoisie and the proletariat are presented in alternating episodes revolving around the lives of the Abalos family, their servants and acquaintances and Mario, his brother René and his sister-in-law Dora, early critics interpreted this structural dichotomy as a social dichotomy. The reduction of Coronación to only a social dichotomy is unjust to the novel's more complex and important levels of significance and aesthetic richness. These levels in Coronación appear more clearly when a critical approach is used that encompasses not only the social aspect (which is of a secondary, accessory nature in Donoso's writing) but also the synthesis of biographical, philosophical, psychoanalytical, archetypal elements present in the novel. These key factors in the creative process and in the narrative itself provide a critical path to understanding the thematic dominance of destruction in Coronación and three subsequent novels, which is the essential configurating element in Donoso's perception of human and social reality.

We have an unfair advantage over Donoso's early critics in that we can view Coronación in the light of his subsequent novels and as part of emerging literary trends and changes. When we view
Coronación in this larger context, it becomes clear that while Coronación may express some aspects of the socioideological process in Chile in the 1950's, these aspects are accessory to the personal confines of Chile which constitute the basis of the writer's narrative world from Coronación to El obsceno pájaro de la noche. It is true that Coronación, in the same measure as Donoso's three following novels, is deeply rooted in Chilean society, but primarily in the particular milieu of Donoso's background and of his past. The realism of Coronación that early critics lauded, lies in Donoso's perception and recreation of his obsessive and repetitive world as he exorcizes his own past. As Isis Quinteros explains:

... su obra no es una cosmogonía. En ella aparece un Chile personal y confinado: el Chile de José Donoso, cuya 'realidad' creada, recreada y fundida a la realidad multi-facética e insondable del propio escritor es la que configura toda su narrativa.

In this sense, some selective biographical background is as relevant to the genesis of the creative process leading from Coronación to El obsceno pájaro de la noche, as is the socio-historical and literary background. The personal confines of Donoso's Chile - his family, friends, schools, city - the web of past memories is vital in that it provides the first impulse in the writer's creation. In Coronación and in Donoso's following novels we can recognize this personal element, if not in a clearly autobiographical, anecdotal form, definitely as undercurrent of obsessions and evocations and allusions to past ghosts and demons which the novel, in an act of personal catharsis and liberation, seeks to exorcize. Donoso's writing is
a continuous creation of obsessions which goes beyond autopsychanalysis as Donoso, the writer, goes beyond being the subject in these novels and becomes the creator, as his literary imagination becomes imaginary reality interpreted and communicated to us as the creation of the author's own original language produces an aesthetic object, the novel.

Donoso grew up in the milieu of the "burguesía acomodada". He and his family lived for ten years with his ailing maternal grandmother. Donoso recalls the presence of this woman during his adolescence:

El gradual proceso de su deterioro, entremezclado con relampagueantes destellos de memoria y de saber familiar, hasta su muerte más de diez años después, es uno de los episodios que más han marcado mi vida, no porque yo amara a esta anciana, sino porque su demencia puso tan cruelmente en evidencia las ironías de la vida familiar y los horrores de la vejez y la agonía.5

Misiá Elisa is a confrontation with this ghost from the past — not a parody as some critics have suggested. As Donoso said referring to Coronación: "estoy demasiado metido allí dentro de todo eso como para poder parodiarlo".6

The Donosos' family household included many servants: cooks, gardeners, maids, etc. The relationship between masters and servants, the roles of mutual dependence and the masks people wear in hierarchical social systems, are constantly explored in Donoso's first four novels, and are another thematic link in Donoso's Chilean cycle of novels. The "criada" in particular, is a dominant character from Rosario and Lourdes in Coronación to Peta Ponce in El obsceno pájaro de la noche. In his own Cronología, Donoso talks about Teresa Vergara, the "criada" of
the Donoso family who brought him up. Donoso writes: "Sus hermanas, hermanos, primos y sobrinas, han sido nuestros cocineros, jardineros y doncellas, y han vivido en simbiosis con mi familia por medio siglo."7 *Veraneo y otros cuentos* is dedicated to "Teresa Vergara que no sabe leer" and in relation to this dedication the author says "sin saberlo, me estaba comprometiendo, estaba eligiendo una temática. Teresa Vergara era la criada de mis padres y fue quien me crió... es la madre de todas mis viejas..."8

Clearly the characters and settings of Donoso's past, the old mansions, the servants, the senile relatives, made a profound impact in Donoso and this impact is important in its relation to the literary realization of Donoso's recurrent themes. In particular, the recollected facet of a childhood spent growing up amidst senile bedridden relatives (not only his grandmother but also an assortment of sick aunts and uncles) in a household mainly run and organized by servants is related to Donoso's theme of destruction. The process of disintegration in *Coronación* and subsequent novels is marked by costumes and disguises as characters assume various different personalities and symbolic roles in their futile search for self-integration. The theme of the relationship between masters and servants, another recollection of childhood, is also developed in relation to the theme of disintegration of the human personality. In relation to the theme of the mistress of the house and the maid servant, Donoso says:

Again it's my obsession with the non-unity of the human personality. The servant is another part, another
incarnation, at a different level, of the mistress. She is both the mistress and the servant. They are two faces of the same being. It's good and bad bound together. Because there is a moment when the beautiful woman turns into a monster.

The complex relations between masters and servants focus on the domination and dependence of each other in a symbiotic relationship that develops the theme of the precariousness of a personality and its susceptibility to disintegration. The rich and the poor have an unconscious and obsessive attraction for one another that alternately unites them and then disintegrates them.

In _Coronación_, Donoso uses an intellectual framework to organize the process of disintegration his characters undergo within the larger archetypal structure of the novel's thematic development. The main components of this intellectual framework are provided by existentialism and psychoanalysis.

In particular, Donoso uses Sartrean and Freudian concepts in his characterization of Andrés. Within this conceptual framework, Andrés' psychology can be better understood and the structuring of the destruction theme more clearly explained. Donoso's conceptual framework of existentialism and psychoanalysis should be analysed first as part of a system of characterization and thematic development in _Coronación_. The archetypal organization of _Coronación_ which provides the fundamental structural basis of Donoso's main themes will be subsequently studied.

By the end of World War II, Jean Paul Sartre had emerged as the dominant figure in the existentialist movement. He had published _La Nausée_ (1938), _Le Mur_ (1939) and _L'Être et le Neant_ (1943). From the beginning, Sartre was interested in psychology.
and especially in the particular structure of consciousness (*La Transcendance de l'Ego* (1936), *L'Imaginaire* (1940), *Esquisse d'une Théorie des Emotions* (1939). A very basic summary of the main views expressed by existentialism is useful in understanding the relevance of Donoso's incorporation of existentialist concepts in *Coronación*, particularly in his characterization of Andrés. The range of views covered by existentialism has made it easy for the most widespread influence to be claimed and found in postwar writers. The same might be said of the general influence of psychoanalysis. While there was a diffusion of existentialist and psychoanalytical influence in literature in the 50's, there are specific concepts within these movements which are developed in Donoso's writings and these are of interest to us.

Briefly, the recurrent themes of existentialism are: the individual and systems; intentionality; being and absurdity; the nature and significance of choice; the role of extreme experience; the nature of communication. Existentialism emphasizes the underlying continuous awareness of one's own future death and the feelings of anxiety and dread as one confronts the void. Existentialism stresses the importance of extreme and exceptional experiences in contrast to every day experiences which are viewed as an aid to complacency, conformity, self-deception. French existentialism developed the thesis that existence is absurd, that the possibility of choice is the central fact of human nature. Sartre says that the feeling of anguish is our experience of the freedom of human consciousness.
In the face of this freedom, human beings can attempt to conceal it from themselves by a variety of devices resulting in a paradoxical internal duality of consciousness in which consciousness thinks of itself as a thing at the same time that it gives covert recognition to its freedom. Although Sartre condemns the attempt by human consciousness to objectify itself and put itself on a level with things, he ultimately sees the human enterprise as hopeless since while human beings are responsible for their choices, their existence is not the result of their choice. Thus the project of constituting an ontologically self-sufficient being is a hopeless undertaking because a genuine logical synthesis of the two kinds of being described by Sartre (being in itself - en soi, being for itself - pour soi) is precluded by the negating aspect of human consciousness which perpetually creates anew the distinctions such a synthesis is intended to overcome.

The content of existentialist philosophy we have summarized makes it clear that dramatic dialogue in the form of plays and novels, rather than systematic treatises, is a form of expression more consistent with Sartre's intentions than deductive argument. It is a commonplace that people living in loneliness and doubt provide the characters for existentialist novels. Perhaps the reality that Sartre best understood and which he focused on in L'Être et le Néant and developed in the earlier fictional characters of Daniel and Roquentin is the psychology of the lonely individual.

What interests us in Coronación is how Donoso's
characterization of Andrés follows existentialist concepts. Throughout Coronación, Andrés is characterized as an essentially solitary person: "... la anciana representaba el lazo más absurdo y precario con la realidad emocional de la existencia. El ya no tenía otros lazos. Además, no osaría confesarse completamente solo hasta que la señora falleciera." (p. 16)

Andrés is a bachelor, an only child, an orphan living alone. He confesses his solitude to his only friend Carlos Gros: "... Estoy más solo que nunca antes, excluido por todo y de todo." (p. 131)

Andrés repeatedly experiences a sensation of terror evoked by death:

Que uno moría era indudable. Pero en el fondo de Andrés, en algún rincón oculto e infantil - quizás un resabio de la fe religiosa que descartó de una vez y para siempre al finalizar su adolescencia -, existía una certeza fiera, arraigada tenaz y hondamente en sus temores más inconfesados, que él jamás moriría, que la muerte era para otros, no para él.

... Oír a su abuela hablando de la muerte en la forma más natural del mundo, era como levantar la tapa hacia una siniestra posibilidad de horror. No había que ceder a la tentación de asomarse por el resquicio, era necesario mirar a otra parte, huir, huir de esa voz que quería obligar brutalmente a Andrés a enfrentar algo que sabía que alguna vez iba a tener que enfrentar. (p. 38-39)

... Y ahora, ¿qué experiencia me queda?, la muerte, nada más. No puedo pensar en otra cosa. Y en ella no puedo pensar más que con terror porque sé demasiado bien que todas las teorías filosóficas, todas las satisfacciones de vivir y toda creencia religiosa son falsas, todas mentiras para ahuyentar el gran pánico de la extinción. ... (p. 156)

Andrés has abandoned his catholic faith and his feelings of anguish, of confrontation with the void are expressed in the novel in the recurrence of a nightmare:
Solía soñar que iba a toda velocidad por un larguísmo puente suspendido por un vacío. Pero el puente, de pronto, terminaba antes de llegar a la otra orilla, dejando un trecho en que no había nada, nada más que abismo. En su veloz ansiedad por alcanzar a la otra orilla, Andrés caía dando gritos de terror al precipitarse en ese vacío. Despertaba transpirando y sobresaltado. Ningún libro, ni la filosofía, ni la ciencia — que tantas discusiones suscitaba con Carlos Gros — eran capaces de darle medios para llegar, material y conscientemente, a la otra orilla. Todo desembocaba en cero, en otra pregunta más, en la interrogante de la muerte.

... y en la noche Andrés caía por el abismo por el final del puente, dando alaridos.

... pero continuaba soñando que el puente no llegaba a la otra orilla, y se precipitaba aullando en el fondo de su sueño, hasta perderse en el abismo. (p. 62-63)

Sartre's atheism is a consequence of his views on human nature. In _Coronación_, Andrés moves progressively closer to accepting an ideology capable of expressing the consciousness of his anguish, the awareness of belonging to a disintegrating world. In _Coronación_, this ideology derives from an interpretation of atheist existentialism linked, according to Sartre, to the anguish of the bourgeois class caused by the awareness of its own disintegration. This is one facet of the theme of disintegration so dominant in _Coronación_ and in Donoso's subsequent novels. It is the main thematic link between the first four novels and it is developed and extended to include the individual, society as a whole, the traditions, values and beliefs (religion in particular), upon which society is based.

The existentialist concepts of the absurdity of existence, the meaningless of life, the fear of death are used by Donoso to establish the framework within which Andrés' character is...
developed. Andrés repeatedly expresses his sense of the absurdity of existence:

Vida era una sola, ahora lo veía con claridad. Luego él también iba a morir, y pasarían miles, millones, miles de millones de años, y de él no quedaría nada, y el planeta seguiría rodando por los negros espacios intersiderales hacia un destino absurdo e inexistente. (p. 76)

El, en cambio se hallaba desnudo bajo un firmamento hostil, que sólo podía señalarle su propia pequeñez, y la inútil brevedad de su conciencia. (p. 155)

Andrés' fear of death prevents him from experiencing life and his daily routines are a form of self-deception, of resignation, of passive acceptance of his own futility:

Rebelarse, tratar de dar un significado a la vida, hacer algo, tener cualquier fé con la cual intentar traspasar el límite del actual, era estúpido, pretencioso, pueril, lo único razonable era la aceptación muda e inactiva. ¿Le gustaba leer historia de Francia? Leería historia de Francia. ¿Le gustaba pasear en las tardes por las calles tranquilas? Pasearía. Andrés sintió por primera vez que sus pobres pes' pisaban terreno firme, que lograba saltar desde el extremo puente hasta la orilla lejana. Para otros, sentir lo que él acababa de sentir quizá resultara un pozo negro de angustia. Para él, sin embargo, era la justificación de no hacer nada, de no aventurarse a nada, la liberación completa de todo compromiso con la vida. (p. 65)

In what Sartre would call an act of bad faith (mauvaise foi), Andrés, when faced with the need to give meaning to his existence and when confronted with his own sense of failure, concludes that madness is his only alternative:

Ojalá me volviera loco para así no tener que abocar directamente, claramente, a la luz plena y con toda conciencia, el problema de la muerte y de la extinción. ¡Qué maravillosa manera de escamotearse de la necesidad de mirar de frente... , eso ... ! (p. 133)

... 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
At the novel's conclusion, Andrés attempts to objectify himself, to put himself on a level with things exemplifying Sartre's concept of the paradoxical internal duality of consciousness in which consciousness thinks of itself as a thing at the same time that it covertly recognizes its freedom:

El 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 ni 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. (p. 212)

The emphasis in Coronación on Andrés' individual problems as a literary theme, is one area in which Donoso differs from the previous literary generation. The novel, while it shows social injustice and inequality, does so without the primary objective of criticizing. Rather, Coronación explores the human condition in general and the anguish of Andrés in particular. Linked to this latter theme is the assertion of the impact of existentialist philosophy on the individual. A Marxist critic, such as Lukács, would say that the debased individualism of the existentialist is but a symptom of the malaise of the bourgeois intellectual. The bourgeois makes a fetish of his individual inner experiences and crises (what Lukács calls "le carnaval permanent de la intériorité fétichisée") as he is unable to find his own values incarnated in the surrounding society. Lukács and his many followers view society as the reality behind the surface appearance of literature.
Although Donoso is not a writer with any obvious social intent, *Coronación* does reflect, not only the personal confines of the author's social experience, but also tangentially, the larger social trends of the period he wrote in. In a marxist analysis of Chilean narrative, Ariel Dorfman, writing about the characters created by the generation of 1950, points out the characteristics that the novels of the period have in common:

El personaje no se mueve, porque no tiene hacia donde huir; el impulso renovador que denuncia la rigidez, se resuelve en la incertidumbre, en el parentesis, en la máscara ... rodeado por soluciones falsas, sociales, futuras, interiores, el hombre se hace radicalmente Ambiguo ... 11

Donoso, like the other Chilean writers of his generation, does reflect some aspects of the social reality they live in, according to Dorfman:

Enfrentan el desahucio de la utopía americana, enfrentan el fracaso de un sistema, expresan hasta los límites que sus demonios se lo permiten, que lo rebelarse, lo grotesco y ridículo la única manera de expresarse, la fragmentación, la manera de amar, la máscara la única cara. 12

In *Coronación* we see the emphasis on the ambiguous, irrational and grotesque aspects of reality and personality as well as rebellion against all forms of moral taboos especially those related to religion and sex. From *Coronación* to *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*, these aspects of Donoso's fiction will escalate in intensity and scope.

The basic existential conceptual framework in *Coronación* has been briefly outlined, largely in relation to the characterization of Andrés. Psychoanalysis provides the other main component in the conceptual framework developed in
Coronación's system of characterization. Freudian elements are clearly present in the novel. Donoso mentions that his father was reading Freud in the 20's and indeed, by 1926, the main body of Freud's psychoanalytical theory was complete [The Interpretation of Dreams, (1900), Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, (1905), Beyond the Pleasure Principle, (1920), The Ego and the Id, (1923), Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, (1926)].

Many of the basic theories of Freudian psychology are illustrated in the characters of Elisa and Andrés and they evolve within the framework of these theories. Freud stated that many of the most important aspects of human mental development and functioning are intimately related to childhood conflicts, particularly sexual conflicts. Guilt, shame and anxiety are often the result of the recognition of sexual conflict within oneself. Freud pointed out the vital significance of instinctual conflict in unconscious mental phenomena and analysed the defensive function of regression, the processes occurring in dreams, thinking, affect and defense.

Misiá Elisa and Andrés, both products of a repressive religious upbringing typical of their social class, are classic cases of Freudian repression. They illustrate the artifice of bourgeois sexual mores which Freud denounced as inducive of neuroses through the repression from early childhood of sexual instincts and pleasure. Misiá Elisa's obsession with sexuality is provoked by symbolic images. For example, the gift of a pink shawl (this image reappears in El lugar sin límites) from Andrés for her birthday results in an outburst of escalating intensity.
and obscenity aimed at Estela:

- Este chal tan lindo le va a sentar mucho más a la Estela. A ella sí le quedaría bien de veras. Mira niña, lo que te trajo tu novio, un chalcito rosado. Para que te veas rosadita cuando despiertes a su lado en la mañana . . ., toma, pruébatelo . . .
  . . . ¡Pruebate tu chal! Pruebaste tu chal rosado, que a ti te lo trajo de regalo! Si me lo trajo a mí, sería un insulto, porque es un chal de puta, sí, de puta, no para una señora que merece una corona de santa y reina, como yo. ¡Pruebate tu chal, te digo, china!
  . . . ¡India puta! ¡Las cosas mugrientas que le habías enseñado a hacer en la cama!
  . . . cochina, viciosa, . . . (pp. 50, 51, 52)

Andrés' adult life is dominated by ritual behavior and by rigidly ordered routines. His collection of ten canes symbolizes the search for control, order and discipline in his life.

The description of scenes of Andrés' traumatic childhood encounters with sex illustrates several basic tenets of Freudian psychology. Andrés' character has been, to a great extent, determined by the early sexual episodes in his life and by the repression of his sexual desires. The following quotation provides one example of the cycle of sexual desire, guilt, fear and repression associated with religious moral strictures in Andrés' youth.

Cuando Andrés tuvo que confesarse para preparar su primera comunión, se lo calló todo, absolutamente todo, lo de Velarde y su amigo, las postales, sus sueños, el sillón que se llamaba Lourdes y todo lo demás. Comulgó en pecado mortal. No fue, como le dijeron que debía ser, el día más feliz de su vida. Porque estaba condenado, y su carne ardería en los infiernos por los siglos de los siglos. Solo su abuela y Lourdes se irían al cielo.
  - ¿Cuántash veshesh, hiho? - le preguntaría el padre Damián, si contaba.
  . . . y eso jamás podría confesarlo. (p. 59)

The importance of sexuality in Andrés' unconscious is
revealed in several dream sequences. The motive of Estela's pink palms (reminiscent of the "sillón pequeño y rosado como el cuerpo de una persona desnuda" (p.57), which Andrés associates with Lourdes) progressively penetrates the unconscious layers of Andrés' mind, gradually arousing his repressed sexual desires. Estela's pink palms become a fetish for Andrés, a fixation for all his repressed instincts, unconscious desires. Finally, his impulses erupt, threatening to destroy all his defense mechanisms. The erosion of the artificially established order of Andrés' world by the intrusion of Estela, an element of instinctive vitality and natural impulses, eventually provokes the collapse of the old order. Andrés is an individual submerged by his own obsessions and it is fascinating to follow this recurrent motive of Estela's pink palms as it marks the steps in Andrés' evolution. Donoso develops a sense of momentum as the tension between Andrés life of ritualized routine and the repeated intrusion of Estela's pink palms and the sexual attraction that Andrés perceives in them creates an increasing conflict. The novel's final dénouement shatters Andrés' precarious balance. This augmenting momentum and tension is typical of Donoso's obsessive and repetitive world as his characters balance between compulsion and control. Upon Andrés' first encounter with Estela:

"Don Andrés observó que sólo el dorso de la mano era cobrizo como el resto de la piel - la palma era unos tonos más clara, un poco rosado, como . . ., como si estuviera más desnuda que el resto de la piel de la muchacha." (p. 17)
Later on:

Andrés desvio la vista de esas palmas descubiertas, presa de incomodidad y de un inexplicable pudor; como si hubiera sorprendido alguna intimidad de la muchacha. En esa ligera variación de color del cobre opaco del dorso al rosa mullido y sin duda tibio de la palma desnuda, inconfidentemente desnuda, Andrés se vió acechado por algo instintivo, algo casi salvaje, inadmisible en su mundo donde todo era civilización . . (p. 40)

Then, on the occasion of Misía Elisa's birthday, when the pink shawl provokes her outburst against Estela:

Estela no se movió. Levantando un poco las manos como quien pide ayuda, miraba a Andrés, que desvió la vista a ver esas palmas, acosado tanto por la presencia de esa carne fresca y rosa que se le antojo descaradamente indecente, como por la locura de su abuela, que de manera tan inconvéniente los había unido. ¿Dónde mirar, a quién acudir en busca de orden? (p. 51)

Estela se había envuelto en el chal, apretándolo a su cuerpo. Andrés la vio rosada entera, como si la desnudez de la palma de sus manos se hubiera extendido impudicamente por todo su cuerpo, como si Misía Elisita la hubiera desnudado con sus palabras enloquecidas, para entregársela. La mente de Andrés pugnaba por echar mano de cualquier cosa para cubrir o alejar esa imagen, pero era inútil. (p. 52)

This scene is particularly rich in Freudian psychology. Andrés gives his grandmother a pink shawl for her birthday. He is probably influenced in his choice of colour by his growing obsession with Estela and his association of pink with female sexuality. His grandmother makes the connection between the shawl and Andrés' unconscious attraction for Estela. Then Elisa's own sexual fantasies surge forth. Elisa can well understand Andrés' repressed desires because she suffers from the same sexual repressions.

When Andrés sees the palms of Tenchita, the antique dealer's
wife (she is wearing a pink shawl):

En lugar de Tenchita veía a Estela, envuelta en el chal que él había regalado a su abuela ... y Estela despertaba en el lecho junto a él. El calor joven de la muchacha. Su cuerpo levemente humedecido por el sueño tibio lo tocaba. Tenía vivo en la nuca el aliento de Estela al ayudarlo a ponerse el abrigo, y ante sus ojos se hallaba abierto el peligro desnudo de sus palmas. . . (p. 113)

After this encounter, Andrés accepts the existence of his desire for Estela:

Deseaba a Estela. Sus manos enpunadas en los bolsillos de su abrigo imaginaron la suavidad desnuda de las palmas de la muchacha, y en las rétinas de Andrés hirvieron sus ojos negros. La tibieza súbita de la respiración de Estela al ayudarlo a ponerse su abrigo una noche hacia más de un mes, repitió un aliento ardoroso en su cuello. Sí. Deseaba a Estela. La deseaba como creyó que jamás iba a ser capaz de desear. (p. 115)

Then Andrés sees Estela and Mario together and realizes that they are in love. This blow leads him to believe that what he felt for Estela was not just desire but love:

"Todo su edificio de esperanza quedó desecho. Desecho, porque vio claro que no era sólo deseo lo que sentía por Estela, era amor, sí, amor cuya certeza lo clavaba." (p.117)

Andrés becomes aware that loving Estela is his last chance of living authentically and escaping his empty and sterile mode of existence:

El deseo no era suficiente para liberarlo de la nada y de la muerte, de los días planos de su pasado, ni del abismo futuro que de pronto vio rodeándolo con su frío. Sólo el amor joven y armonioso como el de ese par podía rescatarlo. (p. 118)

At the end of the novel, Estela, under the manipulative efforts of Mario and René, appears to yield to Andrés:

"El, dentro de un momento, iba a acariciar esas palmas
húmedas, rosadas, muelles, y esas palmas lo iban a acariciar a él, revelándole todos sus secretos, entregándole todo su poder. El las necesitaba, determinadamente a esas palmas." (p. 209)

This is the last rousing vision of Estela's pink palms and marks the end of the reiterative development of this motive. After Estela ultimately rejects Andrés, he deliberately escapes from his feelings of inadequacy, alienation and anguish into a world of madness. Cedomil Goic sums up the process Andrés goes through in Coronación:

> De este modo cuando el engaño de la muchacha y el sentimiento de su rebajamiento, de su enajenación lo arrojan en la conciencia del absurdo y del sinsentido de todo, se precipitará en la existencia de la locura, se enajenará consciente y libremente para evadirse de la angustia atroz y de la caída insoportable. De este modo la existencia inauténtica modificada luego en la angustiosa autenticidad concluye por desembocar en otro modo de existir en que la conciencia anulada, aniquilada, abre la posibilidad de escapar para siempre al temor y al temblor del existir consciente.13

Andrés' voluntary submersion into madness after he has been on the brink of a total change in the established order of his existence provoked by the primitive forces of irrational instincts (symbolized in Coronación by Estela and the motive of the pink palms) is one outcome of the same conflict which will reappear and be explored in different ways in Este domingo and El lugar sin límites before being finally resolved in El obsceno pájaro de la noche. According to José Promis Ojeda:

> Las tres novelas de Donoso plantean, pues, cada una desde un ángulo específico, un mismo problema o, más bien dicho, una misma obsesión: la precariedad de la existencia. . . en El obsceno pájaro de la noche, 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
The cyclical nature of Donoso's four novels involves two basic related areas: thematic content and narrative techniques. These two areas are developed in parallel as part of a coherent narrative process. The main thematic themes initiated in Coronación have already been pointed out: the focus on existentialist and metaphysical aspects of the human condition and the individual; the emphasis on the ambiguous, irrational aspects of reality and personality; the precariousness of human existence and established order revealed by instinctive elements; the rebellion against moral taboos; the roles and masks pertaining to hierarchical social caste systems; the dominant and all englobing theme of the disintegration of the individual, society and the traditional values and beliefs upon which society is based.

These thematic links are the configurating elements of Donoso's personal vision of social and human reality. The author's narrative techniques evolve away from the limits of factual verisimilitude and the traditional realist attributes of fiction which assert an objective, concrete reality, towards a narrative structure capable of expressing his questioning of reality and, as in the case of El obsceno pájaro de la noche, his negation of reality.

In Coronación, Donoso uses narrative techniques appropriate to expressing "una sublevación contra todo intento de presentación unívoca de la realidad." The interior reality, or
the interior coherence of the novel's characters, particularly Andrés, is achieved by the use of what Noé Jitrik calls: "el realismo de conciencia", which he defines as: "la penetración descriptiva en el campo del fluir psíquico que si bien es una realidad concreta y mensurable, se expresa fuera de los canales y propone una imagen compleja y rica de la realidad." This penetration into the interior reality of each character limits the omniscience of the narrator as the narrative perspective is determined by what each character is thinking and feeling. Here is one example of this technique applied to Andrés:

¿Y su abuela?
¿No pagaba para que cuidaban a su abuela a todas horas del día y de la noche, como era necesario a sus años? ¿Con qué derecho esta chiquilla la dejaba sola para salir a besuquearse con un cualquiera en la calle? Quizás éste no fuera el primero, pero iba a ser el último. ¡En sólo tres meses! Sí, su pobre abuela tenía razón, Estela era una corrompida, casi una prostituta. ¡Su pobre abuela no estaba loca, eran estos jóvenes los locos, los sucios y envenenados! (p. 118)

Seeing the story through the limited point of view of the characters is a narrative device that Henry James favoured and perfected. Suspense, tension, emotion created and filtered through a limited point of view can be more effective than when attempted through omniscient, godlike manipulation of the story. It seems more natural; it places the reader in the mental world of the characters and makes the reader interpret things for himself if he wants to follow the story.

It is not only Donoso's use of this narrative technique in Coronación which is reminiscent of Henry James. The character of Elisa and the setting she evolves in is similar to that of the
senile old woman in a Venetian palazzo in *The Aspern Papers*. Isis Quinteros also points out that Donoso's use of the house as a symbolic image of the maternal being is similar to Henry James' use of this image in *The Spoils of Poynton*. Quinteros states that Donoso certainly owes this image to Henry James. Thomas C. Meehan has made an association between *Coronación* and *The Turn of the Screw*, in the atmosphere of latent terror developed by both Donoso and Henry James.17

The specific associations with Jamesian characters, settings, techniques, images are not as important as Donoso's identification with James's non-ideological approach to literature and James's psychological internalization of the novel. The Jamesian, anglo-saxon influence on Donoso is useful in situating *Coronación* in a more accurate context, which is larger than that perceived by early critics.

The psychoanalytical conceptual framework is particularly in evidence in Donoso's exploration of the unattractive bourgeois married sex lives of two different generations: Elisa and Ramón; Carlos and Adriana. *Coronación* contains a series of deft psychoanalytical insights into these couples' sexual relationships, in particular into what Freud called the "dark continent" of female sexuality. These couples portray the prototype bourgeois milieu replete with truly Victorian characteristics of surface respectability, inhibitions and prudery where hypocrisy operates as a cultural defense mechanism in a period of turmoil. Donoso portrays the problem of the seemingly contradictory perception of women in a bourgeois milieu
where, on one hand they are feared - e.g. Andrés who perceives Elisa's power of engulfment and her threat to his mental equilibrium, as did Ramón - and, on the other hand the elevation or subjection of women to the role of sexless, frigid angels:

El abuelo le tenía tanto miedo a su mujer, porque era pura, que por eso se iba al club todas las noches, y la abuela a veces lloraba encerrada en su dormitorio . . . (p. 59)

¿Creerás que siempre he sido una mujer tan buena, tan moral que nunca en todos mis años de casada permití que Ramón me mirara el cuerpo? Nunca, nunca, y eso que dormíamos en la misma cama. Ya ves, díme se no merezco corona de santa. Enfin, Dios premiará mis sacrificios en el cielo, dándomela allá. (pp. 149-150)

. . . todos los hombres lo único que quieren es abusar con nosotras. . ., y el placer es una cochinada, una inmundicia. ¡La vida es un asco y hay que buscar refugio en la religión para no verse obligada a descender hasta eso y contamírnarse! (p. 151)

Al ver aparecer a su marido, el gesto de Adriana se paralizó en el aire, dejó el pote en el velador, limpiándose automáticamente los dedos en un pañito celeste. No sentía miedo ni repulsión. Este era un deber como cualquier otro, necesario de vez en cuando, aunque prefería que fuera lo más de tarde en tarde posible. (p. 165)

Adriana era capaz de quererlo hasta como para entregarle su cuerpo para que lo usara, como esta noche, por ejemplo. Pero Carlos ya no tenía derecho a pedir que compartiera sus emociones. ! Frialidad? Más bien no. Era simplemente un deseo de vivir tranquila porque a su altura nada era peor que abrir necesidades que se ahaban comodamente selladas en un rincón de su ser, casi, casi, olvidadas. (p.166)

A psychohistorian, such as Peter Gay, would argue that fears of female sexuality and fears for male dominance in a period of rapid change and uncertain values, trigger the dominant but by no means exclusive theory of female frigidity - a classic example of the defense mechanism Freud analysed as the "reaction formation". Denial of female sexuality is thus a subconscious male attempt to
reinforce his supremacy in a time of upheaval.18

In *Coronación*, the novel's characters, events and objects move towards assuming mythic and symbolic functions. These symbolic functions assign a representational value to the characters, objects and events which correspond to universalized dimensions of human existence. This system of significance is present in *Coronación* and in Donoso's later novels. As the treatment and dimension of the main themes of destruction and disintegration evolve, there are parallel changes in the systems of significance in the narrative.

In *Coronación*, the roles of the main female characters are primarily symbolic. They incarnate basic literary myths of archetypal character - Misiá Elisa: death; Estela: life; Dora: poverty. The women act as catalysts to the actions of the male characters who are constantly reacting to the presence of the women and the dimensions of human existence represented in their symbolic function.

Let us analyse first the archetypal incarnation of death - Elisa. Donoso depicts Elisa in terms that emphasize her closeness to death. Her appearance is no longer really human, she is a skeletal object. Donoso often associates the color white with Elisa (in contrast to the sexual connotations of the color pink usually associated with Estela). Here are some examples of Elisa's symbolic incarnation of death:

\[ . . . la senectitud barrió toda individuación de su rostro, dejando solo la osamenta de una nariz soberbia y cierta fijeza insistente en sus ojos de loca. (p.19) \]

A veces, algún muchacho del Emporio Formino que entraba con su bicicleta divisaba entre los visillos de una
ventana del segundo piso el rostro blanco de la nonagenaria que miraba la luz, que miraba el aire. (p. 25)

El lecho de Misiá Elisa Grey de Abalos era una gran embarcación de madera reluciente y obscura. La anciana se hallaba incorporada, blanca entre las sábanas. Con un espejo en una mano temblorosa – era increíble que esos ojos de párpados como harapos fueran capaces de recoger su imagen en el óvalo minúsculo de la luna – y armada de una pinza, se estaba sacando los pelos de mentón...

Ahora estoy como los cadáveres, dicen que el pelo les sigue creciendo después que los entierran... (p. 38)

Dando dos palmadas de deleite que soñaron mas a huesos que a carne... (p. 50)

La anciana seguía gimoteando. Sus fuerzas cesaron pronto, dejándola convertida en un ovillo insignificante y blanquecino entre las sábanas, en el que la vida apenas existía, apenas palpitaba. Sus manos, con un rosario entre los dedos, se habían plegado sobre su pecho como las de un muerto, pero sus labios se movían. (p. 53)

Estela fue reuniendo las mechas blancas de la señora, tan blancas y tan transparentes como cristal hilado... (p. 94)

La luz dibujaba su nariz estúpidamente aguilena, firme aún, lo único firme salvado del naufragio de este rostro de escuálidas blanduras, de esa máscara de anfractuosidades sueltas blanqueadas por los años, todo empequeñecido por el tiempo (p. 195)

En el silencio de la alcoba se escuchaba solo la respiración de las viejas dormidas, y una última levisima pluma blanca fue depositada por el aire sobre la mano de Misiá Elisita, donde aún corría un poco de sangre por las venas azulosas. (p. 203)

From the beginning of the novel, Elisa is associated with the house she has been confined to for more than twenty years, the house where Andrés grew up. In fact, the house is described in similar terms as Elisa, it is a cadaver of a house (el cadáver de la casa, p. 48) as she is a corpse of a woman. Dona Elisa haunts this house like a ghost, her white face occasionally glimpsed at
a window. The house is described in terms that resume the lives of Elisa and Andrés, contrived, with an excess of decorations, non-functional, somber, useless:

La casa donde Misia Elisa Grey de Abalos vivía con sus dos ancianas criadas, Lourdes y Rosario, era un chalet adornado con balcones, perillas y escalinatas, en medio de un vasto jardín húmedo con dos palmeras, una a cada lado de la entrada. Además de los dos pisos, arriba había otro piso oculto por mansardas confitadas con un sin fin de torrecitas almenadas y recortes de madera. La casa tenía un defecto: estaba orientada con tan poco acierto que la fachada recibía sol escasas horas . . . (p. 13)

. . . se quedó observando esa casa defendida por esqueletos de árboles humedecidos, goteando aun después de la lluvia de la tarde; era una visión de lo inútil, con sus adornos de mala calidad confundiendo la línea esencial hasta borrarla a fuerza de pequeños torreones, mansardas innecesarias, terrazas, balcones que no se abrían a pieza alguna. (p. 160)

We have seen how Elisa's proximity to death disturbs Andrés and provokes, in him a feeling of anxiety and terror. His grandmother's pervasive influence, which will eventually lead to his madness, is embodied in the house and penetrates Andrés identity, threatening his mental equilibrium:

Esta casa, en cambio, de viejas maderas impregnadas de la voz de la enferma, era la peor amenaza para la cordura de Andrés. (p. 43)

Allí no podía permanecer. Su abuela estaba viva en el cuarto de abajo. Con cada una de sus débiles respiraciones, la nonagenaria lo iba cociendo más y más a la angustia de los días anteriores . . . (p. 125)

Tengo miedo, sí, miedo de acostarme a dormir aquí en esta casa. (p. 199)

Andrés perceives the house and his grandmother as a threat. Both represent an all-engulfing maternal repression, a form of obliteration, of death which can swallow him up. Another image of engulfment in Coronación is the mouth which appears as a symbolic
value of female sexuality in its extreme forms of attraction (Estela) and repulsion (Dora and Elisa). Elisa and Dora are toothless hags, their mouths appear as threatening, cavernous holes which can swallow one up: "Abrió la boca inmensa. Mario cerró los ojos para borrarlo todo, para borrar esa cavidad donde aun sangraba el dente mal extraído", (p.31) . . . "su boca desdentada se hallaba entreabierta" (p. 124) . . . "La caverna desdentada de su boca era de cien años" (p. 172).

We have said that Estela incarnates another basic literary myth of archetypal character - life - and in this symbolic function she, like Elisa, acts as a catalyst to the actions of the male characters who react to her presence in the dimension of human existence she represents.

Estela, in contrast to the moribund, repressed, oligarchic Elisa assumes in the novel the symbolic incarnation of sexuality, instinctual responses, light, life. She is 17 years old, fresh from the country when she arrives to work in the decaying Abalos mansion to help care for the dying Elisa. Her presence immediately evokes an instinctive response in Andrés: . . . "Andrés se vio acechado por algo instintivo, algo casi salvaje" (p. 40). Estela's pink palms are part of a symbolic association of the color pink with sexuality which appears in relation to Lourdes and Tenchita as well as Estela throughout the novel:

. . . un sillón pequeño y rosado como el cuerpo de una persona desnuda. Lourdes, que ya engordaba, debía parecerse a ese rechoncho sillón capitone. (p. 57)

. . . su cuerpo desnudo bajo el tosco camisón suelto, sin duda era bañado por la luz rojiza de a lamparia del velador. (p. 128)
We have seen how Estela's pink palms become a fixation for Andrés' repressed sexual desires. As in the case of sexuality associated with the mouth, Donoso presents this image and the sexual connotation of the colour pink in its extreme forms of attraction (Estela) and repulsion (Tenchita). When associated with Tenchita, female sexuality appears in a grotesque, repulsive caricature of Estela's attraction for Andrés:

Después de unos instantes apareció Tenchita ataviada con un peñador de seda. Era como un gran pastel color rosa, adornado con anillos, prendedores, aros de fantasía. (p. 112)

La fiebre le producía escalofríos, aseguro, envolviéndose los hombros en su chal de fina lana rosada. Donaldo me lo trajo anoche de regalo, fijese que es amoroso. Dijo que quería verme rosadita entera cuando me despertara en su lado en la manana. al indicar a su marido, descubrió a los ojos de Andrés la palma de su mano, rosada, muelle, cruda. (p. 113)

It is interesting to note Donoso's use of this technique of opposite extremes of symbolic attraction and grotesque parodies of that attraction which inspire repulsion. This dual presentation of opposites extremes recurs in his subsequent novels frequently using the same images that appear in Coronación (e.g. the pink shawl).

Elisa and Andrés belong to an old, dark, dying world. Estela carries within her the power of youth, the spark of life and a strength of will:

Entonces Mario la vio entera iluminada, como se fuera el centro mismo de la gran llambrada azul y peligrosa. dentro de ella se había ido restando la facultad de entregarse, manteniendo, sin embargo, vivo y oculto el germ en de su voluntad y de sus gustos, los que una manera o de otra y sin que nadie lo supiera, terminaba por cumplir. (p. 46)
Solo sus ojos, siempre gachos, permanecían iguales: dos ranuras húmedas y oblicuas. Pero ahora no era raro verlos abrirse de pronto para mirar de frente, y en ése fondo negrísimo surgía súbitamente algo como una intensa llamada azul. (p. 49)

Estela and Elisa represent symbolically the opposite poles of life and death which alternately frighten and attract Andrés:

Erraba interminablemente de habitación en habitación, vestido de bata y pantuflas, pero siempre sin entrar al cuarto de la nonagenaria, y esquivando posibles encuentros con Estela. Su angustia se hallaba suspendida entre esos dos extremos, uno y otro eran objetos de su huir que lo mantenía flotando en una existencia crepuscular después de la vida y antes de la muerte . . . (p. 126)

Estela's sexuality affects and attracts not only Mario, her lover, and Andrés, but also Carlos:

. . . en el momento mismo de entrar en ese cuarto con olor a colchón en desusado y a armario vacío, la presencia animal de Estela tendida en el lecho lo había perturbado. . . . Con su antebrazo, la muchacha defendía sus ojos de la luz de la ampolleta desnuda que colgaba en el medio del techo, de modo que de bajo de la blusa los tendones de la axila erguían sus pechos. Carlos buscó ese color rosado muelle de las palmas descrito con tanta turbación por Andrés y al verlo, un violento deseo de palpar a Estela acometió al médico. (p. 154)

The girl's pregnancy emphasizes her archetypal incarnation of life and her separation from the moribund sterility of Andrés' world: "Desde ese momento todo para Andrés fue en disminución, mientras que el vientre de Estela dos vidas conjugadas bellamente producían otra vida completando un ciclo de perfección." (p. 155)

The enduring spark of life and the strength of will that Estela carries within her is evoked at the novel's conclusion as she escapes with Mario from the Abalos mansion towards a future shadowed by the degraded values of machismo, the seemingly inevitable corruption of innocence and the descent into
destruction. Estela's flicker of triumph at the novel's climatic finale is the only slightly optimistic note Donoso injects towards an uncertain, ambiguous future:

Ella, como sonámbula, sin escuchar los insultos del muchacho, con las facciones manchadas de sangre, caminaba. Sus piernas casi no le obedecían. Pero en el fondo de las tinieblas de su dolor físico había una chispa que podía transformarse en claridad, una certeza firme de su triunfo. (p. 211)

Dora also incarnates another basic myth of archetypal character - she represents poverty, misery, degeneration. She is described as a hag, whining, crying, in her dirty, cold, smelly hovel surrounded by hungry children:

... la mujer de René, ahora era un espectro. El escaso pelo graciento 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 remedio colgante de su antigua cara. (p. 30)

La última vez fue tal el asco que le produjo su mujer, no sólo su cuerpo envejecido y mal oliente, sino que más aun, esa pasión, esa sensualidad anhelante y frustrada, que permaneció muchos días sin ir a su casa. (p. 96)

La Dora lloraba todo el día por su embarazo, y los chiquillos, con los mocos chorreando, detenían sus juegos insoportablemente bulliciosos para pedir de comer una y otra y otra vez. (p. 135)

La miseria de la casa, la fealdad de la mujer que lo recibió, el olor a la comida y a cama sin hacer y a niños sucios, ... (p. 183)

embarazada. ... el embarazo persistió, haciéndola quejarse de rebeldía e incomodidad durante horas enteras." (p. 122) It is Dora's degeneration and poverty that embodies Donoso's most pessimistic projection towards the future. What is to prevent Mario and Estela from becoming the same as René and Dora?

Mario's relationship with Estela is based on the same
degraded values of machismo as René and Dora's relationship. He perceives love as a trap and he constantly feels resentment towards Estela and a compulsion to humiliate her in order to reassure his own pride and sense of male superiority:

Era chica y huasa, y se le había entregado. En otras mujeres había sentido el peligroso deseo de envolverlo, seducirlo, vencerlo, pero no de entregarse. Estela se había entregado. Por eso todo era tan perfecto.

"Ayúdame, no sé..."

Súbitamente, sus propias palabras dichas en un momento de ardor confuso regresaron a su memoria para derribar el orgullo. Miró a esa mujer que cosía satisfecha, como para destruirla con su resentimiento por conocerlo tan débil y desnudo. ¿Por culpa de esas malditas palabras que lo amarraban, ya no sería posible comentar nada con sus amigos? No, no iba a decir ni una sola palabra, aunque se rieran de él cuando contestara a las preguntas con evasivas. En realidad, lo mejor era no volver al Condor. ¿Por culpa de Estela se veía reducido a la suerte de los enamorados! Una marea de odio hacia ella lo dejó estupefacto. ¿No, él no había caído en el garlito! ¿Enamorarse? ¿Eso era para los imbéciles que no conocían a las mujeres! Ahora él las conocía bien. ¡Esta no era más que una entre las muchas mujeres que iba a seducir, todas iguales. ¿Acaso no siguió cada uno de los pasos de la tan conocida técnica de la seducción, y ella cayó igual que todas? Sí, todas iguales, lo demás era cosa de imbéciles . . . (p. 100-101)

Estela's pregnancy terrifies Mario who perceives it as the ultimate female trap and he sees his future in terms of René and Dora's situation:

Estela se cubrió el ventre con las manos como para protegerlo. Nada más. Y las manos de Mario se suavizaron apenas un segundo sobre los hombros de la muchacha al ver su gesto. Pero inmediatamente, poseído de una furia mayor y más peligrosa, sacudió a Estela una y otra vez, aun con más violencia:

¿Estás esperando, jetona de mierda? ¿Estás esperando? ¿Estás esperando?

Su voz temblaba al repetir la pregunta de nuevo y de nuevo, premiosa, aterrada, furibunda, mientras sacudía a Estela como si quisiera desarmarla, miembro a miembro.

- Sí... - murmuró ella.

Entonces, como si toda la fuerza de René hubiera
poseído su cuerpo, Mario dio un golpe salvaje con la mano abierta en la cara de Estela, que lanzó un gemido de animal.

—¿Tú también quieres joderme, huevona de mierda?

Y huyó, dejando a Estela sola, palpándose la mejilla con la punta de sus dedos. (p. 138)

¡Estela! El ya no era ningún incauto que se iba a dejar pescar por la primera mujer a quien le había hecho un chiquillo! No era la primera vez que pasaba, a muchos de sus amigos les había sucedido y siempre lograban esconderse o huir. ¡Cualquier cosa menos dejarse pescar! Y menos por Estela, que además de todo era una ladrona, sí, ladrona, porque a él no le iban a contar cuentos, esos cinco mil pesos eran robados. ¡Cómo no! ¡Para qué la mujer lo hiciera trabajar como un caballo, y ella anduviera rabiosa y quejándose todo el tiempo, y después del segundo o tercer chiquillo quedara convertida en un espantapájaros asqueroso, igual que la Dora? No, no. Con razón los cabros del club se reían de él porque ahora lo encontraban tan serio. ¡Juntarse con ella? ¡Para qué? El mundo, y sobre todo el mundo de René, estaba lleno de mujeres con quienes era fácil pasarlo bien sin necesidad de amarrarse. Porque él, ahora, no iba a dejarse amarrar por nadie. (p. 139-40)

Like René, Mario needs to blame his situation on a woman in order to justify his abusive, exploitative treatment of her. He feels insecure about his own masculinity and he constantly needs to reassure himself about his virility. He seeks to impress others with his male prowess, his strength, his independence, his courage - the classic macho syndrome:

—¡La jetona se lo tragó! —rió René.

Mario repitió la palabra, riendo con su hermano, la saboreó pronunciándola una y otra vez, muchas veces, las más veces que pudo. Hacerlo quizás disolviera sus últimas ataduras con Estela, quizás borraría un temblor que sentía, un treparid que se insinuaba en sus vísceras, en sus músculos, en sus nervios, como si todo estuviera nadando ingravido en su interior. Apretó los dientes para dominar ese temblor, para hacer algo, cualquier cosa que lo obligara a mantener su entereza, porque ya era imposible echar pie atrás. Esto no era momento para fallar. Al fin y al cabo ni él ni 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 se 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. ¿Y aunque René y él fueran culpables, qué importaba? ¿La policía y los años en la cárcel carcomiéndole poco a poco los escombros de su dignidad, en el fondo de una celda fétida? ¿No importaba un bledo! Había que arriesgarse, probar ahora o nunca que era un hombre! (p. 204-10)

In their reactions to the female characters, the main male characters advance the narrative level of action. Andrés and Carlos and Mario and René occupy in symmetrical positions the two social classes depicted in the novel. All the male characters are faced with interior existential conflicts and exterior social chaos which transcend social boundaries. They are all caught up in the process of human and social decomposition.

While the lineal structure of the text divides into a dichotomy, (the world of the Abalos and the world of Mario), the feminine archetypes organize the narrative by providing reference points for the male characters and by being the catalysts for the actions of the male characters, therefore determining the process of the narrative level of action.

Coronación also presents an archetypal reduction of time, which will recur, with some variations, in Este domingo, El lugar sin límites and El obscene pájaro de la noche. The past appears as a lost paradise where order (so important in Donoso's novels) once prevailed and this past is often evoked in terms of nostalgia. For example:

"¡Pero esta paz era un mendrugo cuando Andrés recordaba a su abuela en otros tiempos! ¡Tan armoniosa entonces, tan diestra y callada! Toda la casa había respirado serenidad en aquella época, lo que tocaba iba adquiriendo orden y sentido. ¡Y había sido tan
hermosa!" (p. 19).

The past is evoked in terms of its serenity, security and beauty:

En las tiendas de cosas usadas, en cambio, polvorientas y en desorden, atendidas por caballeros un poco zarrapastrosos y de origen oscuro, como también en esos objetos y volúmenes duenos de mas historia que el, existía un algo indefinible que le proporcionaba apaciguamiento y confianza no carentes de misterio, como si esos cuartos repletos de trastos y de libros viejos estuvieron deliciosamente domesticados, sin las aristas de las tiendas de objetos nuevos. (p. 108)

Hallaba una seguridad colmadora al sentir en el hueco de su palma aquellas empuñaduras que otras manos, en épocas y continentes distantes, habían entibiado. (p. 109)

Tanto Lourdes como el parecían haber olvidado la existencia de todo el mundo, haberse embarcado en un viaje de regreso a una época en que para ellos era imposible perderse porque todo valor les era conocido. (p. 145)

As José Promis Ojeda comments: "Uno de los motivos que se va repitiendo a través de las novelas de Donoso es, precisamente, la nostalgia del paraíso, el anhelo de hombre por reencontrar el espacio metafísico de la felicidad y la permanencia."19

Andrés has lost "ese orden que era la esencia misma de la vida" (p. 41) when Andrés turns away from any hope of a future and escapes from the unbearable present, he chooses madness, he takes refuge in it. Madness represents order for Andrés and he associates order with the past:

"... 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 ser sino 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 haberles dotado de algo para vencerlos? ... el único orden es la locura, porque los locos son los que se han dado cuenta del caos total." (p. 157)
Madness is a form of order (another important theme in Donoso's following novels) and for Andrés, madness is also a return to the lost paradise, to lost innocence, a refuge in nostalgia, an infantile regression. This is the last image we have of Andrés:

"Quando Carlos partió, Andrés se puso sus gafas y extendió el periódico. Después lo puso a su lado y se dirigió a la biblioteca en busca de un cortaplumas. Cortó el diario en trozos regulares, bien cuadrados, con lo que fue haciendo pajaritas de papel, como las que su abuela le había enseñado a hacer durante un invierno muy lluvioso y muy frío que él pasó en cama enfermo de escarlatina, cuando era muy, muy niño." (p. 218).

The future is ambiguous. Consistent with Donoso's emphasis on the ambiguity of human actions and the ambiguous reality these actions create, Mario and Estela's flight together away from the Abalos mansion is not presented as a utopic projection towards the future (as some earlier critics would have us believe) but rather as a temporary postponement of the inevitable fall. As we have said, their fate seems destined to be that of René and Dora, as the same degraded values of "machismo" upon which René's relationship with Dora is based, appear as impediments to Mario and Estela's salvation.

Promis Ojeda resumes this pessimistic outlook:

"Si aceptamos que la decadencia proviene de la vaciedad de un falso orden establecido, significa que también debemos suponer la caída del mundo de René y Dora. Este se rige asimismo por un falso orden, basado fundamentalmente en el machismo y en el odio, es decir, también en valores degradados. El machismo es, al respecto, el obstáculo que se tiende entre Mario y Estela . . .

. . . Tanto el mundo de Andrés como el de René son, pues, mundos finales, degradados, mundos donde el orden precario que los sostiene está a punto de quebrarse. El
The theme of the fall is the main recurrent element in Donoso's novels and is the essence of the treatment of the themes of destruction and disintegration.

This archetypal theme of the fall dominates Coronación in that it orchestrates and organizes the process of disintegration and destruction in the novel. We have said that the feminine archetypes act as catalysts to the actions of the main characters: Andrés, who is attracted by the life-giving forces Estela incarnates and who fears Elisa as the incarnation of death and as a symbol of maternal repression; Mario and René, who also perceive and fear the powers of engulfment they see in women, although they are initially attracted to the youth and strength of life in women. The women act as catalysts for the actions of these male characters whose alternating attraction and repulsion to them largely determines and advances the narrative level of action. After all, the narrative continuity in Coronación is provided by the evolution of the relationships between Andrés and Estela, Estela and Mario, Andrés and Elisa and, to a lesser extent, René and Dora.

In these relationships, woman functions as the cause for the fall from paradise into earthly chaos and eventual destruction. The theme of the fall, the lost paradise, the corruption of innocence, the violence of sexuality are the old biblical myths
which bourgeois society has cultivated and which provide the essential structural basis of *Coronación*. It is ironic that Andrés, who has abandoned his Catholic faith and proclaims himself an atheist, is inescapably a part of this biblical legacy.

The culminating point of the novel is the coronation of Misia Elisa by her drunken servants. Like *Este domingo* and *El lugar sin límites*, *Coronación* ends with a grotesque, symbolic image, which represents a disintegrating world. The ceremony of Misia Elisa's coronation is a death ritual symbolizing the triumph of madness. And as in the case of Andrés' madness, in the crowning of Misia Elisa's madness as she lives her death there is a sense of refuge, of reaching towards paradise:

"Quedaba apenas una llamita de vida en la señora, casi, casi nada de conciencia. Sin embargo, divisó estrellas a través de los vidrios llovidos de la ventana, y como ya no era capaz de distinguir distancia ni cercanía, al ver luces remontando por los regueros de mostacillas del suelo hasta los brillos de su vestido de gran aparato, pensó que también eran estrellas del firmamento, y que la envolvían entera. Supuso, entonces, que ya había muerto, y que iba subiendo entre tanta y tanta estrella, subiendo muy suavemente a camino directo del cielo. Después cerró los ojos.

Estaba tan agotada 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)

As a novel, *Coronación* is, in the thematic and narrative terms outlined, the first step towards the "unsubdued forest where the wolf howls and the obscene bird of night chatters."21
All quotes from _Coronación_ taken from Seix Barral Second Edition, 1969

1. Ana María Moix, Prólogo to _Cuentos_ , José Donoso (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1971).

2. A more detailed analysis of earlier (pre 1970) critical commentaries of _Coronación_ reveals a fairly wide range of differing emphasis and opinions (often contradictory) within the general interpretive framework of traditional realism. For example: Fernando Alegría ( _La literatura chilena del siglo XX_ , Santiago: Zig-Zag 2nd Ed., 1962) pp. 93-94, says that the novel lacks profundness and maturity; Carlos Raulí ("José Donoso, Coronacion", _Finis Terrae_ , No. 17, Year V, 1958, p. 81-82) says that the novel is close to total maturity and incarnates an existential attitude towards life; Ricardo Lachman ("Coronación por José Donoso", _Carnet Crítico_ , Ed. Afa, Montevideo, 1962, p. 190-93) emphasizes the psychological aspects of the novel; Thomas C. Meehan ("José Donoso, Coronacion", _Books Abroad_ , Vol. 43, No. 2, Spring 1969, p. 233) states that Donoso is the successor to Eduardo Barrio in the tradition of Chilean psychological novel; Enrique Lafourcade ("José Donoso, Coronación", _Cultura Universitaria_ , Caracas, July-August, 1958) emphasizes the novel's solid structure and its alternating brutal reality and poetic ingenuity; Hernán Poblete Varas ("Novelistas de Hoy", _Atenea_ , No. 389, 1960, p. 175-77) maintains that Donoso is so limited by traditional realism that he completely neglects developing fantasy and imagination.


11, 12. Ariel Dorfman, "Notas para un análisis marxista de la narrativa chilena de los últimos años", _Casa de las Américas_.

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19, 20. José Promis Ojeda, pp. 16-17.

21. Henry James Sr., extract from a letter written to his sons Henry and William (Preface to *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*).
Chapter three


The short stories contained in _El Charleston_ (El Hombrecito, Ana María, El Charleston, Puerta Cerrada, Paseo, Santelices) reflect the same thematic obsessions present in Donoso's previous short stories and in _Coronación_: the theme of the inevitable loss of innocence; the lost paradise; the repressed sexuality of the upper classes; domination and dependence in hierarchical social systems; the cataclism of death and madness when instincts destroy order. Mario Vargas Llosa once said that a writer is an exorcist of his own demons. Donoso is implacably launched from his earliest writing on a search of self-defining in a never-ending process to exorcize himself of his past. The process of this search is marked by a progressive evolution in form and style and also by a strong thematic unity. The single most pervasive theme which repeatedly characterizes and illuminates Donoso's apprehension of reality is that of destruction.

The stories in _El Charleston_ are part of Donoso's narrative evolution and illustrate the author's gradual shift away from the more traditional narrative techniques and their attributes of realism towards a more complex narrative form where ambiguity
dominates. Donoso moves step by step from a realistic environment to a world of dream, fantasy and mystery. The author presents different versions of reality emanating from a schizophrenic world whose characters are obsessed and driven by their own unconscious needs. These characters, driven by their obsessions, are usually overcome by chaos and destruction.

_Paseo_ is perhaps the short story which best resumes many of the themes in _Coronación_ and anticipates the novelistic world of _Este domingo_. In _Paseo_ the upper class is depicted as incased in a life of sterile routine rituals, dependent on the lower class for vitality. The dog in _Paseo_ becomes a fetish for Matilda, a fixation for all her repressed instincts (like Estela's pink palms in _Coronación_). Matilda is an individual submerged in her obsessions like Andrés in _Coronación_ and Chepa in _Este domingo_. As in _Este domingo_, a first person, subjective narrator filters the events and characters of a novel through his childhood memories. The personality of children is frequently used by Donoso to incarnate and present a different perception of reality. In _Paseo_ and _Este domingo_ the child's point of view also enhances the nostalgic evocation of the past and the nostalgia for the innocence of childhood seen from the point of view of a narrator aware of the inevitable loss of that innocence. The process of the destruction of childhood innocence, the fall into decay, violence, chaos is a vital aspect of the theme of destruction in Donoso and _Este domingo_ is the most subtle and poignant evocation of that process.

_Este domingo_ is concerned with the same upper class Chilean
family world of ritual described in **Coronación**: a decaying mansion, family dominated by a grandmother (Chepa), servants providing their masters' sterile lives with a measure of sexual stimulation, bourgeois couples locked in uncommunicative and hostile relationships.

The main characters of **Este domingo** are: Alvaro Vives and his wife Chepa, a rich upperclass couple in their fifties living alone in their large family home, which is the Sunday meeting place for their children and grandchildren who are important characters and one of whom is now the adult narrator; Violeta, formally the family cook and Alvaro's mistress; Maya, a psychopathic criminal from a poor family, abandoned as a child by his mother.

Alvaro is similar in many respects to Andrés — another inauthentic character leading a useless sterile life, seeking vitality and sexuality in a servant, Violeta. Alvaro, when evoked from the child's point of view, strangely resembles Elisa in **Coronación**. He no longer seems alive to the children — he is like a white porcelain doll and they call him "la muñeca": "Pequeño y seco con el traje ridículamente entallado, era un personaje de farsa que en nuestros juegos llamabamos la muñeca porque era muy blanco, muy blanco como de porcelana envejecida, y teníamos la teoría de que se echaba polvos." (p. 17)

Chepa and Alvaro's relationship is similar to that of Elisa and Ramón and Carlos and Adriana in **Coronación**. They cannot communicate with each other and Chepa has always been frigid with her husband and sexually unsatisfied. Chepa, like Elisa and
Adriana, her bourgeois counterpart in *Coronación*, has been trapped in a contradictory dual role of a pure sexless angel who nearly rendered Alvaro impotent on their wedding night and a repressive matriarch continually seeking to engulf and dominate.

For the grandchildren, Chepa and Alvaro's house is evoked in terms of nostalgia of a lost paradise. It represents a bygone era of harmony and tranquility:

>Aquí la inestabilidad de departamentos y calles y casas que yo habitaba con mis padres durante un año o dos y después abandonábamos para mudarnos a barrios distintos, se transformaba en permanencia y solidez, porque mis abuelos siempre habían vivido aquí y nunca se cambiarían. Era la confianza, el orden: un trazado que reconocer como propio, un saber donde encontrar los objetos, un calzar de dimensiones, un reconocer lo significado de los olores, de los colores en este sector del universo que era mío. (pp. 12-13)

This tranquility is maintained by a facade of civilized ritual. The hidden sexuality behind this facade erupts violently and destroys the appearance of order. What provokes this cataclism is the appearance of Maya who, like Estela, represents the instinctive, primitive sense of life. In *Este domingo* a similar process occurs with Chepa as with Andrés in *Coronación*. Chepa gradually becomes aware that the real basis of her relationship with Maya is repressed sexual desire. As with Andrés, this realization provokes mental chaos in her which coincides with the chaotic, infernal aspect of the slum she has her breakdown in. The world evoked in *Este domingo* converges in a geometrical progression on one Sunday (*Este domingo*) of final crisis after which all the characters disintegrate. Violeta is killed by Maya, Alvaro is confronted with the evidence of a cancerous growth which foretells his approaching death, Chepa is reduced to mental
incoherence (she is virtually lifeless), the children and the grandchildren cease spending Sundays in the grandparents house. The world of childhood games and imagination has vanished forever.

_Este domingo_ and _El lugar sin límites_ were published almost simultaneously. The success and critical praise accorded to _El lugar sin límites_ was greater than that granted to _Este domingo_. In fact, Isis Quinteros points out that several critics dismissed _Este domingo_ when it was first published as an inferior novel in comparison to _Coronación_ and _El lugar sin límites_.

More recent critics, such as George McMurray, have reassessed _Este domingo_ in terms of its technical innovations and more subtle thematic development. McMurray concludes that _Este domingo_ is "a fictional creation of greater intensity and artistic merit" than _Coronación_. Emir Rodrigues Monegal, in a basically Freudian analysis, sees _Este domingo_ as a more profound and subtle exploration of the themes of _Coronación_. Raul Bueno Chávez and Antonio Cornejo Polar have focussed on the theme of destruction in _Este domingo_ as structuring the novel and analyzed it within these parameters. These more recent critical approaches are typical of the shift away from the earlier social reading of Donoso's novels.

Donoso's exploration of his relationship with his past in a mythical recreation of obsessive themes was often interpreted by earlier critics as the swan song of a vanishing social class. The critics' habit of reducing his first novels to their social content profoundly irritated Donoso. In an interview with _Libre_
Donoso commented at length on this point:

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. . . . las clases sociales, tal como las dibuje en mis libros son imaginarias. Me explico: nací en una familia de posición social ambigua, con un pie en la oligarquía y otro en la clase media pero desterrada de ambas; y crecí en una época en que las clases sociales iban perdiendo importancia, los matices se confundían y quedaban solo pintorescos residuos. Por razones psicológicas personales, neurosis juvenil o lo que se quiera llamarla ese mínimo matiz de destierro al que ya nadie daba importancia más que yo se fue hinchiendo en mí como un abceso, se hizo doloroso, cruel, obsesivo, y durante mucho tiempo este desfase subjetivismo - además de otros desfases subjetivos que se hicieran abceso y deformaron otras áreas de mi personalidad - me sirvió de lupa para mirar el mundo, magnificando algo insignificante. Sin embargo esta insignificancia tomó en mí la forma de un sentimiento de marginación, vivido con tanta fuerza en cierta época, que determinó mi elección entre millones de materiales posibles, el juego de clases sociales, su derrumbe, su poder, su magia, su sujeción. Al escribir estilicé, sublime, exageré, condené, defendí, idealicé. . . lo que hay en mis novelas no es un retrato de un mundo que tiende a desaparecer dentro del panorama chileno actual: en la realidad ese mundo desapareció hace decenios. Hay, en cambio, un retrato de mi relación con ese mundo apenas atisbado, casi puramente imaginado, pero que por alguna razón produjo mi obsesiva relación con ese mundo.5

Donoso's comments are very revealing both in terms of the importance of the autobiographical factor in the creative genesis of his novels and in terms of the narrative process he develops in these novels. Although a critic rarely accepts an author's comments on his fiction without reservations, Donoso's texts largely confirm these comments and are illuminated by them. In particular, the metaphor of the "lupa para mirar el mundo" as the narrative process Donoso develops, provides us with another instance of the strong ascendance of Henry James in Donoso's writing. Henry James also confined his fiction to a limited world.
which he analyzed exhaustively and minutely under a magnifying glass. Although the limited confines of Donoso's or James' imaginary worlds only reflect one aspect of reality, through their exhaustive analysis of the multiple facets of this single aspect, they both create their personal vision of social and human reality.

The autobiographical element outlined in Chapter Two in relation to Coronación is equally relevant to the genesis of Este domingo. Este domingo, like Coronación, is deeply rooted in the aspects of Chilean society that delineate Donoso's personal background and past (which we briefly summarized in Chapter II). Each novel of Donoso is an act of personal catharsis and liberation as the recollected facets of his past mark the writer's search for self-definition and his attempts to free himself from the burden of his own demons. In Este domingo, Donoso again surpasses and transcends the level of autopsychoanalysis in his fictional creation and interpretation of imaginary reality.

In Chapter II we outlined Donoso's use of an existentialist and psychoanalytical conceptual framework in his system of characterization in Coronación within the overall archetypal structural organization of the main theme of destruction, the essence of which is the eternal fall.

In Este domingo, this existentialist and psychoanalytical framework operates in a more subtle form as an integral element of a character's personality. In Coronación, the lengthy philosophical conversations between Andrés and Carlos in which
Andrés describes his sense of the meaninglessness and absurdity of life stand out somewhat obtrusively and disrupt the narrative flow. Similarly, the psychoanalytical insights into the character's psychosexual development occasionally appear as a rather obvious montage of explanatory dreams and flashbacks which also hinder the smooth advance of the narrative discourse. In *Este domingo*, Donoso skilfully integrates the psychoanalytical and existential framework to the narrative structure. Donoso's apprehension of reality in its destructive nature appears in his method of characterization as existential and psychoanalytical comments converge on the fall and disintegration of the characters.

In *Este domingo* as in *El lugar sin límites* and in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*, the characters experience the sensation of living in an absurd universe where no real communication is possible. In fact, there is a thematic escalation from *Coronación* to *Este domingo* in the intensity of individual isolation and in the elimination of the slight ray of hope in *Coronación* provided by Estela's reaching out to Mario. The characters in *Este domingo*, like those in *Coronación* perceive their own futile existence, loneliness and alienation - Donoso's system of characterization again operates within an existentialist conceptual framework. Recurrent themes of existentialism such as the nature and significance of choice and the nature of communication are important aspects of the characterization of Chepa and Alvaro in particular.

Alvaro and Chepa are totally unable to communicate with each
other. There is no possibility of communication between them. For example, when Alvaro contemplates his cancerous growth, he thinks: "Ella será la última en saberlo... Que no lo sepa. Una venganza elegante, si uno quisiera vengarse. Pero no es eso... Ella se quedará sin participar en su muerte. No es venganza. Es miedo de que se la arrebate." (p. 32-33)

There is also a total lack of communication between the grandson narrator and his parents:

"... jugaba cerca de ellos en la sala, intentando atrapar la vista de mi padre y mediante una sonrisa arrancarlo de su universo para recordarle que yo existía. (p. 11); ... yo me cuelgo del cogote de la Antonia, besándola, hablándole, riéndome con ella para que mi padre crea que no lo oigo y así no se dé cuenta de que no tengo ganas de despedirme de él, y parte sin insistir, sin darse cuenta de mi enojo. Nunca se da cuenta de nada.

A similar lack of communication exists between the grandchildren and the grandfather:

Todos los sábados, al llegar, pasábamos por esta estricta ceremonia: un estirado ritual, siempre idéntico, suplantaba la relación que mi abuelo era incapaz de tener con nosotros... Después ya casi no nos miraba y jamás nos dirigía la palabra, ni siquiera para reñirnos. (p. 18)

Alvaro is characterized as an isolated individual, terrified of death, a classic existentialist character:

Pasaba poco tiempo en casa y allí siempre encerrado en su escritorio jugando interminables partidas de ajedrez con un adversario fantasmal que era él mismo. (p. 18)

Pienso en el egoísmo, en la indiferencia de su vida... pienso en su vanidad, en ese terror suyo, mudo, ineficaz, ante la sordera y la vejez que avanzaban. (p. 21)

Tiene 55 años - la década del cáncer. Cuatro días para hacer la biopsia, esas cosas de brujos que los médicos llaman cultivos... y después de ese breve aplazamiento la caída al fondo del terror y no dormir
nunca más hasta dormirse definitivamente. (p. 31)

Cuando por último fui la Antonia me contó que la muñeca lloraba y lloraba, y gritaba que no quería morirse y pedía auxilio porque tenía miedo. . . . 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. 205)

Chepa's final conscious choice to search for Maya in order to find salvation and meaning in her life is a classic existentialist pattern - the possibility of choice is the central factor of human nature in Sartrean philosophy. For Chepa, this choice results in an outcome typical of Donoso - she destroys herself and drags others down in her fall. Alvaro continues to live in loneliness and doubt and experiences the same terror of death as Andrés in _Coronación_. Again Donoso uses the existentialist concepts of the absurdity of existence, the meaninglessness of life, the fear of death, the isolated individual to establish the framework within which he organizes the process of destruction which inevitably overtakes and consumes his characters.

Again in _Este domingo_, as in _Coronación_, Donoso consistently delineates the course of disintegration in individual personalities using a psychoanalytical framework to chart a relationship of psychosexual development to unconscious conflicts and the destructive mechanisms of the human psyche. In _Este domingo_ the psychosexual development of Chepa, a frigid middle aged woman who has never experienced sexual satisfaction, is deftly integrated into the narrative: "No envidio lo sexual. Dios sabe que Alvaro comenzó a matar eso en mí al mes de casados y después fue todo cerrar los ojos y pensar en . . . Dios, para
que termine pronto y me deje tranquila." (p. 153) Like Andrés in Coronación, Chepa is confronted with the erosion of her control and defense mechanisms. The sexuality that emerges from her unconscious needs and desires precipitates madness, destruction and death.

When Chepa first meets Maya, the mole next to his mouth becomes associated in her mind with his attraction for her. Just as Andrés in Coronación associated Estela's pink palms with her sexual attraction for him, Chepa associates Maya's mouth and the mole with her own subconscious desires:

Este sí. Este es Maya. El lunar tenía las facciones disueltas en su rostro despojado de tensiones: sólo el énfasis de ese lunar tan oscuro erizado de pelos en el borde del labio superior. (p. 115)

Y esa mancha en el labio que se mueve poco cuando habla de esa manera tan plana ... sólo cuando sonríe el lunar baila y descubre sus dientes grandes, fuertes. Claro. Roto nortino. Calcio. Tantamina. La sonrisa de Maya es sencillamente encantadora. (p. 127)

Maya está enojado. Come uva. Una pepa se le ha quedado prendido en el labio. La Chepa estira la mano para sacársela. No es pepa. Es lunar. Los ojos de Maya se llenan de luz al reírse. (p. 135)

Se quedó parado en el umbral sonriendo como la Chepa jamás lo había visto sonreír, el labio superior flexible, el lunar un adorno insinuante, una claridad nueva, como si hubieran despejado su cara de una capa de polvo párdsco. (p. 154)

Estiró la mano para tomar la de Maya y se la tomó entre las dos suyas que le ardían. Me arde no sólo la mano sino que la cara y todo el cuerpo y la sangre cantándome las venas. Me lleva las manos a la boca y me las besa. (p. 155)

Both Emir Rodrigues Monegal and Isis Quinteros have pointed out that Chepa is attracted to Maya in an oedipal desire of possession. Chepa is more than twenty years older than Maya and
their situation assumes an incestuous nature. Chepa is a mother substitute for Maya who was abandoned by his own mother as a child. Maya, in his own confused perception of his attraction to Chepa reflects Chepa's passion and maternal instincts:

"Y cada vez que Maya le preguntaba con la boca seca de ansiedad: ¿Y qué más? ella siente ese remezón de placer, como si Maya fuese su guagua y ella le diera su seno repleto de leche y él chupara porque su hambre era inagotable y chupara más y más, como a esa madre que le dijo a una vecina que le cuidara al chiquillo un par de días mientras ella iba a hacer unos tramites a otro pueblo con el minero con quien estaba viviendo, y se subió al autobús en una nube de polvo por el desierto. No volvió. Y una vez, esa vez maravillosa y terrible, Maya en medio del verano, con el sol machacando la tierra seca del patio, Maya le dijo que cada vez que ella se alejaba por el patio era como esa vez con la nube de polvo, y temía que lo olvidara y nunca más volviera. (pp. 136-137)"

Chepa again embodies the dominant engulfing mother figure. The image of the suckling infant and mother in relation to Chepa and Maya expresses the symbiotic nature of their relationship. She wants to take Maya over completely:

"... nadie es mío más que Maya, que no podía salir y yo lo puse en libertad, que no conocía los árboles, que me preguntaba qué más, qué más y yo le cuento y yo so sus ojos y sus oídos y su piel y sus sueños y sus recuerdos y sus proyectos ... (p. 155)"

The incestuous situation is an archetypal one that always results in punishment and expiation. It is Violeta who expiates Chepa and Maya's oedipal passion as Maya identifies her with Chepa. Once again, sexuality, primitive instincts provoke violence and Chepa's drama is the biblical myth of the fall which is determined by the eruption of unconscious needs and desires which destroy the superficial order of the bourgeois conventions and drag the characters down to their fall. In Chepa's case, in
her search for Maya, she literally sinks into a pile of garbage: "Ella sigue tratando de subir o bajar, todo está tan revuelto y sus pies se quedan pegados en la basura podrida y no puede sacarlos y se hunden más y más hasta que no puede y cae." (p. 199) Chepa herself is just another piece of garbage: "Un niño con su perro salta en cima de ella como si no fuera más que otra basura." (p. 199) Again, the theme of the fall and of destruction provides the central basis for Donoso's use of a psychoanalytical framework.

The more subtle integration of the system of characterization with its existential and psychoanalytical elements in *Este domingo* is due to the novel's real novelty, its structure. *Este domingo* has a structure that is far more technically complex and sophisticated than that of *Coronación* as Donoso abandons the largely conventional chronological sequence of his first novel and also skilfully handles alternating points of view and a shifting temporal flow.

The novel is organized around a temporal axis of one specific Sunday - the day Alvaro and Chepa's marriage breaks down, the day Chepa becomes aware of her sexual desire for Maya and the day Maya kills Violeta. The narration moves from this central point forwards and backwards in time in a counterpoint system alternating between the three sections of the grandson's first person memories and the two sections written mainly in third person focussing on Alvaro and Chepa.

Donoso's technique of using alternating or superimposed points of view of a novel's event in a forwards and backwards
temporal flow evoking these events from different perspectives corresponds to his vision of the fragmentation of the human personality and the impossibility to apprehend an integrated, complete reality.

There is a symbolic parallel between the grandson's narrative and the two sections devoted mainly to Alvaro and Chepa. The children's games foretell Chepa's eventual downfall as they symbolically bury the imaginary character Mariola Roncafort. In this way, Donoso presents a double level of perception - the children are unaware of the frustrations and passions of their grandparents but, intuitively and on a metaphoric level, they foretell their grandmother's tragic fate in the symbolic burial of Mariola Roncafort.

The sections titled: En la Redoma; Los Juegos Legítimos; Una Noche de Domingo are narrated by Chepa's grandson. According to Charles Tatum, the child point of view serves several functions in Este domingo:

1) to make a statement about how as the individual matures, the innocent and fabulous world of childhood slowly changes and becomes corrupted 2) to give the reader a perspective on the adult world seen through the child narrator's eyes 3) to reveal the Oedipal relationships perpetrated by the adults on the children and 4) to set a pattern which suggests a kind of cyclical "eterno retorno".6

Through the use of the child's point of view Donoso succeeds in conveying the atmosphere of apparent calm and superficial tranquility as the child's perspective of reality is limited by his innocence and naivete. It is only as an adult viewing in retrospect the events of his childhood that the sequence of events caused by frustration and repressed sexuality become
clear. The adult narrator in *Este domingo* is the same age as Alvaro at the novel's beginning: "El momento en que mi abuelo comienza a existir en mi memoria tenía la edad que yo tengo ahora y su recuerdo nace junto al de su ancianidad y su absurdo." (p. 23) At the end of *Este domingo* the adult narrator is aware of the shattered facade of his childhood world. With this awareness of the pathetic fate of the adults of his childhood, comes a fear that his own life will follow a similar pattern. The memory of Chepa and Alvaro remains vivid and he refers in a veiled way to the pattern his own life seems to be following - a sterile and lonely existence. Hernán Vidal points out: "El narrador parece ser un viejo solterón sin descendencia." 7 As Charles Tatum concludes: "Donoso thus suggests the existence of his fictional characters of a cyclical neverending process of loss of innocence".8

When the now adult narrator becomes aware of the destructive element of the experiential world, the formerly naive child begins to discover that progress and disintegration are the same thing - a conclusion that Alvin Greenberg calls:

the paradoxical lesson of the world in contemporary fiction. . . . It is in this sense of decay - disintegration, deterioration, however it is called - that, rooted in a contemporary and particularly human sense of time and analogous to the scientific formulation of the temporal process as well, a major development of the modern novel, which may well be called the novel of disintegration, is involved.9

Donoso's preoccupation of the disintegrative process wrought by the passage of time is best illustrated in his descriptions of the physical ravages of age contrasted to the former beauty of youth:
La Violeta fue envejeciendo. Esa carne que fue tan dura y tan blanca mientras fue activa, al reposar se puso fofa y amor atada y cualquier cosa le costaba un esfuerzo tremendo. (p. 45)

Las piernas de la Violeta están llenas de varices. La luz de la calle al atravesar los visillos imprime su desenfo sobre su rostro: otras varices. (p. 54)

Tiene el trasero verdaderamente enorme y las piernas como postes llenas de moretones y llagas . . . (p. 56)

Alvaro espera antes de avanzar, contemplando desde su cuarto la terrible destrucción de sus nalgas maltratadas por la celulitis. Hay que esperar: el portaligas, el corpino, las medias. ¿No se da cuenta de que es obsceno? (p. 83)

Pero alcanzas a ver: tus ojos son demasiado chicos y juntos, lo más débil de tu rostro, y no los quieras porque en los ojos es donde más se te notan los años que no pasan en vano, mi viejo, que no pasan el vano, el iris descolorido, el perfil de los párpados apenas enrojecido, escasez de pestanas que nunca fueron abundantes . . . mira tus ojos que pueden estar muriéndose. (p. 32)

The cancer which will eventually kill Alvaro is another graphic example of the disintegrative process:

Como si las metastasis ya sembradas en tu hígado y tu prostata, en tu cerebro, en tu rodilla, en tu vejiga, hubieron chupado todo el vigor de tu organismo. (p. 32)

Donoso also accompanies the physical disintegration of the characters and their disintegrating world with the decrepitude and decay of their houses:

Y todo ese silencio en la pieza, donde la Violeta está poniendo recipientes para recibir las goteras al lado de los muebles increíblemente desteñidos que fueron de la salita de su madre. (p. 54)

Sigue deshabitada: el jardín enmalezado, las paredes descoloridas. La avidez de la buganvilla tumbó el balcón de madera de nuestro mirador. (p. 208)

Cuando entregan la casa a los demoledores abrirán las puertas y las ventanas. La luz volverá a entrar como antes. Encontrarán la casa despojada de puertas y zócalos y jambas y guardapolvos y parquets, un cascarón
que caerá a los primeros golpes de la picota hecho un montón de escombros en el jardín enmalezado. (p. 210)

Alvin Greenberg uses the concept of entropy as a critically descriptive device which he applies to Celine in particular as well as Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs, Joseph Heller, Nathaniel West. Donoso's novels from _Coronación_ to _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ illustrate the concept of entropy, a system that may be defined as the tendency of an ordered universe to go over to a state of disorder, to sink back into that original chaos from which it may have emerged, to drift toward an unstructured state of equilibrium that is total. _Este domingo_ is part of that process of moving towards an increasingly unstructured state of equilibrium which culminates in _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_.

Part of this entropic process is the gradual elimination of any possibility of regeneration. The final note of hope in _Coronación_ which was at best ambiguous and tenuous, is absent from _Este domingo_.

As the adult narrator evokes his childhood, we follow his development as he retraces his path towards adulthood. This development represents an inevitable loss of innocence, an awareness of the corruption of the adult world and eventual inclusion in the disintegrative process. The evocation of the past, of the child's world is the only way to recover a kind of human innocence. Thus Donoso, using a vision of the past seen through a child's point of view, provides a possibility of recuperating time gone by, of going against the current of time which leads towards death and decay. In this way, Donoso's use of
a specific technique - manipulating a child's point of view - liberates the thematic material. The past is a refuge, rich and full of sensual experiences. In *Este domingo* there is a Proustian sense of recollection. Proust fully exploited the minute, domestic details of life in a household. In the grandson's memories, we find a similar sense of tender and nostalgic evocation in *Este domingo*:

La Antonia me alcanzó mientras yo, inclinado bajo el ilang-ilang, estiraba mis medias y fijaba las hebillas de mis pantalones preparándome para una entrada triunfal. Al preguntarle como me veía me pareció muy tieso para que me examinara. La luz que quedaba era honda como la de un estanque: si yo me movía, si cualquier cosa se movía, los objetos que reposaban dentro de esa luz fluctuarían silenciosamente y solo después de un instante recobrarían la perfección de sus formas quietas. (p. 16)

La casa estaba llena de armarios y de alacenas y subterráneos, de puertas falsas ocultas por cortinas o condenadas con una tranca de palo que era facilísimo desclavar de maletas cubiertas con etiquetas fabulosas y baúles nominalmente prohibidos que abríamos con una horquilla retorcida para disfrazarnos con sus contenidos, de posibilidades de que otras sombras se desprendieran de las sombras, y pasos de la oscuridad, y arañas de los techos y de pronto el deleite de una ventana abierta de par en par sobre el jardín donde la luz amarilleaba entre las hojas. (p. 25)

Y en la noche del sábado —la ventana abierta al jardín en el verano, las escamas púrpuras de la buganvilla formando un dragón fascinado que se asomaba al balcón— esperábamos los tres primos, Luis, Alberto y yo que mi abuelo y mi abuela se quedaran dormidos y entonces, en silencio, las dos primas, Marta y Magdalena, subían hasta el cuarto del mirador y comenzaban nuestros juegos. (p. 26)

Proust's sensual imagination and in particular his association of the sensual stimulation of smell with memory is also echoed in the passages describing the "olor a domingo" in which the "empanadas" provide the mnemonic stimulus:
En un instante el auto entero se llena del festivo olor de las empanadas calientes... de los domingos de toda la vida... este olor dorado, tibio... este olor a domingo que llena el auto, a domingo, a este domingo... este domingo, este olor a domingo, a domingo en la mañana pero no muy temprano, cuando las sirvientes están atareadas en la casa pero en otras partes de la casa, una limpiando el salón con un trapo amarrado en la cabeza, otra atendiendo a mi madre, otra vistiendo a mi hermano menor, otra regando las plantas de la galería, otra canturreando la cocina al destapar el horno para ver cómo están las empanadas, y entonces, en ese momento, este olor a domingo en la mañana pero no muy temprano se pone a circular lentamente por la casa desde el fondo del patio de la cocina, galerías y corredores, escurriéndose por los intersticios debajo de las puertas para entrar a las habitaciones cerradas donde aun no terminamos de despertar - se cuela por debajo de mi puerta hasta mi dormitorio caldeado por la mañana de verano, cerradas las persianas, corridas las cortinas la sábana casi tapándome la cabeza y el olor a masa apenas dorándose vence a los demás olores calientes de mi cuarto y llega a mi nariz e desde ahí manda comunicaciones hasta el fondo de mi sueño tibio... (pp. 56-107)

Este domingo is also reminiscent of Faulkner in several aspects. As the reader follows the characters immersion in the past in Este domingo, it is not only the narrative techniques of alternating points of view, forms of interior monologue, moving forwards and backwards in time around one temporal axis which are reminiscent of Faulkner. Donoso, like Faulkner, links the destiny of his characters to their obsessions. With Donoso, as with Faulkner, the fall is inevitable. The act of the downfall is preestablished, what counts are the antecedents and the process of that fall.

There is also a very strong flavour of Kafka in Chepa's desperate and disastrous search for Maya. Kafka, unlike Faulkner, always presents his characters as totally alone, with no God, in their infernal and tortuous descent into hell through the
labyrinth of their obsessions.

These literary influences, some of which Donoso himself has often mentioned, in no way diminish *Este domingo* - rather situate it in a larger literary context than earlier critics who viewed Donoso in a narrow Chilean literary context. This broader and more cosmopolitan literary affiliation is recognizable in several other major Latinamerican authors (Fuentes, Cortázar, Borges, Vargas Llosa). Donoso, in following the efforts of modern writers to break with the unilateral vision of the omniscient narrator and the concept of unity of action is using techniques able to express his personal vision of the fragmented nature of human personality and of the ambiguous nature of reality.

The sections titled "primera parte" and "segunda parte" which alternate with the grandson's narrative sections are written from the point of view of an apparently omniscient narrator who focusses on the world of the adults, mainly on Chepa and Alvaro. Although the "primera parte" and "segunda parte" are largely third person narrations, Donoso, as in *Coronación*, uses a form of penetration into the character's interior reality. In *Este domingo*, the techniques Donoso uses to achieve the sense of interior reality, are varied and subtle as he manipulates points of view.

In the "primera parte", which focusses on Alvaro, the narrative perspective is often determined by what Alvaro is thinking and feeling, what Noé Jitrik calls "el realismo de conciencia."10 Donoso uses indirect interior monologues in a third person narration, direct interior monologues in first
person narration, direct interior monologues in first person narration and interior monologues in second person narration, examples of which follow:

Se mira en el vidrio del mayor de sus anaqueles. No. Así no. Doblado sobre su brazo el cuello de su abrigo no debe caer junto al ruedo, es necesaria una diferencia, el cuello a la altura del Stendhal empastado en tela verde flordelisada, el ruedo más abajo, sobre el Carlyle en una pasta bastante ordinaria que tantos deseos tiene de cambiar. (p. 31)

Estoy pensando en alguien, alguien que conozco poco y me desagrada, pero que ha estado aquí en mi casa y que tiene un lunar como la saltadura de la tetera en la arista del labio. Alguien . . . ¿quién será? enfin, no importa. Lo que importa es que a veces los nombres se me quedan atascados en los repliegues del cerebro. (p. 29)

Y si no, mi viejo, te conformas con la pasta corriente que tienes y te pasas la tarde encerrado en tu escritorio leyendo On Heroes and Hero Worship, que al fin y al cabo no es mala preparación para la muerte. (p. 32)

These are favorite Jamesian narrative devices which place the reader in the character's mental world.

These interior monologues, like those of Henry James or William Faulkner, are not an attempt to recreate an exact and instantaneous insight into the mental chaos of the characters thoughts such as Joyce attempted, where style and even spelling reflect the characters psychic flow. Donoso's characters' interior monologues are a literary reelaboration of the original chaotic thoughts and feelings. In reconstructing the characters' state of conscience, their doubts, their anguish, their egocentrism, Donoso avoids Joyce's prolific verisimilitude but achieves a great deal of plausibility. Donoso, like James, analyzes human relationships from inside his characters' egocentricity. For example, we understand the resentment and
hostility Alvaro feels towards Chepa who is always busy with her charity projects during the week and with her grandchildren on weekends:

La Chepa sale temprano y llega tarde todos los días de la semana. Lo deja solo en la casa sin nada que hacer ahora que ha jubilado, sin preguntarle siquiera cuál es su programa para el día, si quiere que hagan algo juntos, como los demás matrimonios de su edad y posición, ir al cine, o alguna visita de familia o de pesame. Ella se va. Quien sabe donde. Ah, sí. Donde sus zapatos embarrados, con olor a parafina o a fuego de leña en la ropa. (p. 36)

Although these activities are socially laudable, they cover Chepa's absolute lack of interest in Alvaro and from his point of view, Chepa's activities are merely a form of rejecting him. Later on, we see from Chepa's point of view the compensatory nature of her charitable activities:

¿Pero qué voy a hacer? Con la miseria puedo vermelas. Y con la mugre. Eso está a mi alcance porque yo soy una pobre mujer ignorante: la institutriz no me enseñó más que a leer y a escribir y a sacar cuentas. En el piano nunca pasé del Czerny más simple y el francés se me olvidó todo. Pero a ellos los pobres les doy algo que sé, cuando les enseño que no deben seguir viviendo en la mugre, cuando les empapele la pieza con papeles de diario porque si no lo hago yo misma ellos no lo hacen y el viento del invierno trae las pulmonías, sí yo sé ayudarlos, déjenme ayudarlos . . . (p. 119)

The alternating of different narrative points of view underlines the ambivalence of the reality that is being narrated. Another factor in Este domingo that increases the sense of ambivalence and ambiguity is the use of what Antonio Cornejo Polar calls the "ley de substitución."11 According to this "law", each character can change into another, at least in the mind of a third person. In Este domingo there is a system of substitution which implies a questioning of human identity and actions. This
system is one which Donoso will continue to develop in *El lugar sin límites* and which reaches its ultimate conclusion in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* which totally negates human identity.

This system is most clearly displayed in the sexual relations between the characters of *Este domingo*. For example, Alvaro, when making love to Violeta imagines in her place the pure virgin bourgeois girls he knows:

"... entonces, de noche, tarde, lleno de deseo por la Alicia o la Pola, a quienes ha dado sacratísimos 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 será la Alicia y otro día la Pola, todas, poseo a todas esas muchachas imposibles en tu carne rolliza y caliente. (p. 74)"

Violeta participates in this charade of identities in order to sexually satisfy Alvaro:

"... cuando regresaba después de pasear con la Pola y se metía en su cuarto para revolcarse con ella diciéndole Pola, mi linda, apriétame Pola que te quiero, apriétame - y la carne gorda de la Violeta se transformaba en la carne glacial de la Pola, en los pechos apenas insinuados y dolorosamente deseados, pero que solo podía tocar y gozar en los pechos inmensos de la Violeta, que le decía, sí, sí, soy la Pola, su Pola, mijito ... . Ella era todas. La Pola, la Laura, la Alicia, sus primas ... todas. También era la Chepa. (p. 78)"

On his wedding night, Alvaro can only make love to Chepa by imagining that she is Violeta.

No es la Chepa la que se estremece en sus brazos esperando, es la Violeta. Acaricia una axila, sí, sí, es la axila de la Violeta y se es la axila de la Violeta es la Violeta entera, Violeta, mijita, Violeta, conte así, tócame por acá, ahora aquí mijita. Y cerrando los ojos ... sí, sí puedo, sí puedo, y duro ahora y seguro hizo el amor con la Violeta en la carne ignorante de la Chepa. (p. 88)"
Violeta makes love to Alvaro, pretending that he is Marín, her hometown boyfriend:

... me volvía loca ese verano pensando en él todo el tiempo sola en la cama aquí en la ciudad, me volvía loca, hasta que lo encontré a usted pues, don Alvarito, y cuando usted me toca y me hace de todo pienso en él. Usted es él, el huaso Marín. (p. 76)

Maya imagines that la Marujita is Chepa ("Nunca estamos solos porque siempre está acordándose de usted, y cuando está borracho y me besa en la cama, cerra los ojos y una vez dijo su nombre, como si yo fuera usted.") (pp. 187-188) and when Maya kills Violeta, he feels that he is killing Chepa, whom he identifies with Violeta: "... que las dos queríamos comerlo, tragarlo, controlarlo, deshacerlo, y que él no se iba a dejar y entonces comenzó a pegarme, Misia Chepa, mire como me dejó este sinvergüenza ..." (p. 172) Each act is transferable to another and each person dissolves into another - concrete reality is always ambiguous and only a mask covering another possible perception of reality. This constant emphasis on the ambiguity of sexual relationships and sexual identity anticipates the world of El lugar sin límites which is based on the reversal of sexual identity and roles - the world of the "travesti", whether real or symbolic.

So far we have outlined key elements in Este domingo which are integrated into the novel's overall archetypal structure which is what organizes and best reveals the main theme of destruction, the essence of which is the fall. We have pointed out relevant biographical, existential and psychoanalytical
elements in the system of characterization as well as the integration of narrative techniques which express the author's perception of reality.

We have mentioned the importance of the past in *Este domingo* which brings us to the necessity of synthesizing all of the component elements into a whole complete structure. The archetypal analysis of *Este domingo* provides us with both a central focus to the novel and an overall structural basis.

In Donoso, the symbols in the Bible provide the main grammar of literary archetypes. The Bible, as myth, provides a synthesizing archetypal structure extending from creation to apocalypse. *Este domingo*'s mythical patterns are organized largely by apocalyptic and demonic imagery.

In *Este domingo* we find a similar archetypal reduction of time as that expressed in *Coronación*. Again, the past appears as a lost paradise where order prevailed and this past is evoked in terms of its serenity, security and beauty. The grandparents' house represents this lost Garden of Eden. For the grandson the house was "la permanencia y solidez, la confianza, el orden." (p. 13) Through the narrative device of filtering the past through the child's point of view, Donoso expresses the longing for the lost paradise and the attempt to recapture a metaphysical space of happiness and permanence. In this sense, the child functions as an archetype to restore the state of innocence lost collectively through the process of civilization. The projection towards the future in *Este domingo* suggests a cyclical process of loss of innocence. The child in *Este domingo* begins his memories
at about the age of six, before he begins to go to school: "Mi madre me explicó que la gente ignorante que no iba al colegio como yo iba a ir al año próximo . . ." (p. 99). When the narrator writes this, he is in his fifties, the same age as his grandfather in the child's memory. When the narrator was a child, he was sure he would never be like Alvaro: "Yo no iba hacer nunca, en nada, como él." (p. 22) The narrator projects an aura of loneliness and isolation, he is cut off from his family:

¿Son ellos o soy yo quien se ha quedado aislado en uno de los medallones fabulosos de la alfombra color galleta del mirador? (p. 204)

Ahora, mi abuelo y mi abuela están muertos y mis padres y mis tíos son casi ancianos. Y mis primos . . . ¿qué será de ellos? ¿Dónde estarán, que estarán haciendo? . . . de pronto me doy cuenta de que ni siquiera sé si la Marta tiene hijos, y se los tiene, no sé cómo se llaman y ni que apellido llevan, ni si se van a almorzar los domingos a una casa que yo no conozco. (pp. 206-207)

This similarity with Alvaro's loneliness sets a pattern which suggests a cyclical "eterno retorno". Alvaro represents the end of the cycle the narrator will eventually reach - death. Like Elisa in Coronación he is another archetypal incarnation of death. His appearance is no longer really human, he is a white porcelain doll (la muñeca), and the children think perhaps he belongs to another species, "talvez el de los insectos con sus extremidades flacas y sus gestos angulosos". (p. 22) As with Elisa in Coronación, Donoso often associates the colour white with Alvaro:

. . . bajo, sus pantalones planchados como cuchillos colgaban unos cordones blancos, completamente ridículos con los que ataba a sus canillas los calzoncillos largos que nunca ni en el verano más torrido, dejaban de proteger la fragilidad de su cuerpo. (p. 20-21)
Alvaro even eats white food: "Como postre sólo comía unas gelatinas blanquizcas en forma de estrella . . ." (p. 18) Donoso depicts Alvaro several times as a reflection in the mirror, for example:

Llegamos a darnos cuenta de que escudrinaba su propio reflejo en los cristales de sus armarios de libros, arreglándose inecesariamente el nudo de la corbata, pasándose la mano sobre el cuidadoso peinado que parecía pintado sobre su cabeza, vigilando y tironeando su chaleco de modo que no hiciera ni una sola arruga, como si en esos cristales fuera a encontrar una imagen perfecta de sí mismo destacada sobre el crepúsculo riquísimo de los empastes. (p. 20)

This is a good example of the plastic quality inherent to the archetypal level of significance in Donoso's writing. Alvaro, like Elisa, is truly a ghostly character, a living corpse, a mannequin. He is also a sexually ambivalent character. Emir Rodriguez Monegal suggests that Alvaro is a masked prototype of la Manuela in El lugar sin límites. 12 The nickname "la muñeca" suggests this ambiguous sexual identity. He is sexually passive in his relationship with Violeta and feels castrated by Chepa's domineering nature. He is a true narcissist, vain, obsessed with his clothes and his appearance. Like Narcissus, he is in love with his own image. He spends hours in front of the mirror. Latent bisexuality is not as obvious in Este domingo as in El lugar sin límites, but sexual duality is nonetheless suggested. The masculine-feminine duality is an important aspect of Donoso's emphasis on the lack of unity of the human personality, its

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fragmentation and, as in the case of Chepa, its apocalyptic dissolution and obliteration. Donoso constantly emphasizes dualities within the human mind - good and evil, exploiter and exploited, destroyer and creator, madness and reason, male and female. As Joseph Campbell has stated, the human mind is the ultimate mythogenetic zone:

For the human mind in its polarity of the male and female's modes of experience, in its passages from infancy to adulthood and old age, in its toughness and tenderness, and in its continuing dialogue with the world, is the ultimate mythogenetic zone - the creator and destroyer, the slave and yet the master, of all the gods.13

Chepa, in contrast to Alvaro, from the children's point of view is an archetypal incarnation of life. She is the tree of life, the bountiful cornucopia:

Nos trepábamos a ella como a un árbol cuando éramos pequeños, exigiéndole cuentos y dulces y caricias y preferencias y regalos, como a una cornucopia inagotable. Más tarde, ya crecidos, no podíamos treparnos a su cuerpo pero estar en su casa era como seguir pegados a ella físicamente, y la casa como extensión del cuerpo de mi abuela, configuraba la cornucopia: era como inventada por mi abuela para nuestro deleite. (p. 26)

Chepa, as the tree of life, is part of the apocalyptic structure. This emerges more clearly in her association with the house and with fire. The grandchildren believe that Chepa was destined to become a miraculous animita: "Que mi abuela estaba destinada a ser animita milagrosa lo contamos en el colegio, llenos de orgullo." (p. 99) The house centralizes the action in Este domingo and is endowed with a special significance not only in its identification with Chepa's mother earth image ("esa casa que era prolongación del cuerpo de mi abuela") but also because it is
a refuge, a sanctuary for the grandchildren and later for street children ("un asilo de niños vagabundos") (p. 210), a continuation of the vital forces of life Chepa incarnates: "Me gusta que estos niños se refugian ahí, como se esa casa que era prolongación del cuerpo de mi abuela viviera aun: la cornucopia derramándose todavía." (p. 210) In this sense, the house assumes in the narrator's mind, a mythical projection towards the future as he imagines the burning house as "una animita gigantesca encendida en su memoria". (p. 210) These are the narrator's final words in Este domingo and they convey the same sense of lyric beauty, of reaching towards paradise that we find in Elisa's death in Coronación when she sees the stars through the window and thinks she is already dead and on her way to heaven.

Northrop Frye has pointed out the association with fire in apocalyptic symbolism and the passage to the heaven of the apocalyptic world. The imagery of fire surrounding the seraphim in the Bible, the flames descending at Pentecost, the coal of fire in Isaiah's mouth associate "fire with a spiritual or angelic world midway between the human and the divine." 14 Chepa, who is identified with the tree of life is also a burning tree, the animita of popular occultism.

The paradisal garden, the tree of life, the imagery of fire are part of the apocalyptic structure in Este domingo. George McMurray has also suggested that the Sunday ritual of the empanadas symbolizes the regenerative power of the Eucharist, another apocalyptic image.15 In Este domingo, the concept of regeneration proves to be illusory as Violeta's death marks the
end of the Sunday empanada ritual and also the end of the paradisal world of the grandmother: "Como murió la Violeta, ya no hubo más empanadas ni más almuerzos dominicales. Fue el principio del fin." (p. 206)

The counterpart to this apocalyptic symbolism is the presentation of the world of nightmare and terror, pain and confusion, the labyrinth into which Chepa falls at the novel's conclusion - the existential hell replete with demonic imagery. The demonic counterpart of the empanadas, the Eucharist symbol of apocalyptic imagery, is the imagery of cannibalism. In the labyrinth of the slum, Chepa feels that she is in danger of being devoured:

Esa sensación que a veces tiene con los pobres de su población: son voraces, quieren devorarla, sacarle pedazos de carne para alimentarse de ellos ... (p. 192)

Señor, cómo llamar para que me salven de estos chiquillos que quieren descuartizarme y devorarme. (p. 195)

These grotesque scenes are visual imaginary projections of the entropic process and depict the obliteration of Chepa's personal identity, a disintegrative process which throws her world into chaos. Chaos has always been there, hidden behind a false facade, an illusion of order. The grotesque chaos Chepa falls into is the result of the erosion and undermining of the controls and conventions of bourgeois civilization by the destructive, instinctual elements of her own sexuality. Donoso has stated that:

Uno de los grandes terrores míos es el terror de la destrucción, de la abyección de la no existencia, de la reducción a nada, del ser que se elimina, de la

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exploitación del ser humano por el ser humano, en todos los planos de la destrucción. El tema no me interesa en el sentido social; me interesa el ser humano explotado, destructor y destruido.16

Chepa represents a duality of positive vitality as a nurturing mother earth figure and also of negative destruction as a castrating, engulfing female whose frustrated sexual energy is channeled into an incestuous relationship.

The demonic erotic relation becomes a fierce destructive passion that destroys and consumes the one that seeks to fulfill it. Incest is the most common form of the demonic parody of marriage and as the erotic relations and biblical demonic imagery assume a moral projection, incest is a crime followed by punishment and expiation. Chepa's agony in the labyrinth of the slum and the disintegration of her personality is the expiation of her incestuous passion for Maya.

The slum is a labyrinth:

. . . un laberinto de adobes y piedras y escombros, de latas y tablas y calaminas hacinados de cualquier manera, sin orden . . . (p. 183)

Pero aquí no hay periferia: al pie mismo de la costa se establece el caos y se inicia el laberinto (p. 184)

Va cruzando la cancha de futbol cercada por el monstro de la población que se extiende y crece, por ese laberinto de covachas que dibuja su línea áspera bajo la tapa del cielo: tiene que entrar en el laberinto para poder salir. No sabe por donde ni hacia donde. (p. 189)

In contrast to the light and fire of celestial imagery, the demonic labyrinth is in darkness: "... si solo pudiera llegar . . . a algo a cualquier cosa contar de salir de este laberinto negro . . . " (p. 196).

Chepa's anguished wandering in the slum is the demonic image
of lost direction, the labyrinth is the demonic counterpart of
the apocalyptic way, the straight road to God prophesied by
Isaiah. Chepa's final collapse in the garbage heap follows
biblical identification of filth with evil; hell is a foul pit.
Donoso's integration of the monstrous nature of reality deformed
by imagination creates the element of "esperpéntico" which
infuses his writing with a visual impact reminiscent of Bunuel or
Goya as the following quotes illustrate:

In the greatest moments of Donoso's writing, in the grotesque
climactic finales which characterize his first four novels, we
have a sense of converging significance, the feeling that we have moved into the center of Donoso's order of words and seen what our whole literary experience has been about. Unless there is such a centre, Donoso's use of archetypes would never create a total, complete structure. While the archetypal analysis of Donoso's novels provides us with the principle of the generic and recurrent nature of characters and events and the mythical perception of time, it is the vortex of destruction which provides the necessary center and illuminates the otherwise endless series of suggestive analogies and associations and leads us to understanding Donoso's novels as total forms. Life is treated in terms of creation and apocalypse and awakening of the inner self and the inevitable fall. This eternal fall is the essence of Donoso's thematic design of destruction and disintegration.

In *Este domingo*, as in *Coronación*, woman functions as the cause for the fall from paradise into earthly chaos and eventual destruction. The characters in *Este domingo* do not assume such clear cut archetypal incarnations as Elisa', Estela and Dora in *Coronación*. Thus Chepa embodies some of the positive lifegiving elements of Estela as well as some of the maternal repressive elements of Elisa, while Alvaro resembles Elisa in his incarnation of death. This duality of identity as well as the sexual ambiguity which is suggested in *Este domingo*, anticipate the world of *El lugar sin límites* and *El Pájaro de la Noche*. Perhaps as Northrop Frye has suggested in regard to modern writers in general, Donoso is resistant to having his archetypes
"spotted", so to speak, due to a natural anxiety to keep them as versatile as possible and not limited to one exclusive interpretation.17

However, we have seen how in Este domingo the old biblical myths that bourgeois society has cultivated provide the novel's essential structural basis and best reveal the theme of destruction and disintegration. Donoso exposes the superficiality of bourgeois conventions which create a false illusion of order. He accomplishes this using an archetypal structure based on the inversion of Christian myths. The present is hell on earth, the fall is inevitable and man is surrounded by solitude with no possibility of redemption. In Este domingo, Donoso destroys the concept of love as an existential support and a possible regeneration. Instead he emphasizes the impossibility of communication and the isolation of the individual.

This pessimistic perception of the human condition seems so bleak as to preclude any possibility of presenting a darker view. Yet, El lugar sin límites is a far worse and total hell on earth than Este domingo.
Chapter Three Notes

All quotes from _Este domingo_ refer to edition published by Joaquin Mortiz, Mexico, 1968.

1. Isis Quinteros, _José Donoso, una insurrección contra la realidad_, (Madrid: Hispanova de Ediciones, 1978) p. 114. As examples of early negative criticisms of _Este domingo_, Isis Quinteros quotes two reviews written in 1966: "... Coronación lo colocó en el primer plano de la novela chilena. Recibió elogios dentro y fuera del país. Tuvo premios y traducciones y fue convirtiéndose en un gran compromiso para el futuro. Miles de entusiastas esperaban el nuevo paso que daría el autor. Ahora lo ha dado y es, en gran parte, un paso falso." Guillermo Blanco, _Ercilla_, (December 21, 1966); "Si Este domingo fuese el libro de alguien muy joven representaría sin duda buenos méritos; pero José Donoso, según la solapa, cuenta con 42 años de edad y una pública carrera de escritor, cosas ambas que nos confieren el derecho a exigir una obra significativa de nuestro acervo literario ... Este domingo es un libro asaz malogrado." M.C.G., (P.E.C., No. 209, December 30, 1966).


5. "Entrevista a propósito de El obsceno pájaro de la noche", _Libre_, No. 1, September/October/November 1971, pp. 73-76.


8. Tatum, p. 195.


10. Noé Jitrik, "Realismo y antirealismo" in _Actual narrativa latinoamericana_ (Havana: Centro de Investigaciones

12. Rodríguez Monegal, p. 80.


15. McMurray, p. 84.


Chapter Four

_El lugar sin límites_ is Donoso's third novel, published in 1966. It was written in Mexico where Donoso and his wife were Carlos Fuentes' house guests. The book is dedicated to Rita and Carlos Fuentes as a sign of gratitude and affection. Although it marks a shift in setting from _Coronación_ and _Este domingo_ , _El lugar sin límites_ is an integral part of the novelistic narrative cycle which begins with _Coronación_ and ends with _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_. In fact, _El lugar sin límites_ is the novel which most clearly links the world of _Coronación_ and _Este domingo_ to that of _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_. The characters of _Coronación_ and _Este domingo_ that were destroyed by death and insanity are, part of the entropic process which Donoso continues to depict in _El lugar sin límites_ and in _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_. The latter both use human travesty, inversion of sexual roles, spiritual and physical atrophy and decay to illustrate the inexorable process of destruction and man's inevitable fall. In a 1972 interview in France, Donoso points out that _El lugar sin límites_ originated as part of the material destined to become _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_: "J'avais des milliers et des milliers de pages. J'en ai pris une, je l'ai agrandie et transformée en un roman qui devait être _El lugar sin límites_ , qui, en substance, est une page de "l'Oiseau"."1

The society depicted in _El lugar sin límites_ is under a feudal system, unlike the urban milieu of the "haute bourgeoisie"
in Donoso's previous two novels. The setting of the novel is a small rural town in the central interior region of Chile, Estacion el Olivo. It was founded by a wealthy land owner and politician, Alejandro Cruz - Don Alejo - who is all powerful: "Aquí en el pueblo es como un Dios. Hace lo que quiere. Todos le tienen miedo" (p. 74); "Tanta plata. Y tanto poder: Don Alejo, cuando heredó hace más de medio siglo hizo construir la Estación el Olivo para que el tren se detuviera ahí mismo y se llevara sus productos" (p. 92).

The atmosphere in the town is one of imminent doom and inevitable decay: "Ahora no era más que un potrero cruzado por la línea, un semáforo inválido, un andén de concreto resquebrajado y tumbado entre los hinojos debajo del par de eucaliptos estrafalarios; ..." (p. 20); "El Olivo no es más que un desorden de casas ruinosas sitiado por la geometría de las viñas que van a tragárselo." (p. 46) The action centers on the town's brothel and depicts one day in the life of the four main characters: la Japonesita, la Manuela, Pancho Vega and Don Alejo.

The brothel is run by la Japonesita, a frigid eighteen year old virgin, and her father, la Manuela, an aging and pathetic homosexual tranvestite. La Manuela's one and only act of sexual intercourse with a woman (la Japonesa grande), staged for Don Alejo's benefit as a sort of pornographic peep-show, produced la Japonesita. La Manuela, who dances flamenco for the customers, attracts the local supermacho, Pancho Vega, a truck driver: "Ese hombrazo grandote y bigotudo" (p. 26); "El hombre más macho de por aquí" (p. 58). Both la Manuela and la Japonesita are similarly
afraid of and attracted to Pancho Vega. The long awaited arrival of Pancho Vega to the brothel signals the novel's climax. Pancho Vega's latent homosexuality ["Eso increíblemente asqueroso y que increíblemente es fiesta, éso está bailando para él, él sabe que desea tocarlo y acariciarlo, desea que ese retorcerse no sea sólo allá ... el viejo maricón que baila para él y él se deja bailar y que ... es como se él, también, estuviera anhelando"(p. 126)] triggers an explosion of violence against la Manuela, whom he beats to a pulp and kills. Pancho then disappears for good: "No iba a volver nunca más"(p. 137). Don Alejo will destroy the town: "Echaría abajo todas las casas, borraría las calles ásperas de barro y bonigas, volvería a unir los adobes de los paredones a la tierra de donde surjieron y araríá esa tierra."(p. 69), and Don Alejo will die himself and "no quedará nada después de él porque todos sus proyectos le fracasaron."(115) La Japonesita is left alone to slowly await death: "Hasta que le asaran el arado por encima a todo el pueblo."(p. 137)

Everything and everyone in El lugar sin límites is overtaken by the entropic process which leads inevitably to destruction and death. Three of the main characters have tried to rebel against their condition: Manuela tries to overcome his situation as an old unattractive homosexual by appearing one last time as a seductive, irresistible dancer: "yo, la Manuela voy a ir a bailar para que todo sea alegre como debe ser ... la Manuela avanza atraves del patio entallándose el vestido ... avanza hasta la luz y antes de entrar escucha oculta detrás de la puerta, mientras se persigna como las grandes artistas antes de..."
salir a la luz."(pp. 127-128); La Japonesita wants to lose her virginity and escape the cold monotony of her life: "Para saber quien eres Japonesita, ahora lo sabrás y esa mano y ese calor de su cuerpo pesado y entonces, aunque él se vaya, quedará algo siquiera de esta noche."(p. 121); "Pero hoy Pancho. Un año llevaba soñando con él. Soñando que la hacía sufrir, que la pegaba, que la violentaba, pero en esa violencia, debajo de ella o adentro de ella, encontraba algo con que vencer el frío del invierno."(p. 58) Pancho, who plays the role of the rebel Lucifer, wants to defy the patriarchal authority of Don Alejo, who may in fact be his real father: "... la libertad, él solo sin tener que rendirle cuentas a nadie."(p. 38) All of their efforts to make order out of chaos, to escape their final disintegration, to fulfill their aspirations, not only fail but hasten the collapse of their world.

The critical reaction to El lugar sin límites represents a substantial evolution from that granted to Coronación in 1957. By the end of the sixties, it was evident that Latinamerican literature was undergoing an enormous renovation. El lugar sin límites is clearly part of a period of conscious attempts by Latinamerican writers to renovate language, to express a new apprehension of reality, to question reality, to reject traditional realism. This period of literary renovation, including Donoso, but more commonly associated with the most famous authors such as Fuentes, Cortázar, Vargas Llosa, García Marques, eventually resulted in a significant evolution in literary criticism focusing on Latinamerican literature in
general and Donoso in particular.

Although some critics continued to ignore the problem posed by the emergence of authors and works which formulated new literary values, methods and artistic forms, most, when faced with the national and international success of the new Latinamerican narrative, searched for appropriate methodological approaches to examine this new literary phenomenon.2 The continued burgeoning of various schools of critical methodology, in particular structuralist, marxist, archetypal and psychoanalytical provided ample avenues to explore the "boom". Critics such as Severo Sarduy, Emir Rodriguez Monegal, Ariel Dorfman, Isis Quinteros, Fernando Moreno Turner, Hugo Achugar use these different methodological approaches in analysing El lugar sin límites.3 An enormously varied critical bibliography becomes available in reference to Donoso from the mid-sixties onwards, in comparison to the limited critical material previously in existence.

The "nueva novela" required a "nueva crítica". Carlos Fuentes, in La nueva novela hispanoamericana, 1969, presents a genealogy of the "nueva novela" and outlines his basic criteria for a valid critical approach to understanding it. According to Fuentes the fundamental task of the new Latinamerican writer is the process of searching for and elaborating a new language:

La nueva novela hispanoamericana se presenta como una nueva fundación del lenguaje contra los prolongamientos calcificados de nuestra falsa y feudal fundación de origen y su lenguaje igualmente falso y anacrónico. ...nuestra literatura es verdaderamente revolucionaria en cuanto le niega al orden establecido el léxico que éste quisiera y le opone el lenguaje de la alarma, la renovación, el desorden y el humor. El lenguaje, en
Fuentes's comments are particularly relevant to *El lugar sin límites*, which has a novelistic language, techniques and forms which are a vehicle for Donoso to penetrate into a multiple, ambiguous reality. The main structural element of Donoso's presentation of an ambiguous reality is the archetypal organization of the novel which is based on a demonic parody of biblical myths, an inversion of Christian beliefs. As Severo Sarduy, whose article is a good example of the "nueva crítica" addressing the "nueva novela", points out, in *El lugar sin límites* "la inversión central, la de la Manuela, desencadena una serie de inversiones: la sucesión de éstas estructura la novela. En ese sentido *El lugar sin límites* continua la tradición mitica del 'mundo al revés', que practicaron con asiduidad los surrealistas. El significado de la novela, más que el travestismo, es decir, la apariencia de inversión sexual, es la inversión en sí: una cadena metonímica de 'vuelcos', de desenlaces transpuestos, domina la progresión narrativa."5 *El lugar sin límites* is part of Donoso's ongoing restating and reshaping of recurrent mythical themes which give the narrative cycle comprised of the first four novels their thematic coherence. Isis Quinteros points out the similarities between Donoso's *El lugar sin límites* and Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* in these two authors' treatment of the descent into hell, the mythical treatment of the themes of destruction, the lost paradise, the malignant deity.6 Fernando Moreno Turner and Donald Shaw find the
treatment of the theme of a malignant deity similar to that found in El señor presidente by Asturias.7

In El lugar sin límites, as in Este domingo, the central action is encapsulated in one day, a Sunday, and flashbacks are used to illuminate the present. The novel alternates points of view, as in Este domingo, and uses many of the same narrative devices discussed in Chapter Three in relation to Este domingo. However, compared to Este domingo, El lugar sin límites represents an escalation of grotesque distortion. The grotesque reflects a reality which is already distorted and fragmented. In El lugar sin límites the atmosphere of physical decrepitude and tangible deterioration remains constant as a continuation and escalation of Coronación and Este domingo, but the grotesque in El lugar sin límites describes a process of destruction and disintegration which includes not only physical but psychic reality. The characters, with their psychic aberrations, are the participants and creators and destroyers of a world of grotesque dimensions.8 By presenting la Manuela's point of view as the novel's dominant penetration into the surrounding reality, Donoso succeeds in creating what Fuentes calls "el lenguaje de la ambigüedad", as la Manuela's consciousness oscillates between two opposing realities. Alternately male and female, la Manuela is constantly torn and eventually destroyed by his own ambiguity without ever having found a permanent refuge or security in any one identity. Just as Donoso used the point of view of the very old or the very young in Coronación and Este domingo, in El lugar sin límites he uses a homosexual transvestite to incarnate
and present an ambiguous perception of reality, where the real and the unreal appear as superimposed in a process of disintegration.

In _El lugar sin límites_ the grotesque, which appears only exceptionally and rarely in _Coronación_ and _Este domingo_, becomes pervasive. The ambiguity found in _Este domingo_ in terms of the characters integrity of identity is amplified in _El lugar sin límites_. The system of substitutions and psychological transferences of identity which begins in _Coronación_ and is further developed in _Este domingo_, assumes new proportions in _El lugar sin límites_. The novel presents a constant succession of ambiguous characters playing changing roles: the "bailarina" is a female impersonator, the madam of the whorehouse is a frigid virgin, Pancho Vega, the local macho, is a latent homosexual, Don Alejo's godlike character alternates between benevolence and malevolence. Donoso manipulates a game of masks which never reveals the real face, only underlying ambiguity.

In _El lugar sin límites_ Donoso achieves a subtle integration of narrative form and thematic content. The presentation of fictional material filtered through the consciousness of la Manuela or la Japonesita or Pancho Vega isolates each individual character, emphasizing their alienation, and through presenting a multiplicity of perceptions, Donoso creates a pervasive ambiguity which undermines a unilateral perception of objective reality.

The novel's action occurs within a time lapse of nineteen hours, beginning with la Manuela's awakening on Sunday around 10:00 A.M.: "La Manuela despegó con dificultad sus ojos
lagañosos, se estiró apenas y volcándose hacia el lado opuesto de donde dormía la Japonesita, alargó la mano para tomar el reloj. Cinco para las diez. ... Se cubrió los hombros con el chal rosado." (p. 11), and ending at 5:00 A.M. the next day when la Japonesita goes to bed, the pink shawl providing a unifying link: "... la hicieron arrebozarse en su chal rosado. ... Deben ser cerca de las cinco porque oye llorar a la Nelly y la Nelly siempre llora un poco antes de la madrugada. Entró en su pieza y se metió en su cama sin siquiera encender una vela." (p. 159)

The novel has twelve chapters which are perfectly fused into one symmetrical unit. The first five chapters are centered on la Manuela's awaiting Pancho Vega's return, the last five chapters are centered on these two characters meeting and the outcome of their encounter. The middle chapters, the sixth and seventh, are centered on the recollection of past events, namely the arrival of la Manuela in Estación el Olivo as part of the celebration of Don Alejo's electoral victory, la Japonesa Grande's seduction of la Manuela as part of a bet with Don Alejo, which resulted in la Japonesita's birth. George McMurray summarizes: "Thus, except for Chapter six and seven, which are essential to both plot and thematic development, the central action zigzags forwards, postponing climactic events, accumulating emotional momentum, and heightening the impact of the final chapters." 9

As in Coronación and Este domingo, Donoso's characters in El lugar sin límites are driven by their own obsessions into a climax of violence and destruction. As Donoso plotted the course of Andrés's and Chepa's psychosexual development and the erosion
of their control mechanisms by their own emerging sexuality, in El lugar sin límites, Donoso carefully plots Pancho Vega's and la Manuela's emotional development towards their final climactic encounter.

The narrative begins in the traditional third person but gradually, in the first chapter, a form of narrated monologue refers to the characters' thoughts: "Casi cinco minutos seguidos estaría tocando, ronca e insistente, como para volver loca a cualquiera." (p.12); "Sin hacer ruido para que su hija no se enojara, se inclinó de nuevo, sacó la maleta y la abrió. Un estropajo. Mejor ni tocarlo. Pero lo tocó. Alzó el corpiño ... no, parece que no está tan estropeado, el escote, el sobaco ... componerlo." (p. 14) Donoso begins with an objective narrative stance and then narrows the focus to la Manuela's figural mind as the third person narrator alternates with a first person interior monologue. This commits the narrator to a certain identification with the character. As Dorrit Cohn comments: "But no matter how 'impersonal' the tone of the text that surrounds them, narrated monologues themselves tend to commit the narrator to attitudes of sympathy or irony."10 The novel uses the same technique found in Este domingo, in which the third person narrator's point of view often focuses in on the characters interior thoughts in an identification of narrator and character:

"Y tragó para agregar:
- Yo no.
- Pero tú me debes plata y él no.
Era cierto. Mejor no acordarse ahora ..."
This third person narrator, whose general function is to describe and to situate time, place and event sometimes becomes an observer who assumes an identification with the unstable, ambiguous situation being described and expresses doubt and hesitation: "Es que hay luna, se dijo la Japonesita, o lo diría en voz alta, o talvez Don Cespedes inclinado sobre el bracero lo diría o talvez sólo lo pensara y ella lo sintió." (p. 136) La Manuela, Pancho Vega and la Japonesita shape the narrative with their direct first person interior monologues. They provide the narration not only with a varied point of view of the events and other characters, insights into their interior reality but they also provide fluidity to the temporal flow of the novel as their orientation flows towards the past, the present and the future through psychological or sensorial stimuli. The frequent incorporation of dialogue into the narration also gives it greater fluidity and agility.

Throughout the novel the point of view alternates between la Manuela, Pancho Vega, la Japonesita, la Japonesa Grande using first person interior monologues, and the third person narrator who, as mentioned previously, often identifies with the characters' interior thoughts and the situation. Don Alejo is seen from the point of view of la Manuela, Pancho Vega, la Japonesita and la Japonesa Grande. Unlike the latter characters, Don Alejo is never seen from within and Donoso's method of viewing him from the characters' different angles reinforces his mythic, unscrutable, impenetrable role.

It is undoubtedly la Manuela's character which is the
central focus of the narration. It is largely through la Manuela's consciousness that the reader gains information and awareness of the characteristics and people of Estacion el Olivo. It is partly through the ambiguity of la Manuela's sexual identity, expressed in linguistic terms, that the whole novel becomes permeated with ambiguity. Other elements, like la Manuela's flamenco dress, are part of the unifying threads of la Manuela's consciousness in the novel and link the text into a cohesive unit. The dress is referred to constantly throughout the novel - sixteen times - and is a symbol of la Manuela's aspirations to feminine seduction.

At the beginning of the novel, the reader is presented to la Manuela and immediately assumes the character must be female, not only because of the feminine name but also because of the narrative attitude: "... como para volver loca a cualquiera." (p. 12) A paragraph later this feminine identity is negated and explained: "A las dos me las voy a montar bien montadas, a la Japonesita y al maricon del papa ..." (p. 12) The sexual ambiguity and inversion of sexual roles is carried beyond merely linguistic terms in the erotic relationship between la Manuela and la Japonesa Grande in which la Manuela assumes a passive feminine role and la Japonesa Grande an active male role: "... no, no, tú eres la mujer Manuela, yo soy la macha, ves como te estoy bajando los calzones y como te quito el sostén para que tus pechos queden desnudos y yo gozartelos ..." (p. 123); "... yo te estoy haciendo gozar porque yo soy la macha y tú la hembra ..." (p. 124)
La Japonesita's sexual ambiguity ["... con sus dieciccho años bien cumplidos ni la regla le llegaba todavía ... Pero la tocaba un hombre y salía corriendo" (p. 25)], the ambiguity of her relationship with her father ["Ni siquiera quería comprar otra cama para poder dormir cada una en la suya." (p. 16); "... su hija le gritó que le daba vergüenza ser hija de un maricón como él. ... bueno, bueno, chiquilla de mierda, entonces no me digas papá." (p. 57); "- Claro, soy tu mamá. No. Mi papa." (p. 146); "Y después con la canción de que los hombres aquí, que los hombres allá, que son todos malos porque le pegan y se rien de él y entonces mi papá llora y dice qué destino es éste el mío y me dice que qué sería de él sin su hijita del corazón, su único apoyo, que no lo abandone nunca." (p. 158)], Pancho Vega's sexual ambivalence ["... esta noche voy a tener que ir a dormir en mi casa con mi mujer y no quiero, quiero divertirme, esa loca de la Manuela, que venga a salvarnos ..." (p. 139); "El sabe que desea tocarlo y acariciarlo, desea que ese retorcerse no sea sólo allá en el centro sino contra su piel, y Pancho se deja mirar y acariciar desde allá ... el viejo maricón que baila para él y él se deja bailar y que ya no da risa porque es como si él, también, estuviera anhelando. Que Octavio no sepa. No se dé cuenta. Que nadie se dé cuenta. ... El baile de la Manuela lo soba y el quisiera agarrarla así, así, hasta quebrarla, ese cuerpo olisco agitándose en sus brazos ..." (p. 144)], Don Alejo's alternatingly malevolent and benevolent divine role ["Y tan bueno Don Alejo. ¿Qué sería de la gente de la Estación sin él?" (p. 20); "Lo conocía demasiado tiempo para no darse cuenta que algo estaba
tramando. Siempre había querido pillarlo en uno de esos negocios turbios de que lo acusaban sus enemigos políticos." (p. 57)] are all central aspects to Donoso's perspective of an ambiguous reality which is structured by an inversion of the norm. The overall archetypal analysis of *El lugar sin límites* reveals an inversion of Christian myths and beliefs and the narrative form sustains this principle of inversion in its structure. In this sense, the novel's social, psychoanalytical and existential contexts are accessories to the archetypal structure which provides *El lugar sin límites* with its essential level of significance.

Like Donoso's previous novels, *El lugar sin límites* is structured by Donoso's use of biblical imagery and dominated by the theme of destruction and the eternal fall. *El lugar sin límites* is hell on earth, a demonic parody of the paradise it was supposed to become. As George McMurray has pointed out:

In *Hell Has No Limits* Donoso reinterprets biblical and classical myths as a means of putting human situations and metaphysical concepts into new perspective. Indeed, the symbolic allusions to the biblical myth of the creation and the fall provide a poetic framework for the depiction of an absurd world based at least in part on existentialist principles.

The schematic relations of biblical themes: innocence, corruption, the lost paradise, the fall play a vital role in analysing the structure of *El lugar sin límites*. A schematic archetypal outline, while it explains the structure and thematic development of the novel, is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the overall literary experience of the reader. The task of rendering the sheer plastic quality of Donoso's writing
is more difficult. Textual analysis does not necessarily make the reader aware of the pleasure Donoso's writing provides although it helps to illuminate his use of narrative techniques and their integration to the novel's thematic content.

El lugar sin límites is a novel in which the themes of destruction and the fall lend themselves perfectly to artistic presentation. By using characters that are grotesque distortions - la Manuela, Don Alejo, Pancho Vega, la Japonesita - Donoso is able to make powerful imaginative statements on the themes of destruction and the fall and these themes consequently provide Donoso opportunity for greatest virtuosity in his writing. As always, Donoso's language is at its most magnificent and becomes the center of our whole literary experience of the novel when his characters are caught up in the vortex of destruction and consumed by chaos:

No alcanzó a moverse antes que los hombres brotados de la zarzamora se abalanzaron sobre él como hambrientos. . . talvez no fueron ellos sino otros hombres que penetraron la mora y lo encontraron y se lanzaron sobre él y lo patearon y lo pegaron y lo retorciaron, jadeando sobre él, los cuerpos calientes retorciéndose sobre la Manuela que ya no podía ni gritar, los cuerpos pesados, rígidos, los tres una sola masa viscosa retorciéndose como un animal fantástico de tres cabezas y múltiples extremidades heridas e hirientes, unidos los tres por el vómito y el calor y el dolor allí en el pasto, buscando quien es el culpable, castigándolo, castigándola, castigándose deleitados hasta en el fondo de la confusión dolorosa, el cuerpo endeble de la Manuela que ya no resiste, quiebra bajo el peso, ya no puede ni aullar de dolor, bocas calientes, manos calientes, cuerpos babientos y duros hiriendo el suyo y que rien y que insultan y que buscan romper y quebrar y destrozar y reconocer ese monstruo de tres cuerpos retorciéndose, hasta que ya no queda nada y la Manuela apenas ve, apenas oye, apenas siente, ve, no, no ve . . ." (pp. 150-151)

As in Coronación and Este domingo, in El lugar sin límites
it is feminine sexuality - in this case, present in a man - which precipitates the final cataclysm of violence and destruction. La Manuela's fall and destruction assumes the character of an expiation of his crime against nature. La Manuela's final destruction is more terrible than Chepa's expiation of her incestuous passion for Maya. In *El lugar sin límites* the feminine sexuality of la Manuela stimulates Pancho Vega's and Octavio's final sadistic act. As Severo Sarduy points out, "El acto sádico final, que perpetran Pancho y su secuaz Octavio substituye al de la posesión. Incapaz de afrontarse con su propio deseo, de asumir la imagen de sí mismo que éste le impone, el macho - ese travestí al revés - se vuelve inquisidor, verdugo."12 Pancho and Octavio substitute violence for physical possession and their attack of la Manuela is similar to a rape and is described in a language with erotic connotations and the violence assumes an aura of sadistic sensuality ("Se abalanzaron sobre él como hambrientos; jadeando sobre él; unidos los tres; deleitados hasta en el fondo; sus cuerpos calientes retorciéndose; cuerpos babientos y duros hiriendo el suyo.")

La Manuela's "case", that of a homosexual transvestite, illustrates a variety of psychological phenomena which Donoso, instead of presenting in a linear sequence of straight realism, views from la Manuela's interior reality thus transcending the limits of an explicit psychological interpretation of character, a very Jamesian characteristic.

Donoso, like James and Faulkner, presents a given situation in terms of the experience of several participants - an objective
recapitulation of the story is thus impossible as it inevitably deviates from the novelist's intention. In El lugar sin límites, the difference between events as they may appear to an outsider and the same events seen through the characters point of view is crucial. In a synopsis, El lugar sin límites appears as a story of assorted perversions and misbegotten passions. But in la Manuela's and la Japonesita's actual experiencing of the novel's events there is a kind of desperate heroism. We feel their confusion and pain, we feel the power of sexual attraction and the agony in searching for a sense of security and identity. In particular, la Manuela as a character reflects this duality between an exterior dimension which is that of a mask, grotesque, "esperpéntico" and an interior dimension which reveals the tragedy of the ambiguous nature of reality. The characters in the novel all reflect an ambivalent duality but in la Manuela, Donoso's use of a double axis to express his concept of reality - the character being simultaneously perceived on an exterior and an interior level - converges on the destruction of the character on both levels of action. La Manuela is literally physically obliterated and his personality dissolves into uncertainty:

La Manuela terminó de arreglar el pelo de la Japonesita en la forma de una colmena. Mujer. Era mujer. Ella se iba a quedar con Pancho. Él era hombre. Y viejo. Un maricón pobre y viejo. Una loca aficionada a las fiestas y al vino y a los trapos y a los hombres. Era fácil olvidarlo aquí, protegido en el pueblo, sí, tiene razón, mejor quedarnos. Pero de pronto la Japonesita le decía esa palabra y su propia imagen se borroneaba como si hubiera caído encima una gota de agua y él entonces, se perdía de vista a sí misma, mismo, yo misma no sé, él no sabe ni ve a la Manuela, y no quedaba nada, esta pena, esta incapacidad, nada más, este gran borrón de agua en que naufraga. (p. 52)
In *Este domingo* and *El lugar sin límites*, the increased use of "point of view" means a less direct portraiture of society than in *Coronación*, the aspects being portrayed are part of a character's vision. This allows for limiting the view of society but heightening the characters' personality, as in James' later novels. The existential and psychoanalytical concepts that provided an intellectual framework for Donoso's system of characterization in *Coronación* and *Este domingo*, are integrated into a poetic framework in *El lugar sin límites*. The characters' experience of the absurdity of human experience and their interior reality which integrates psychoanalytical characterization to the narrative is part of the novel's unique aesthetic unity as thematic content, narrative form and existential and psychoanalytical elements are fused in a cohesive mytho-poetic framework which depicts hell on earth in a demonic parody of biblical myths.

The archetypal structure of *El lugar sin límites* integrates the novel's existential and psychoanalytical elements into an aesthetic synthesis unified by the thematic emphasis on destruction. Each novel of Donoso's shows an increasingly subtle integration of a psychoanalytical and existential framework to the narrative structure and content. The absurd becomes a metaphor of human existence in *El lugar sin límites* and Donoso's perception of the ambiguous and destructive nature of reality is integrated in the characterization of the characters who exemplify ambiguity and annihilate hope as they all converge in disintegration.
Donoso uses elements from biblical narrative and imagery to set up the basis of the mythological universe in *El lugar sin límites*. The archetypal analysis of *El lugar sin límites* reveals a unified structure of narrative and imagery based mainly on biblical myths. This biblical structural core begins with the creation of Estación el Olivo and the birth of la Japonesita and concludes with the town's disintegration and the downfall of all the characters. At the novel's end, Don Alejo is facing imminent death, la Manuela is savagely beaten to death, Pancho Vega's machismo is destroyed as his latent homosexuality emerges and la Japonesita resigns herself to a living death with no hope of regeneration: "Las cosas que terminan dan paz y las cosas que no cambian comienzan a concluirse, están siempre concluyéndose. Lo terrible es la esperanza. Voy a ir a Talca . . . voy a volver . . . lo de siempre, . . . lo de siempre." (p. 156)

The novel's title, taken from one of Mephistopheles's speeches in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, also used as part of the novel's epigraph, indicates that the place represented in the novel is the basis for a system of connotations which concludes in the mythical image of hell. In this system of connotations, la Manuela appears as a twisted, inverted incarnation of the "hombre faustico". La Manuela has made a pact with la Japonesa Grande, indirectly with Don Alejo, in order to become co-owner of the brothel. La Manuela hoped to find security and peace of mind in this arrangement: "... y así, propietaria, nadie podría echarla, porque la casa sería suya. Podría mandar. La habían echado de tantas casas de putas porque se ponía tan loca cuando
comenzaba la fiesta." (p. 87) The result of this pact, which
signified for la Manuela a total inversion of his already
inverted sexual nature, is that he must remain in Estación el
Olivo, a loss of freedom: ". . . claro que sentí que era una
traición para apresarme y meterme para siempre en un calabozo .. ."
(p. 107); ". . . yo tengo derecho a ver un poco de luz, yo que
nunca he salido de este hoyo, porque me engañaron." (p. 128) The
brothel at present, decrepit and rundown, is in fact literally
sinking down into the earth, a clear image of descent into hell:
"La casa se estaba sumiendo. . . . el piso del salon, talvez de
tanto rocillarlo y apisonarlo para que sirviera para el baile
siguio bajando." (p. 21) Donoso uses certain elements of the
Doctor Faustus myth as part of the structural inversion of El
lugar sin límites. La Manuela's pact has only brought him
failure and darkness and when his long awaited angel of
deliverance arrives, it is in the form of Pancho Vega who brings
him agony and death. In El lugar sin límites Pancho Vega
incarnates another inversion of a biblical myth, the rebel angel
Lucifer who opposes God's designs, in this case, Don Alejo's.

The evolution and the intensification of the grotesque and
the ambiguous nature of reality are paralleled by an evolution in
Donoso's continuing exploration and development of the theme of
destruction which reaches its ultimate conclusion in El obsceno
pájaro de la noche in which the creative imagination eliminates
itself and the destruction of inner reality and of the narrative
itself are completed as the only consciousness left in the novel
is burnt to ashes.

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In _El lugar sin límites_, we witness not only the downfall of all the characters but the physical destruction of Estación el Olivo as it degenerates into hell on earth, a demonic parody of the paradise it was supposed to become, the promised land prophesied by Don Alejo.

The novel's aesthetic unity and central archetypal structure is sustained by a body of recurrent concrete images: wine, vineyards, four black dogs, light, darkness. These images recur so often that they are clearly part of the unifying structure based on biblical myths which provide the novel's coherence.

The characters in _El lugar sin límites_ live in a mythological universe themselves, they hold assumptions and beliefs developed from their existential concerns. Their faith in Don Alejo Cruz (whose name, Cruz, is obviously symbolic in biblical terms as is the town's name) as a powerful God dominates the novel and their perception of Don Alejo shifts from that of a benevolent paternal deity to that of a malignant deity. In la Manuela's desperate attempt to escape from Pancho Vega and Octavio, he fervently prays to Don Alejo both as God the father and as the devil with whom he made a pact in a style reminiscent of biblical psalms:

... _defiéndame del miedo, usted me prometió que nunca me iba a pasar nada, que siempre me iba a proteger y por eso me quedé en ese pueblo y ahora tiene que cumplir su promesa de defenderme y sanarme y consolarme, nunca antes se lo había pedido ni le había cobrado su palabra pero ahora sí, sólo usted, sólo usted ... no se haga el sordo, Don Alejo ... usted es el señor y lo puede todo._ (p. 149)

Don Alejo Cruz has promised the inhabitants of Estación el Olivo the "promised land" with electricity bringing new vigor and
energy to the town. Don Alejo has the power to bring light to the town, a divine power in biblical terms. God's creation brought light and order to chaos and darkness. Don Alejo founded the town: he is the landlord, the owner of the vineyards, the maker of the wine (vineyards are symbolically identified with Christ in the Bible, as Jesus said "I am the vine, ye are the branches" and wine is also associated with Christ through the Eucharist ritual). Similar to the Creator in the Bible, Don Alejo has the power to create either chaos or order or lightness or darkness: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Isaiah 45:7). Divine power has the potential to be evil. In El lugar sin límites, Donoso's perception of the ambivalent duality of character which is presented in la Japonesita, Pancho Vega and la Manuela is also embodied in Don Alejo as he alternately appears as an actively malevolent power who destroys and a benevolent paternal God. In the novel, the theme of the fall is linked to this ambivalent perception of Don Alejo. As Northrop Frye has pointed out:

It is with the "fall" that the legal metaphor begins that persists all through the Bible, of human life as subject to a trial and judgement, with prosecutors and defenders. In this metaphor Jesus is the counsel for the defense, and the primary accuser is Satan . . . In the emotional response to Christianity at any rate, the role of God as Father, however defined in dogma, keeps shifting from the benevolent to the diabolical, from a being genuinely concerned for man to an essentially malicious being compounded of wrath and condemnation. One consequence of having a creation myth, with a fall myth inseparable from it, has been the sense of being objective to God, or, more specifically, of being constantly watched and observed, by an all-seing eye that is always potentially hostile.15

Don Alejo condemns Estación el Olivo to disintegration. He
has no intention of bringing electricity to the town as he plans to incorporate the town site into more vineyards and is slowly buying out all the inhabitants. The town is doomed, the highway has bypassed it, the youth have left, there is no future. The town is the opposite of the earthly paradise, it is hell on earth, and the only human inhabitants are aging and/or sterile, a place which is the abyss of nothingness, of misery going on endlessly. As Antonio Cornejo Polar points out, in *El lugar sin límites* the theme of destruction becomes an absolute value: "Podría decirse que lo que fue un destino personal o grupal, referido de alguna manera a una cierta especificidad histórica, se convierte en *El lugar sin límites* en una categoría absoluta: la destrucción, entonces es el destino."16

La Japonesita, la Manuela and all the inhabitants of Estacion el Olivo have been condemned by Don Alejo to darkness and the vineyards of the landlord emerge as a demonic parody of their biblical association with Jesus and the ideal world biblical imagery places harvest and vintage in. This context of demonic parody is similar to that found in *Este domingo*. The ruins and wasteland of the slums where Chepa collapses are transformed into the labyrinth of the endless vineyards haunted by Don Alejo's four black dogs, in which la Manuela is destroyed. The image is of a harvest and vintage of wrath in which la Manuela is made into food to be consumed by death - symbolized by the four black dogs of Don Alejo.

The four black dogs accompany Don Alejo everywhere he goes and on a narrative level they provide along with la Manuela's
flamenco dress, another important unifying thread, as they are mentioned constantly at regular intervals throughout the novel. In fact, like the flamenco dress, they are mentioned sixteen times. On a thematic level, the four black dogs contribute to establishing Don Alejo as a malignant deity. They are "perros endemoniados" and are a manifest demonic parody of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. In the novel, the dogs' barking sounds are associated with the sounds of galloping (p. 133), reinforcing their thematic association of messengers of death. At the novel's conclusion, Don Alejo unleashes his inferno beasts who will announce destruction and death for Estación el Olivo (p. 155). The dogs have names associated with the Muslim world (Otelo, Moro, Negus, Sultán). They literally illustrate the paradox of "hay moros en la raisa". Don Alejo brings the dogs into church with him (p. 46). The association with Islam is interesting because in the tradition of the Koran, the "djinns", or evil genies assume the form of black dogs (Koran, XVIII).

Throughout the Bible, wine is identified with blood, particularly through the rite of the Eucharist. In El lugar sin límites, the new wine that is drunk at the feast celebrating Don Alejo's election parodies the new wine at the wedding at Cana. This demonic parody is often paralleled by a linguistic parody of biblical style as in the electoral victory celebration of the brothel (which is a grotesque caricature of the celebration at Cana): ". . . todos sabían que iban a festejar el triunfo de Don Alejandro Cruz y sabían donde y como lo iban a festejar. Pero porque se trataba de una fiesta en honor del Señor y cualquier
casa que se relacionara con el Señor era buena, . . ." (p. 75)

Donoso consistently uses biblical imagery to present a demonic parody of Christian myths, an inversion of Christian beliefs. In theological terms the vineyards of the Lord are the symbol of the life giving faith and to be allowed to cultivate them is a sign of grace. In El lugar sin límites, the vineyards are a sign of destruction as they take over the town. The twist the highway has taken, therefore bypassing Estacion el Olivo, is the antitype of the straight way, the path of redemption so vital to Christianity. Isaiah associates the building of a path through the desert into a straight highway with fertility imagery of bringing the desert to life. Again in El lugar sin límites as in Este domingo, Donoso presents a demonic counterpart to the apocalyptic straight way — lost direction, dead end. In El lugar sin límites, everything moves in a single direction towards destruction, nothingness and death. As in Este domingo there is no hope of redemption or regeneration. However in El lugar sin límites we do not find the gentle vista open to the past of one’s childhood, the refuge in the rich texture of childhood memories is absent and the tender evocation of domestic life which marks Este domingo is eliminated in El lugar sin límites.

In the last two chapters of El lugar sin límites, when there is no possibility of salvation for the characters, there is also an absence of memory. The present, which is as bleak and desperate as the future, dominates the novel’s conclusion. This is in sharp contrast to the preceding ten chapters in which the characters live in an interior world filled by past memories and
illusions for the future. As the novel progresses, all the characters' aspirations for the future are frustrated and their illusions are demolished.

As in _Coronación_ and _Este domingo_, _El lugar sin límites_ presents an archetypal reduction of time, but consistent with the novel's structure of inversion, this reduction of time has a demonic twist. The past appears consistently in the characters' memory. La Japonesita and la Manuela remember their previous encounter with Pancho Vega. Pancho Vega remembers his childhood. La Japonesita, la Manuela and la Japonesa Grande remember the town's better days. For example:

La Japonesa Grande recordaba, hacia el final, que en otra época la misa de doce en el veranoatraía a los bracks y a las victorias más encopetados de la región, y la juventud elegante... se reunía al atardecer, en caballos escojidos, a la puerta del correo que traía el tren. Los muchachos, tan comedidos de día como acompañantes de sus hermanas, primas o novias, de noche se soltaban el pelo en la casa de la Japonesa, que no cerraba nunca. (p. 45)

This lost paradise contrasts strongly with the void of the present ("Ahora no era más que un potrero cruzado por la línea..." (p. 20). However, this lost paradise evoked with nostalgia is the past in which are found the roots of the evil which is consuming the town and its inhabitants. As Fernando Moreno Turner summarizes:

Este paraíso que se añora nostalgicamente, que se recrea para evadir el presente, no es tal sin embargo. La inversión una vez más hace de las suyas. En efecto, el tiempo preteritno no está exento de culpa, el paraíso no es puro; en realidad es en el pasado donde están las raíces del mal que aquejan al presente. Son esas celebraciones, esos ritos donde se rinde pleitesía al Dios satánico, las que provocan la caída. En esas fiestas, donde la Japonesa Grande viene a ser un equivalente de la sacerdotisa del gran señor,
encontramos el fundamento del universo degradado que en el presente ha llegado a su punto culminante.17

Time is the eternal destroyer which inexorably advances and destroys: "... el tiempo peligroso y vivo que quería engullirlos ..." (p. 143). The four dogs announcing death are the only constant in the novel that escape deterioration and destruction: "Negus, Sultán, Moro, Otelo siempre igual ... siempre perfectos los cuatro perros de Don Alejandro ..." (p. 134). In El lugar sin límites, Donoso's use of biblical myths creates a world dominated by the destructive forces of evil, a hell without limits in which all are held captive until they succumb to their inevitable destiny of destruction. Their fall is preordained, their destruction inexorable. What counts in El lugar sin límites and what gives the novel its aesthetic unity and richness, of significance is the mytho-poetic presentation of the process of the eternal fall and destruction.
Chapter four notes


2. Good examples of these approaches are to be found in: Roberto Fernandez Retamar, "Para una teoría de la literatura hispanoamericana", Casa de las Américas, No. 80, 1973; Carlos Rincón, "Sobre crítica e historia de la literatura hoy en Latinoamérica", Casa de las Américas, No. 80, 1973; Kurt Schnelle, "Acerca del problema de la novela latinoamericana" in El ensayo y la crítica literaria en Iberoamerica, Toronto, 1970.


5. Sarduy, p. 72.

6. Quinteros, pp. 146-151.


9. George McMurray, José Donoso (Boston: Twayne Publishers,
1979), pp. 102-103.


11. McMurray, p. 90.


13. To Dr. Faustus' question: "Tell me, where is the place that men call hell?" Mephistopheles replies: "Under the heavens.

   ... Within the bowels of these elements Where we are tortured, and remain for ever. Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed In one self place; but where we are is hell, And where hell is, there must we ever be . . . ."

14. The similarities between *El lugar sin límites* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* are pointed out by an article by Jose Promis: "El mundo infernal del novelista José Donoso" in *Tierra y mundo en la novela hispanoamericana*, Ediciones de la Universidad del Norte, Antofagasta, Chile, 1969.


17. Moreno Turner, p. 96.
Chapter five

El obsceno pájaro de la noche, published in 1970, is Donoso's fourth novel and it is considered to be his masterpiece by most critics. It is a long book, 544 pages, and Donoso worked eight years on it. Some biographical information is interesting in terms of the circumstances surrounding the writing of the novel. In an interview with Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Donoso describes a period of complete insanity which he suffered:

... tuve otra hemorragia de úlcera y me tuvieron que hacer una operación de emergencia. A causa de mi intolerancia a la morfina, pasé varios días enloquecido, con alucinaciones, doble personalidad, paranoia e intentos suicidas... los efectos de esta locura demoraron un par de años a desaparecer... En un esfuerzo sin pausa durante ocho meses, todavía sufriendo de pesadillas y paranoia, empecé a reescribir desde el principio El obsceno pájaro de la noche. El recuerdo de los miles de páginas que ya había escrito dio al material una organización quizá redescubierta tras mi experiencia con la locura.

Donoso also discussed with another interviewer the reorganization of the novel after his experience with insanity:

Empecé la novela "da capo", es decir integralmente como si nunca la hubiera comenzado, el trabajo de ocho anos como que lo ingerí y a través de esta locura se me ordenó en la forma que aparece ahora. Lo escribí desde el 15 de marzo hasta el 15 de octubre del mismo año (1969) incorporando todo el material de los ocho anos, pero dándole el orden que me había sugerido la locura.

We know that Donoso, as a child, lived in a large, old mansion, filled with senile, eccentric old relatives and run by servants. The fictional world of El obsceno pájaro de la noche no doubt has as its genesis many elements of the author's personal
background and the socio-historical context the writer is familiar with.

Donoso, in an article he wrote, describes what he perceives as the initial element of the novel's conception in 1960:

... . cuando de pronto vi que se detuvo justo delante de nosotros un gran coche oscuro, lujosísimo, con chofer con librea de los que no se veían - y supongo que ahora tampoco se verán en Santiago. El chofer era rubio, de ojos azules, eléctricos, buen mozo, con la barbilla partida, como los Azcoitía en mi novela. Pero esta presencia no hubiera bastado para sugerir nada: en el asiento de atrás, elegantísimo, solitario, iba un monstruo, un niño con la cara cosida y zurcida, enano y con joroba. Iba a llamarle la atención a Fernando sobre esta visión y este contraste - ¿Cuál de los dos era el triunfante? ¿Cuál de los dos el humillado? -, cuando cambiaron las luces, el coche partió, y la conversación nos llevó casi inmediatamente a cosas tan lejanas de la reciente visión no compartida, que por entonces no dejó ninguna huella en mi imaginación y pareció borrarse por completo de mi memoria.3

Donoso finally concludes, referring to the material at the origin of the novel:

Los resultados han sido, casi siempre, infinitamente distintos a los principios, semilla y no planta, plano azul y no casa, de modo que no solo nadie se "reconoce", lo que sería imposible, puesto que cada personaje y cada situación están compuestos de infinitas capas de tiempo y sensaciones y emociones que necesariamente deforman el original, si es que lo hubo claro y unívoco; si no tampoco nadie sabe que está unido al comienzo mismo de la espina dorsal - como testigo, como iluminados ojos que miran y por lo tanto que también modifican - de lo que he escrito.4

With any literary creation it is both impossible and pointless to try to retrace all the elements at the origin of the creative process. In the case of El obsceno pájaro de la noche as in Donoso's previous novels, the novel is a search for the writer's past, an exercise in exorcism, a confrontation with past ghosts. Donoso's statements are fascinating in terms of what they
reveal of his personality and psychology but not deeply relevant in terms of a productive reading of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* on the practical narrative level. However, the author's comments do illuminate some aspects of the creative process at the origin of the novel and as such, deserve note, particularly as throughout the novel we find echoes of the creative process that Donoso has referred to in the interviews:

... le confesó a Don Jerónimo que no pudo dejar de admirar al artista, no sabía cual era la realidad, la de adentro o la de afuera, si había inventado lo que pensaba o lo que pensaba había inventado lo que sus ojos veían. Era un mundo sellado, ahogante, como vivir adentro de un saco, tratando de morder el yute para buscar una salida o darle una entrada al aire y ver si era afuera o adentro o en otra parte donde estaba su destino, beber un poco de aire fresco no confinado por sus obsesiones, donde comenzaba a ser él y dejaba de ser los demás ... (p. 245)

Humberto no tenía la vocación de la sencillez. Sentía necesidad de retorcer lo normal, una especie de compulsión por vengarse o destruir y fue tanto lo que complicó y deformó su proyecto inicial que es como si él mismo se hubiera perdido para siempre en el laberinto que iba inventando lleno de oscuridad y terrores con mas consistencia que él mismo y que sus demás personajes, siempre gaseosos, fluctuantes, jamás un ser humano, siempre disfraces, actores, maquillajes que se disolvían ... sí, eran más importantes sus obsesiones y sus odios que la realidad que le era necesario negar ... (p. 488)

One could say that this novel suffers from critical overexposure. There is an abundance of articles and reviews analysing it. The novel has been the occasion for so much moral, sociological, thematic, symbolical, structural, psychoanalytical analysis, that readers may miss the simple and apparently surprising fact that the book is very enjoyable to read. To do justice to Donoso's writing, to convey the quality and quantity of pleasure his work can provide is especially difficult in the
case of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*. Apart from the inadequacy of trying to summarize the novel and the inevitable impoverishment of passages separated from their context, the critic of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* has the problem of how to represent the magnitude, the scope and the richness of Donoso's novel without becoming tedious.

It is such a complex novel that most of the critics' accounts of what actually happens in the novel differ rendering any comprehensive interpretation quite elusive. The traditional principles of verisimilitude are meaningless in the context of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*. One of the more honest comments is that of Alexander Coleman: "The only fact you can assert about The Bird, once you have finished reading it, is that you have read it."

The text of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* has the structure of a mental delirium, basically a long interior monologue which functions according to the obsessions and hallucinations of one character, el Mudito. Nothing is certain or clearly factual. Does Mudito invent Humberto Peñaloza, the other "I" which confers the identity of a family name and the identity of authorship? Does Humberto invent el Mudito? Does el Mudito invent himself? The definition of the characters is certainly not psychological in the usual sense. The characters undergo transformations, substitutions, hallucinations in an atmosphere of plausible neutrality. In fact what appears bizarre is defined individual identity. In *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* the norm is the mask, nothing is essential except the possibility of change. *El obsceno*
pájaro de la noche never reveals what lies behind the mask, we only see the possibility that there is emptiness.

The narrative mode alternates from "tú, usted, yo, él, nosotros", all interwoven in an often ambiguous context that forces the reader to decipher the mutations of identity. The narrator as character goes through transformation and adopts a bewildering assortment of identities as he-she-it-we-you-they-I tell the story:

... soy la séptima vieja, tu impudor me lo demuestra todos los días. (p. 130)

Yo, esta corteza que es Humberto Peñaloza, no le servía para nada. (p. 217)

Las siete viejas tendemos a la Iris en la cama. (p. 119)

Yo soy el padre del hijo de la Iris. (p. 94)

Soy el Mudito. A veces soy otra vieja más. Soy el muñeco de la Iris. (p. 431)

No existe Humberto Peñaloza, es una invención, no es una persona sino un personaje ... Mudo, Mudito, no te vayas, no desaparezcas ... (p. 447)

Tengo que nacer. Una mañana amanecí en la cama de la Iris ... (p. 448)

Tu cuarto está oscuro. Nuestro cuarto ... tomo tu mano dormida y con ella rozo mi cuerpo. Me tienes que reconocer, Inés, aceptame si quiera ahora, tal como soy, sea quien sea, Humberto, Mudito, vieja, guagua, idiota, ... ¡Inés! Despiertas. - Jerónimo ... (p. 465)

Ahora me eliminaré yo para que te desplomes y te partas en mil fragmentos al caer y pondrán los fragmentos en el carro del Mudito y el Mudito los arrastrará hasta su patio para que la lluvia y el tiempo y el viento te corrompan y te eliminen. Tengo muchas paginas en blanco esperando que yo escriba tu fin, tengo mucho tiempo para inventarte el fin mas abyecto porque ahora estoy a salvo aquí en la Casa ... nosotros ya no tememos nada, yo ya no temo a Peta Ponce ... (pp. 471-472)
As John Hassett comments on el Mudito's narration:

Central to Mudito's narration is the use of an interior monologue which from one moment to the next suddenly externalizes itself by representing the conversations of all the other characters. As a kind of roving eye limited by neither time nor space, Mudito has the power not only to record the conversations of those around him, but to reproduce conversations that may or may not have taken place... Because there is no distinction made between what a person thinks and what he actually verbalizes, dialogues become embedded within Mudito's continuous monologue. Such a blending of the presentational forms of narration into the body of the text results from Donoso's refusal to differentiate between a character and the idea of that character in his narrator's mind.7

The narrative voice destroys chronology and destroys the traditional notion of an integrated character as it drifts in time and space, blending past and present, fusing characters. The importance of the manipulation of point of view in Donoso's fiction is one of the clearest Jamesian influences. Donoso considers the question of the point of view as vital to his narrative. As he comments:

Mi posibilidad de destruir la caparazón clásica de la novela se presenta no bajo la forma del idioma lujoso como el de García Márquez, por ejemplo, no bajo la forma de una ideología o un planteamiento de Vargas Llosa; se plantea bajo el modo del punto de vista. El punto de vista es el gran elemento para explorar y hacer y rehacer y deshacer la escritura de una novela. En mis primeros ensayos tenía que usar el punto de vista mas próximo: el Yo, del autor. Se unifica la literatura con la autobiografía. Es un comienzo. De éste, ochocientas mil formas. Del yo, primera persona, puedo construir las mas increíbles variedades de punto de vista. La última novela, El obsceno pájaro de la noche , es un ejercicio en punto de vista; es el método de una cosa ya completamente barroca. Es el punto de vista desarrollado, exacerbado, lucido, implicado, jugando en todas las posibilidades.8

Henry James saw the novelist as a poet and in Donoso's portrayal of the devious elusiveness of el Mudito's mind, we find
the delight in creative exploration which inspires the imagination to unusual flight of invention. Donoso's artistic methods in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* are able to express the intractable and elusive character of the material he is dealing with - the mental delirium of an aging schizophrenic on the verge of total collapse. Donoso uses the relationship between the decrepit and labyrinthine Casa and the interior maze of el Mudito's consciousness as the focal point in the narrative structure of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*. Donoso's sense of place is one of the central aspects of his Chilean narrative psychofiction and the Casa de la Encarnación de la Chimba is the most concretely described element in the novel and becomes the main metaphor of the labyrinthine structure of the novel.

In an attempt to clarify el Mudito's interior monologue we can point out that there are four main narrative bases which are at the origin of his kaleidoscopic collage of memories, dreams, hallucinations, which create the labyrinth which the reader attempts to follow.

There is a basic biographical thread describing the life of Humberto Penaloza, the first "I" of el Mudito before becoming el Mudito. The life of Humberto is intertwined inextricably with that of the Azcoitia family. The second narrative base is the relationship of Jerónimo and Inés Azcoitia which is equally inextricably tied to Peta Ponce. There are a series of symbiotic relationships between master and servant: Inés-Humberto; Inés-Peta; Peta-Humberto; Humberto-Jerónimo, etc. The third basic narrative block is constituted by the offshoot of this symbiotic
master-servant interweaving, the monstrous Boy and the world created for him in la Rinconada. The fourth basic narrative thread is the story of the Casa de la Encarnación Chimba, an asylum for a few stray orphans and the ancient servants of the aristocracy. It is in the Casa that el Mudito creates the hallucination about Iris Mateluna, el Gigante and "el niño milagroso". These narrative blocks are interrelated and complete a full circle when the aristocratic Inés de Azcoitia comes to live at the Casa with the old crones who are the former servants of the aristocracy. It has taken the length of the novel for Inés to become what Peta was at the beginning of the book and at the novel's conclusion, el Mudito is sewn into burlap bags and transformed into an "imbunche" (the imbunche is a creature that has had all its orifices sewn shut by witches). From this confinement el Mudito evokes his past. The novel's perspective of retrospect is only visible and evident at its conclusion.

These characters which we have mentioned are themselves sometimes and then someone else or themselves or someone else at the same time. So what the reader believes really happens in the narrative is up to him or her. What is amazing is the insistence of so many critics to accept or reject what they see as the facts of the novel.

What is also amazing is the fact that the reader's interest and attention is held long after it has become obvious that there is no point in trying to figure out what is really happening. Donoso incorporates in the novel a number of fascinating subplots, each one capable of creating a sense of anticipation of
discovery: the story of Iris, the Gina Lollobrigida orphan who has sexual intercourse with any man who will wear the mask of el Gigante; the senile old women who believe in this girl's immaculate conception and virgin birth and are determined to keep it secret; the wealthy and powerful politician who creates a world of freaks for his monstrous son; the illiterate servant whose flair for business makes her a millionaire and whose mistress works for her; the legend of the "nina bruja santa"; the senile old priest who wanders naked through the convent; the ritualized courtship and marriage of Inés and Jerónimo and many, many more.

The narrative of the novel covers a period from approximately 1915 to 1970 (based on the references to Verdun and Allende). The actual narration of the events takes place in the last year of el Mudito's life (as the first chapter begins with a funeral and subsequently refers to events one year after this funeral). Humberto or el Mudito reimagines his past and the novel is really the deformation of the process of the retrospective delirious projection of memory.

I am clearly partial to Donoso. I like everything he has written and consider him to be one of the most fascinating and rewarding contemporary authors. Reading El obsceno pájaro de la noche requires effort but also provides sheer pleasure as well as useful insights into Donoso's narrative development.

The reader of El obsceno pájaro de la noche finds many of the familiar motives, characters and language that make Coronación, Este domingo, El lugar sin límites, and El obsceno
pájaro de la noche such a cohesive thematic and linguistic narrative cycle. Donoso's fictional world is consistently one of decay and disintegration peopled by aging, pathetic characters and places whose decrepitude is graphically portrayed. El obsceno pájaro de la noche is no exception. We find the familiar "bocas desdentadas" and "ojos legañosos" (page 24) "entre estas viejas decrépitas, en esta Casa condenada, rodeada de imbéciles, de enfermas, de miserables, de abandonadas, de verdugos y víctimas que se confunden y se quejan y tienen frío y hambre .. ." (p. 29)

In each novel we have seen the presentation of two worlds, that of the rich and poor, that of masters and servants and their symbiotic relationships. El obsceno pájaro de la noche explores and develops this persistent motive again, particularly in the Inés, Jerónimo, Humberto, Peta symbiosis:

Usted sabe que los sirvientes se quedan con una parte de sus patrones, sí sabe, como no lo va a saber si yo me quedé con lo principal suyo cuando usted me tuvo a sueldo como testigo de su dicha... No eran capaces de vivir sin la presencia de mi mirada envidiosa creando su felicidad . . . (p. 84)

. . . jamás, por ningún motivo, la iba a separar de la Peta Ponce. Desde esa noche Jerónimo e Inés jamás han estado solos en el lecho conyugal. (pp. 186-187)

The motive of masks and disguises which also runs consistently through Donoso's fiction dominates El obsceno pájaro de la noche and reaches its height in the subplot of el Gigante, the demonic mask men wear to make love to Iris Mateluna [ . . . la máscara descomunal, colorada, pecosa, de payaso, títere, demonio, muñeco . . . (p. 89)], emphasizing another frequent motive in Donoso's fiction, the substitution of identity in
sexual relationships. Sexual relationships in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* are based on the substitution of identity, the attraction to the mask:

... en esas tinieblas yo puedo no haber dado mi amor a Ines sino a otra a la Peta, a la Peta Ponce que sustituyo a Ines por ser ella la pareja que me corresponde ... en el momento del orgasmo ella gritó: Jerónimo. Y yo grité: Inés. (p. 224)

Masks are one aspect of the theme of destruction in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* as they destroy the illusion of a defined autonomous identity: "... hoy yo y manana no me encuentra nadie ni yo mismo me encuentro porque uno es lo que es mientras dura el disfraz." (p. 155) Donoso's fictional characters from *Coronación* to *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* reveal the fragmentary nature of personal identity. In what Alexander Coleman calls "a terrifying confusion of doubleness", the world of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* presents the dualities of master-servant, male-female, saint-witch, virgin-prostitutes, God-devil, as interrelated aspects of one another which coexist rather than mutually excluding one another. As in *El lugar sin límites*, this is the world of travesty where "all objects are signs of their opposites".9

The recurrent demonic imagery which we outlined in Donoso's previous novels is again present and vital to the archetypal level of significance in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*. There is a body of recurrent demonic imagery which is clearly part of the overall archetypal structure of the novel based on biblical myths. We find the four black dogs, a demonic yellow bitch, a she devil, the labyrinth, sterility and impotence, darkness and
night, the "niño milagroso". The "obsceno pájaro de la noche" is perhaps the demonic image that best links the series of associations together into a cohesive unit as the title and epigraph of the book. In his "Garden of Earthly Delights", Bosch portrays the bird in terms of lascivity and Donoso's use of Henry James Sr's image of the obscene bird of night resumes the aura of eroticism, malevolence and night which is a constant reminder of death. El obsceno pájaro de la noche is a modern version of Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights". In both artists' world, woman is the cause for the fall from paradise into earthly chaos, hell on earth, with no hope of salvation. The exuberant lyricism of Donoso's writing infuses El obsceno pájaro de la noche with the same plastic quality rich in archetypal symbolism that characterizes Bosch's painting, a supernatural presentation of the erotic allied to the demonic. For example:

... quedamos en la oscuridad total, quizá no ha habido nunca ojos contemplándonos y todo haya sido siempre oscuro, no, ahí están los ojos amarillos, soy yo otra vez, te deseo más que nunca ahora porque sé que estás cansada y porque yo estoy cansado, esos ojos amarillos y legañosos ven como te penetro, como revives, los ojos legañosos cerca de los nuestros, más, más, hasta que Inés lanzó el grito final, Madre Benita, que no fue solo un grito de placer sino también un grito de terror, porque al abrir los ojos para ver la constelación de miradas relucientes de los testigos alrededor del rostro de Jerónimo, vio a la perra amarilla que se acercó a husmearlos o a lamer los jugos que sus cuerpos dejaron sobre las hojas: la perra amarilla, acezante, babosa, cubierta de granos y verrugas, el hambre inscrita en la mirada, ella, dueña del poder para provocar el grito. (pp. 193-194)

As Martin Stabb summarizes:

... for him the erotic is a dark force, tinged with the satanic and leading only to obsessive desire and a fruitless quest for pleasure or release. ... we know that behind the masks of everyday existence there lurks
Donoso's descriptions of the ritualized world of the aristocracy illustrates the elaborate social camouflage for the real emotions lurking below the surface. For example, the description of Jerónimo's return to Chile, his courtship and marriage to Inés is typical of Donoso's imaginative treatment of the rituals and routines of the aristocracy. As in Henry James's fiction (e.g. *The Sacred Fount*), it is an essential element that the narrator should be aware of the subtleties of the social system and that the participants in this ritualized society should be seen and should see each other as constantly involved in a game which always requires the use of accepted appearances as cover - the image Donoso uses is that of the "medallón":

Las reglas y las fórmulas, el ritual tan fijo y tan estilizado como los símbolos de la heraldica, que iban regulando el proceso del noviazgo, inscribían su propia figura y la de Inés, entrelazadas como iban debajo de los arboles cargados de fruta, como en un medallón de piedra: este medallón no era más que una etapa del friso eterno compuestos por muchos medallones, y ellos, los novios, encarnaciones momentaneas de designios mucho más vastos que los detalles de sus sicologías individuales. El cuerpo y el alma de Inés, intactos, esperaban que él la animara para sacarla de ese primer medallón y hacerla ingresar en la suntuosidad del medallón siguiente. (p. 179)

Routines and rituals in the aristocracy provide an acceptable pattern of decorum which is an elaborate cover for the raw emotions underneath superficial appearance.

Donoso's writing in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* has moments where the plastic visual impact is on a poetic, lyric,
sensual level reminiscent of Proustian passages:

Un diamante azul se enciende entre los matorrales del parque, se apaga y vuelve a encenderse dorado más allá, titila más acá y se apaga otra vez y entre esos macizos de plantas oscuras nacen más fulgores que nos están mirando a tí y a mí que desaparecen, joyas, astros, ojos, fulgor que disimulan las hojas, vuelve a aparecer multiplicándose, desvaneciéndose, paseándose entre los arbustos oscuros, no al acecho sino que vigilándonos porque son los ojos de mis perros vagando entre las hortensias, lentos ahora, rojo, rosa, atentos, allá se extinguieron esos dos ojos de acero que ahora se encienden más cerca aquí, entre los matorrales al pie mismo del corredor donde tú y yo estamos tendidos, centellas fijas en la línea de claridad fina como el canto de una hoja que insinua tu perfil perfecto. (p. 191)

In the novel, el Mudito uses the metaphor of the "lupa" (in a different context) which best describes the detailed and multifaceted linguistic richness in El obsceno pájaro de la noche: "... mirarlas con lupa para apreciar la suntuosidad maniática de sus detalles." (p. 210)

In El obsceno pájaro de la noche we witness a detailed and exhaustive presentation of the process of reality being negated, individual identity being negated, the narrative and the narrator being obliterated. It is a process that seen through the magnifying glass which grotesquely distorts, is the culmination of a demonic apocalyptic obsession which provides the archetypal structural basis for the novel.

Subordinate to this archetypal structure, Donoso uses in his system of characterization in El obsceno pájaro de la noche, similar existential and psychoanalytical elements as those found in the previous novels. The absurdity of existence, the alienation of human consciousness, the loneliness of the individual are basic to Donoso's system of characterization,
while psychoanalysis is incorporated in the exploration of unconscious layers of interior reality, the subterranean flow of images, of dreams, of repressed desires and morbid fantasies.

Biographical, existential and psychoanalytical elements are integrated into _El obsceno pájaro de la noche’s_ archetypal structure which organizes and best reveals the dominant theme of destruction.

In Donoso's writing, as we have seen, the symbols of the Bible provide the main grammar of literary archetypes. The Bible, as myth, provides a synthesizing archetypal structure extending from creation to apocalypse.

In _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ the demonic parody of biblical myths again fulfills an essential structural role. _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ is a novel where demonic imagery underscores the archetypal structure, the essence of which is again apocalyptic destruction in man's eternal fall. In the novel as in Donoso's preceding ones we are constantly faced with death, decrepitude, destruction. In thematic terms the group of images which we find in the novel leads to the "unsubdued forest" of the epigraph, the world of chaos, of selfdestruction, of grotesque caricature. The demonic images are those of an infernal perception of reality symbolized by the monstrous Boy ["... era la confusión, el desorden, una forma distinta pero peor que la muerte. ... esta versión del chaos" (p. 161)]. Once again it is woman who is the cause of the fall. The image of the witch incarnated in Peta Ponce, the archetypal old woman is, in el Mudito's consciousness, the element of destruction behind every
event [ "... la Peta Ponce, la más peligrosa, la más implacable, la más feroz, la más difícil de distinguir porque la puedo confundir con cualquier vieja ... vieja lasciva que no me dejas en paz" (p. 84)]. Woman functions as the destroyer of order as in Donoso’s previous novels and as an engulfing, castrating menace: "... fue el sexo de la vieja, agusándolo por la cercanía de la muerte que devoró mi maravilloso sexo nuevo" (p. 224); "... la Peta no quiere robar, ha venido a buscar en mí lo que siempre ha buscado. Yo no despertaré porque la Peta no encontrará nada. La noche se tragará su rugido de rabia que no oiré y se irá a buscar a otra parte después de cerrarme los pantalones ..." (p. 299). The archetypal mother is not the virgin but definitely the eternal witch. Peta Ponce, the archetypal witch, haunts Humberto throughout the novel. Peta Ponce is the eternal sorcerer of the sinister "mundo del revés", the embodiment of irrationality which is the very essence of existence in the novel.

In *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* Donoso emphasizes the cyclical nature of generations within a mythic perception of time. Time is the destroyer, it is repetitive and circular and the future is parallel to the present, the present parallel to the past. *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* is a novel of lost illusions and the future is already present as hell on earth.

Don Jerónimo, with his four black dogs, is reminiscent of Don Alejo in *El lugar sin límites* and presents the same ambiguous alternance between a malevolent and benevolent deity. He is the owner of the Casa, the creator of La Rinconada, the employer of
Humberto Peñaloza, he is a wealthy landowner, a powerful politician. "As God the Father" he has produced a monstrous son for whom he creates a demonic parody of paradise - La Rinconada - where only the most "noble" monsters can enter.

In _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ as in _El lugar sin límites_, this demonic archetypal organization leaves no hope of salvation or redemption. The baby that the old crones of the Casa await as their Saviour is a twisted parody of Jesus ["... nuestro hijo milagroso que nos llevará al cielo ..." (p. 128)].

The obliteration to ashes of the main character of the novel is the culmination of all of Donoso's previous fictional characters' courses of destruction. In _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ el Mudito moves towards the ultimate destruction, the total disintegration of consciousness as substance is reduced to nothingness. It seems as if Donoso's narrative has completed a full circle with _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ and the only solution to escape inexorable destruction is that which Andres in _Coronación_ chose to follow: to join in the cosmic madness. Madness and abdication to chaos are the only alternatives when the fragile illusion of order collapses. _El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ is the final apotheosis of the entropic process as the novel moves towards an unstructural state of equilibrium that is total with no possibility of regeneration.

_El obsceno pájaro de la noche_ is, in a way, a summation of all of Donoso's obsessions. It constitutes a grand finale to the narrative cycle of fiction constituted by Donoso's first four novels as thematic development and narrative technique evolve in
conjunction in a crescendo of grotesque distortion, madness, violence, death, decay and destruction. The main theme of destruction which we have followed throughout Donoso's work reaches its final resolution in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* in a typically biblical apocalyptic climax in which the narrative and the narrator are reduced to ashes and dispersed in the wind — "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" — another Donosian final scene of great lyrical beauty and intensity:

El viento dispersa el humo y los olores y la vieja se acurruca sobre las piedras para dormir. El fuego arde un rato junto a la figura abandonada como otro paquete más de harapos, luego comienza a apagarse, el respoldo a atenuarse y se agota cubriéndose de ceniza muy liviana, que el viento disperza. En unos cuantos minutos no queda nada debajo del puente. Sólo la mancha negra que el fuego dejó en las piedras y un tarro negruzco con asa de alambres. El viento lo vuelca, rueda por las piedras y cae al río. (p. 543)
Chapter Five Notes

All quotes from *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* refer to edition published by Seix Barral, Barcelona, 1970.


6. Alexander Coleman, "Some Thoughts on Donoso's


8. Guillermo Castillo, "Artists and Authors: José Donoso y su última novela (Extractos de una entrevista a José Donoso a fines de diciembre de 1970, en Vallvidrera)", *Hispania*, LIV, No. 4, December 1971, p. 959.


11. "Every man who has reached even his intellectual teens begins to suspect that life is no farce; that it is not genteel comedy even; that it flowers and fructifies on the contrary out of the profoundest tragic depths of the essential dearth in which its subject's roots are plunged. The natural inheritance of everyone who is capable of spiritual life is an unsubdued forest where the wolf howls and the obscene bird of night chatters." Henry James Sr., writing to his sons Henry and William, epigraph to *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*.
Conclusion

The four novels of Donoso that we have studied have revealed clear influences from Faulkner, Proust, Joyce, James and Kafka. Donoso's cosmopolitan, wide ranging literary influences make the style which evolves from *Coronación* to *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* impossible to categorize as authentically and uniquely Chilean. Yet these influences and literary ascendences are representative of some of the greatest contemporary Latinamerican authors, a group to which Donoso definitely belongs. Donoso's education at an English school, his nomadic life and current European residency place him on an international literary level. He presently remains in self-imposed exile in Europe where he has lived for most of the past twenty years. He has consistently avoided any direct intellectual or ideological involvement or affiliation. He is however, a man with a well-defined and original vision of reality and of the world which is the starting point for any valid approach to his fiction.

Donoso has used his great talent and creativity, his spectacular flights of the imagination, his affinity with surrealism and satire, his use of archetypal demonic structure to develop his own particular version of the literature of disintegration. Donoso's first four novels portray a world moving inexorably towards total destruction and chaos.

In the novels studied, we have seen a series of characters
whose lives are destroyed by the emotions, the violence and the sexuality present under the surface of conformist, conventional bourgeois society. The complex relationships that evolve in a rigid hierarchical social system are but a play of masks and disguises and Donoso's characters are condemned to disintegration when the repressed forces of instincts erupt. These characters are unable to communicate, they are isolated, stifled by a repressive society. They suffer mental, emotional, spiritual and psychic fragmentation and disintegration. Donoso portrays a society which alienates man and in which man is inexorably condemned to fall as the false order of civilization is destroyed by the emergence of instincts and emotion. This bourgeois society is largely sustained by the Christian and biblical myths which it cultivates and Donoso's inversion of these myths is the essential structural element of the narrative cycle we have studied.

Donoso's view of the human condition is undoubtedly bleak and pessimistic and probably depressing for most people. Yet his prose affirms the glory of consciousness, imagination and sensation. Donoso's great aesthetic realization which creates the language at the centre of his novels is a transformation of his personal obsessions into myth, of past experiences and inner sensations into imaginative reality.

Of the four novels studied, *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* is clearly Donoso's most ambitious, complex and successful book. The dominant theme of destruction which Donoso explores in the previous novels is resolved in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* with the dissolution into nothingness, the ashes of the fire that the

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wind silently disperses. The novel is the literary realization of all of Donoso's obsessions into a self enclosed, complete fictional world of coherent but ambiguous inner reality.

*El obsceno pájaro de la noche* is the culmination of the creative novelistic process which began with *Coronación* thirteen years earlier. It is a process in which narrative techniques increase in complexity and creativity in conjunction with the expansion of Donoso's thematic design. Viewed from the vantage point of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*, the three preceding novels appear as formulative elements of an increasingly complex construction which is fully completed in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*. The increased use of shifting points of view, the abolition of chronology, the incorporation of myth, the ambiguity of multiple narrators are narrative elements which Donoso develops in a progression of complexity and ambiguity. With *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* a cycle is completed, after which a change of literary expression becomes inevitable. The novels subsequent to *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* explore themes unrelated to the particular Chilean scenario of the four novels studied.

We have studied a series of elements which are consistently used in Donoso's fiction. The use of existential and psychoanalytical concepts integrated into an overall archetypal structure involve the development of persistent motives which largely determine the great thematic unity in Donoso's Chilean narrative cycle. We have seen the repeated use and development of the oniric elements, of the penetration into the minds' psychic
flow, of the eruption of primitive forces which destroy masks, of the alienation and existential anguish of isolated individuals, of the archetypal engulfing and castrating female, the archetypal loss of innocence and the fall.

The theme of destruction is the most important link in Donoso's narrative cycle. It is the axis of each narrative and it is best revealed by the archetypal structure of each novel. Donoso's novels are books of impending doom, of inexorable destruction, of man's eternal fall. In this sense El obsceno pájaro de la noche is truly an apocalyptic work.

Donoso's use of archetype and myth provide his novels with resonance and scope similar to that achieved by García Márquez who once said that the ideal novel would be "una novela absolutamente libre, que no sólo inquiete por su contenido político y social, sino por su poder de penetración en la realidad: y mejor aun si es capaz de voltear la realidad al revés para mostrar como es del otro lado."1

It is in this latter part that Donoso has most brilliantly succeeded. His creation is profoundly original and has deservedly achieved recognition of universal stature.
Conclusion notes

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