

The Genesis of *La desesperanza* by José Donoso

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These days a special apology must be made for studying the process by which a writer makes a literary text. So politically incorrect has it become to consider a writer's intentions that some critics nowadays not only look askance at a writer's diaries and notes but even sidestep the term "work," which alludes to the creation of literature by a particular human being. What amounts to postmodern prudishness about the conception and gestation of a work of art needs resisting. Often a look at the process by which a work is made sheds light on the reasons why it works upon us. This is certainly the case with the novel *La desesperanza* (published in English under the title *Curfew*) by the Chilean writer José Donoso. The seven hundred pages of notes Donoso made as he shaped his 1986 narrative about an exile's return to Chile offer an illuminating counterpoint to the finished book. They reveal an artist feeling his way, with few preconceptions about how the novel should be, toward a successful expression of a unifying theme that he seldom articulated even for himself.

This theme, which Donoso identifies in his earliest notes only to lose sight of it again, is "the ambivalent relationship of a human being to his roots" (53: 16).¹ It is natural that Donoso should have wished to express his protagonist's ambivalence for Chile; Mañungo Vera, the fictional folksinger who is at the center of the tale, re-enters Santiago (as Donoso himself had done) while Augusto Pinochet is still in power, and simultaneously feels deep affection for his homeland and disillusionment with it. However, another sort of ambivalence—the ambivalence that colors the relationship between parent and child—figures importantly in the novel as well. So thoroughly does it affect Donoso's way of conceiving the book that

it surely springs from a deeper source than a facile association of "patria" (or, in English, "motherland") with literal parents. Although, as we shall see, one can find evidence of parent-child ambivalence in the finished novel, Donoso's working papers dramatically reveal how crucial this second kind of ambivalence was to his conception of *La desesperanza*. Time and again, as he imagined characters and elaborated the plot, Donoso mobilized and reintroduced the motif of conflicting emotions felt by children for parents and parents for children. In sowing his narrative with multiple expressions of ambivalence, Donoso deploys a powerful device: he recalls the reader to the archaic emotional world of the small child, whose opposing passions for its parents are the heritage of us all. By relating these passions and the guilt that they inspire to the experience of his repatriot hero and of other figures in the novel, Donoso deepens his treatment of his characters, forges a link between their experience and that of the reader, and redeems from topicality a novel that initially was read as a comment on a social moment that by now has passed.

This essay examines Donoso's creative turnings and changes of heart as, over a period of some five years, he shaped *La desesperanza*. I argue that at many points Donoso, consciously or not, devised textual strategies to express ambivalence between children and parents, and that this recurring motif shapes the narrative in important ways. Understanding the degree to which this is so helps a reader to identify significant currents in the finished book. Beyond that, it enables an interpreter of Donoso's narratives to perceive a relationship between parent-child ambivalence and the theme of the mutability of self, a dominant issue in all of Donoso's work.

Much of the commentary on Donoso's writing focuses on the idea that, as Sharon Magnarelli puts it, "human personality or selfhood (ontological being in the world) is a series of masks or disguises, ever changing and ever (inter)changing, with no ultimate coherence or integrity" (4). Donoso himself is on record as having expressed "una duda muy fuerte, una no-creencia en la unidad de la personalidad humana" 'a very strong doubt, a non-belief in the unity of the human personality' (Rodríguez Monegal 521). Yet critics find different meanings in the theme of identity as Donoso uses it. Some, like George McMurray, view the Chilean's treatment of this motif primarily as social criticism, condemnation of the distorting effects imposed by social determinants of identity—family relationships

the mercurial identities of Donoso's heroes as proof that, for the Chilean, not only meaning but being itself must be ever-deferred.² Still other critics, perhaps influenced by Donoso's evident familiarity with psychoanalysis, see the unsteady selves he depicts as feeble egos, susceptible of being understood in psychological terms. These critics have invoked a variety of psychological theories to account for the experience of Donoso's figures. Pamela Bacarisse, for example, applies R.D. Laing's definition of schizophrenia to Humberto Peñaloza, the protagonist of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* (1970), while Silvia Martínez Dacosta, using insights from ego psychology, argues that the same figure offers a case study of paranoia. Taking a different tack, Amadeo López explores Lacan's formulation of the Oedipus complex to find the cause of Humberto's "naufragio de la identidad" 'shipwreck of identity' (121) in failed relationships to weak father figures. C.G. Jung, too, has inspired several readings of Donoso's texts, most notably Hernán Vidal's *José Donoso: Surrealismo y la rebelión de los instintos* and Richard Callan's interpretation of " 'Gaspard de la nuit' ."

Following the lead of this third group of critics, I propose to interpret, in the light of still another psychoanalytic idea, Donoso's theme of identity transformed. The notes he made as he developed *La desesperanza* show that again and again, in developing his novel, he resorted to literary techniques that reflect the psychic process of "splitting," a defense mechanism identified by Freud but much studied by Melanie Klein and her followers. Children, Klein argues, shield themselves from their own anger at parental figures, an anger that invites parental retaliation, by splitting the image of a symbolic parent (or of the self) into entirely good and entirely bad aspects (Klein 99-110; Kernberg 29). Literature sometimes bears witness to this psychic process; Bruno Bettelheim, noting that "all young children sometimes need to split the image of their parent into its benevolent and threatening aspects to feel fully sheltered by the first" (68), shows that fairy tales regularly contain split images of symbolic parents. Fairy godmothers coexist with witches and evil stepmothers, and helpful genies with giants. Donoso's narratives, like fairy tales, are filled with paired characters who function as split images of a single being. Often—one might think of Alvaro and Maya in *Este domingo* (1966) or Inés de Azcoitia and Peta Ponce in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*—one member of the pair is aristocratic (idealized) and the other destitute (devalued).³ In itself, Donoso's penchant for creating paired characters suggests that he employs as literary technique

what psychoanalysts call "splitting." His working papers for *La desesperanza* strongly confirm this idea. They show that his way of developing both characters and plot often entails either splitting into idealized figures and sinister alter egos characters who function symbolically as parents or children, or creating a forking plot that actualizes both poles of parent-child ambivalence. I do not wish to suggest that Donoso employed these techniques deliberately, or even that he intended to insert the motif of ambivalence in his text; his notes contain no explicit reference either to the techniques or, apart from the phrase I have quoted, to the theme itself. However, we shall see that consistently Donoso relied on splitting of characters and plot as favored means of developing his text.

Before *interpreting* Donoso's practices, though, one must have a clear idea of how he proceeded as he created *La desesperanza*. What is most striking about his notes, particularly those he made in 1985, is the degree to which Donoso resists analyzing what he creates. He begins by imagining characters who interest him, and whom he at first conceives not as participants in a story but as entities in themselves. Placing them in a situation whose outcome he has not prescribed—for example, Mañungo Vera's homecoming or Matilde Neruda's wake—he makes exhaustive and quite repetitive character sketches that are ever more detailed, tirelessly reworking the personal history and motivation of each character as he orders and re-orders the plot. The story grows as, little by little, Donoso imagines how his fictional creatures might interact, or how their pasts might plausibly intersect. Donoso does not "know" as he writes how Mañungo's relationship with the female protagonist Judit will turn out, or whether or why Mañungo will decide in the end to remain in Chile. He seldom asks himself what the novel's main themes ought to be, never discusses imagery and hardly ever considers technical questions such as point of view. Attentive to the characters, he develops the plot sequentially, in an exploratory way, essaying ways to take each next step and usually settling definitively on one before advancing in his creation of the argument.

Donoso created *La desesperanza* in two sustained working sessions, one between December 1980 and December 1981 and the other between January and August 1985. In the first of these he planned a work that portrays Mañungo Vera's return with his son to his native town in a remote area of Southern Chile. This initial version of the story casts Mañungo's ambivalence to his homeland primarily by portraying him torn between two women, one idealized and the other

sinister. On the one hand, Mañungo renews his love for his former primary school teacher and musical mentor Ulda Ramírez, a strong, passionate woman politically committed to the Left. On the other, he is attracted to his 18-year-old cousin Lidia Veloso, the self-centered daughter of a local right-wing strongman. Drawn to both lovers, who represent opposing ideological views, Mañungo impregnates both women. Finally, reluctantly giving Ulda up, he marries Lidia, embracing a stifling life devoid of music (Lidia, according to one version, buries Mañungo's guitar). Then, when Lidia falls into the sea and drowns on their wedding night, Mañungo flees across the mountains, renouncing his birthplace in favor of a larger world where he can resume his musical career.

In this original plot one can clearly see the splitting of the female "protagonist" into good and bad components. Donoso consciously contrasts the two women, at one point even reverting to a commonplace of Latin American fiction and proposing that Ulda stand for civilization and Lidia for barbarism (53: 1). It is harder to see that this doubling reflects ambivalence between parent and child; although Ulda's age and her nurturing of Mañungo early in his life suggest the maternal, Lidia Veloso is very young to be a symbolic mother. Yet she ingratiates herself with Mañungo by cultivating a rapport with his four-year-old son, using maternal ministrations to further her love interest. The importance of Mañungo's symbolic mothers in the finished novel—throughout the book he yearns for reunion with lost mother figures, particularly Matilde Neruda and Ulda—permits one to speculate that Donoso's original doubling of female characters may also express a son's ambivalence for symbolic mothers. Moreover, Donoso invents in the 1981 notes two mysterious and powerful witches, evidence that from the outset he meant to portray highly charged maternal characters. One, an Indian woman named Clemencia, cohabits with Mañungo's widower father. By turns protecting and malevolent, she sometimes plays the role of a dangerous mother figure in the original plot, in one version of which she makes the pregnant Lidia miscarry. Still another ominous old woman, the seaweed seller Doña Petronila, figures in the early notes, as well. One of the only scenes in the finished novel that Donoso drafted in 1981 portrays the encounter in a small ferry boat of Doña Petronila and a youth who resembles Mañungo. Unfortunately, Donoso's copybooks do not contain the early manuscript of this scene, so it is impossible to know what characteristics Donoso first assigned to her.

The way Donoso develops Mañungo himself in his 1981 notes also shows his bent for creating "split" characters. In two ways he creates doubles for his protagonist. Planning a metanovelistic part of the plot, Donoso casts himself as a presence in the text, a narrator/character relating parts of the story in the first person. Like Mañungo, the Donoso character is an artist just returned from years abroad, and his experience parallels the singer's own. This doubling of Mañungo does not presuppose a symbolic division of the main character into "good" and "bad" aspects. However, the other alter ego Donoso creates for his protagonist, a hippie named Arturo Vergara, is more clearly a foil for the charismatic Mañungo. The complex way this character relates to parental figures reveals how compelling Donoso found the motif of ambivalence and shows one of his preferred techniques for portraying it. Arturo, fleeing to Chiloe to escape wealthy bourgeois parents who are pressing him to repay a loan, takes refuge under false colors with a credulous couple named Don Darío and Doña Nina.⁴ Arturo's hosts shelter the young man because he intimates that he is a political refugee sought by the government. They sympathize with him because their own son has disappeared, a possible victim of right-wing repression. This remarkably complex subplot shows Donoso "splitting" both the figure of the parents and that of the child. In Arturo, Donoso creates a ne'er-do-well son who contrasts both with Mañungo, the idealized prodigal returned home, and with the couple's own "good" son. Moreover, Arturo is endowed with two sets of "parents," the real ones, who persecute him, and Darío and Nina, who protect him from harm.

After a year of intense work on his Chilote novel Donoso turned aside from it, perhaps displeased with its melodramatic and unworkable plot. When he returned to Mañungo's story in 1985, it was with a changed idea of what the novel should be. Whereas before he had provisionally called the novel "El Regreso" 'The Return,' a title that focuses on Mañungo Vera, he now settles on "La desesperanza" 'Hopelessness,' which alludes not to an individual protagonist but to Chile as a whole. An epigraph from *Bleak House* describing a nightmarish London confirms Donoso's intention of portraying a whole society: "Come night, come darkness, for you cannot come too soon or stay too long by such a place as this." Rereading, as he plans the first scenes of his text, both *Bleak House* and *Les misérables*, he admires Dickens's "grand intelligent construction of the real world" (1, 72) and Hugo's "vision of a nocturnal Paris that is

ragged and solitary and terrible" (1: 14). With these masters in mind, he girds himself to convey the "desesperanza" of Santiago in early 1985, just after the death of Matilde Neruda while the city languished in a state of siege. The death of Neruda's widow struck Donoso as symbolic of the end of an era. "MATILDE'S DEATH SIGNIFIES HOPELESSNESS," Donoso reflects, "the end of something, of a world, the end of the UP [Unidad Popular] and what it stood for"(1: 4).

Donoso now plans a novel divided into two parts. The first, subtitled "Funeral," will set Mañungo Vera's return to Santiago against the backdrop of Matilde Neruda's wake and burial. The second, "Fiesta," will depict the singer's welcome in Chiloé. These contrasting subtitles suggest that Donoso conceives a plot that will split Mañungo's experience of Chile into two parts, the first an experience of bereavement and despair in Santiago and the second of reunion with the community where he was raised. Thus, although Donoso will ultimately give up this bipartite schema, he starts work in 1985 with a plot that expresses ambivalence for Chile.

The "desesperanza" Donoso first conceives is the despairing tone of the country as a whole. He first thinks of it not in particular connection to Mañungo—only slowly will Donoso come to portray Matilde Neruda's death as the loss of a mother figure for the singer—but as the mood prevailing at Matilde's wake. He begins work on the plot of Part I by sketching ten characters attending the wake, among whom are a woman friend of the Nerudas, a humane minor writer, the head of Communist Youth, a rapacious oligarch, and a young Communist woman—characters who become, respectively, Fausta, Celedonio, Lisboa, Freddy Fox, and Judit in the final text. He then maps a plot in which Mañungo returns to Santiago and experiences firsthand the state of collapse into which Unidad Popular has sunk. Repelled by the dehumanizing opportunism of the Communists, who exploit Matilde Neruda's death for political effect, the singer decamps with his son for Chiloé.

Having sketched the outlines of Part I, Donoso enthusiastically turns to his female lead, at first setting her apart from other figures in the Santiago section of the book and casting her heroically as "*the only one not affected by hopelessness*" (1: 26, Donoso's emphasis). Modeling her largely on a woman he knew, a Communist from a wealthy Chilean family who had been jailed and tortured under Pinochet, Donoso from the outset conceives his female protagonist as unsusceptible to love, hardened by having been raped in prison both by men and by a dog trained by the police to sexually terrorize

women. Significantly, he does not at first show her as prey to guilt. Wholly devoted to left-wing activism and in particular to a defense of the women who suffered with her in prison, she will, Donoso plans, seek her jailer during the curfew hours and have an intense but short-lived encounter with Mañungo. The singer will ultimately shy away from her, rejecting Judit's unskeptical commitment to a political cause and horrified by her bloodthirstiness.

Donoso almost immediately discards his idea that Judit is immune from despair; "it's hopelessness that makes criminals of us all" (1: 42), he has her say. He now plans to convey the "monstrification" (1: 42) of Santiago's citizens in his portrayal of Judit. Later, Donoso will complicate his understanding of his female lead. He will ascribe her emotional barrenness to guilt, and account for that guilt by providing Judit with ambivalent relationships with parental figures.

Donoso plans for Mañungo to separate from Judit at the end of Part I and journey to Chiloé in search of a wholesome, simple life. However, the "Fiesta" promised by the title of his projected Part II never materializes. Indeed, as Donoso, vacationing in Chiloé in January and February of 1985, reimmerses himself in Chilote life, he notes how completely his reaction to the place has changed. Whereas on his 1981 trip to the island Donoso had been much impressed with the beauty of Chiloé's glaciers, volcanoes, and lakes, he now sees in Chiloé "total hopelessness on an ecological-metaphysical-symbolic level" (1: 66). Attending the Festival of the Virgin of Caguash, he is struck by its drabness, the primitivism of the religious icons, and the deformity of many of the congregants. "They're all like *degenerates* [degenerados]," he writes, "undernourished, poor, lots of dwarfs, lots of people with defective hips, lame, others with clouded vision or completely blind, or with only one eye . . . the man without an arm . . . the man cut off at the waist" (1: 69, Donoso's emphasis). These sufferers, one of whom he will later recreate as the beggar king Don César, come to the Festival to offer their pain to Christ, but unlike their Spanish counterparts, fail to redeem their distress in colorful dress, drunkenness, and dance. Noting "the absence of any orgiastic feeling," Donoso is depressed by proceedings whose "pain is never transubstantiated into something else" (1: 69).

Donoso has, in effect, exchanged an idealized vision of Chiloé for a depreciated one, subjecting even the setting of his book to the process of "splitting." He now perceives Chiloé not as more whole-

his text as a section that, structurally and thematically, will parallel Part I. Mañungo, having seen and walked away from the values of the Chilean Left after an intense twenty-four hours in Santiago, will encounter in the space of a second day spent in Chiloé the sinister attitudes of the political Right.

Thus far Donoso has not probed much the psychology of Mañungo or Judit. In particular, he has not begun to link Mañungo's personal history and motivation with the topic of "*la desesperanza*." Now, planning the end of the novel, he imagines that Mañungo should die in a freak accident on the train as he leaves Chiloé after an unhappy visit there. Alternatively, Mañungo should take some "action . . . that demonstrates and dramatizes his hopelessness, which is not only political but also creative and personal, a dramatic action that will also reveal the generalized hopelessness . . . of people in general" (1: 89). It is now that Donoso begins to explore Mañungo's inner being. The singer should, he thinks, impregnate Lidia Veloso out of perverse self-destructiveness. Or he should commit a crime. It is important to note that Donoso hits upon the idea of Mañungo's guilt—evidenced in his self-destructiveness and in the commission of an actual crime—before he explores very much his protagonist's psychology. The many elaborations of the novel's ending that Donoso essays as he spins out the rest of the plot rationalize Mañungo's guilt in various ways. Significantly, these multiple versions of the ending also insistently deploy fathers and children in an array of ambivalent relationships.

Exactly whose death should bring the novel to a close remains an open question. If Mañungo's *father* were to die, the writer speculates, the death would symbolize the loss of "the land, tradition, origins" (1: 66). Quickly, though, Donoso abandons this idea and considers the death of Mañungo's *son* as a possible way to end the book. Analyzing the singer's relationship to Jean-Paul, Donoso posits that Mañungo feels guilt because he often wishes for his son's death, "as if death for a beloved person is the only hope of salvation" for Mañungo himself (1: 91). Donoso returns repeatedly in his notes to an anecdote he has heard about a Chilote man who, by sacrificing his daughter to the ghost ship, or *Caleuche*, saved his warehouse from a disastrous fire in Castro during the 1930s. Following this line of thought, Donoso imagines that Jean-Paul and not Mañungo might die leaning out the train window on the journey back to Santiago, at a moment when Mañungo is angry with his son and wishes him dead. Implicitly, Donoso is casting around for the

right sort of "crime" for Mañungo to commit. One possible alternative is filicide.

As he elaborates reasons for Mañungo's guilt, Donoso in effect splits his protagonist by inventing Lopito, an alcoholic failed artist who inopportunely intrudes in Mañungo's doings during the night and day the novel depicts. Donoso does not, it must be said, consciously conceive of Lopito as an alter ego for Mañungo but as a foil for him.⁵ Lopito's Dostoyevskian abjection, Donoso thinks, will evoke a second kind of guilt in Mañungo, who has escaped in exile the hard lot of Chileans like Lopito who remained at home.

Lopito is destined to have a complex role in *La desesperanza*. Eventually he will double both Mañungo and Mañungo's son. Mañungo sees in the grotesque drunkard what he himself might have become had he not left Chile. Like Lopito, he has had a brief affair with Judit. And both men harbor ambivalent feelings for their children. However, Donoso also develops Lopito as an emotionally needy substitute for Mañungo's son. The failed poet demands that Mañungo stay with him instead of returning to Jean-Paul in the hotel, and Lopito's body is described in the finished text as "casi infantil" 'almost infantile' (305).

Moreover, no sooner has Donoso invented Lopito than he wonders whether he should kill him off toward the end of Part II. (Lopito, he thinks, might try to vindicate himself by participating in a small political rally and be killed by a stray bullet.) Shortly before, Donoso had planned that the novel should end with Jean-Paul's death. Although he does not at first think of Lopito's death as a substitute for Jean-Paul's, or as the central event in the denouement of the novel, he will eventually develop the plot in just this way; after Matilde's funeral Lopito is arrested and dies in police custody and Mañungo, outraged at the mistreatment of his friend, vows to remain in Chile and take responsibility for Lopito's orphaned child. The ending Donoso finally elects economically plays out both aggression against one symbolic child (Lopito) and righteous defense of another (Lopito's daughter).

At this point in his development of the novel Donoso had an experience that changed his ideas about Mañungo's fate. On January 30, 1985, during his stay in Chiloé, Donoso and his wife María Pilar attended a meeting of the Comité de Defensa de Derechos del Pueblo and Mujeres de Chile. Seated rows behind his wife, Donoso was alarmed to see that, when the police broke up the meeting, María Pilar was among those detained. He volunteered for arrest himself in

order to protect her. The couple received privileged treatment because of Donoso's fame and were released before their fellow prisoners, but not before Donoso had failed to secure from the officials at the jail a necessary medication. Donoso immediately resolves to use this dramatic experience in his novel; indeed, even before he records his own experience in his notes Donoso sketches a fictionalized version of it that substitutes Mañungo for his wife and himself. Mañungo, he imagines, will hope to expiate guilt at his non-participation in Chile's ills by being arrested. Ultimately, though, Donoso will modify this idea and subject Lopito, not the singer, to arrest, making the pathetic poet a scapegoat while assigning Mañungo the role he himself had played of trying to protect a hapless detainee.

Returning to his chronological development of Part I, Donoso spends six weeks elaborating the wake scene and Judit's adventures with Mañungo during the curfew hours. In working and re-working the wake scene, which he models on the concert in Tantomount House in Aldous Huxley's novel *Point Counter Point*, Donoso gradually creates a polyphonic texture by imagining the many tensions among the mourners. It may be useful to follow his method of conceiving character by following his invention of a single exemplary figure.

Ada Luz, Matilde Neruda's self-effacing friend, recommends herself for this kind of analysis. Donoso's technique of relating her little by little to other characters exemplifies his procedure with every other figure in the scene. Moreover, a false start he makes in conceiving Ada Luz reveals Donoso's continuing interest in the parent-child motif. Donoso first imagines Ada Luz as a mousy little woman reminiscent of Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*. He imagines that Ada Luz has heard Matilde wish that a left-wing priest say a mass over her remains. Donoso begins his development of Ada Luz by endowing her with an exiled stepson. "The son of her dead husband is the center of her world," Donoso writes, and then, feeling his way: "They won't let him return from exile. He could return, but it's not worth it for him to come for a month to visit his 'mother,' she thinks that if she were his real mother he would come back" (2: 93). Donoso, in other words, makes Ada Luz a doting would-be mother to an almost-son. This curiously equivocal mother-son relationship stands at first at the center of Ada Luz's emotional life. Little by little, however, Donoso relates Ada Luz to others in the wake scene, and as he does so he invents other human ties that ultimately sup-

plant her motherly concerns. Her acquaintance with Lisboa, which begins when she asks the Communist Party to intercede to bring her stepson home, evolves into an amorous involvement. Then Donoso connects her to Judit by making Ada Luz one of the victims of rape imprisoned with her. Finally, he imagines that Lopito pesters Ada Luz so that she will rent him a room. By the end of the wake scene he has enmeshed Ada Luz in a web of relationships that make superfluous her devotion to a distant stepson. Nonetheless, Donoso's original portrayal of Ada Luz shows him still intrigued with parent-child relations.

As he elaborates the wake scene and the events of the night Judit and Mañungo share, Donoso also builds ambivalence into his conception of Judit. He aims to convey "Judit's madness, her mental imbalance, how she suddenly goes off into a completely blighted, irrational world" (2: 142). Originally, he had envisioned Judit not as painfully neurotic but as emotionally blocked, and had not tried to account for this facet of her character. Now he explores Judit's psychology, making of his female lead a volatile person prey to intense ambivalence. Beginning with the idea that Judit, for reasons unspecified, pursues Mañungo throughout Part I of the book, Donoso soon makes her interest in Mañungo coexist with, and be subordinate to, her pursuit of another man, the officer in the CNI (National Information Agency, Chile's secret police) who was in charge of her detention. By developing the plot in this way Donoso provides a plausible mission for his female lead, as well as a reason for her to conscript Mañungo during the curfew hours and a way to make him witness a political act. Curiously, though, by constructing a sort of double pursuit of two men whose voices she associates, one beneficent and the other an enemy, Donoso starts to portray Judit's ambivalence toward male figures, which he develops in several other ways as the novel evolves. Very soon, for example, he imagines that Judit should both hate her victimizer and be attracted to him. Then, ascribing Judit's emotional sterility to guilt, Donoso seeks reasons for the guilt and hits on the idea that the CNI man *saved* her from rape that her fellow prisoners were not spared—that is, that her jailer was in some sense her benefactor, too. And, in a bizarre turn of the plot that Donoso considers for a time and ultimately rejects, Judit is at one time convinced that the CNI man and the bureaucrat who issued her a false passport, a secret ally, are the same man. In developing Judit, then, Donoso relates her to men who, alternately

reveal his female protagonist expresses both poles of her ambivalence for figures who, like symbolic parents, exert power over her.

In writing the first draft of the wake and night walk scenes Donoso has for a time deflected his attention from Mañungo Vera. Now, reminding himself that Mañungo is the protagonist, Donoso sets about restoring to him pride of place. His reflections on Mañungo now revert to Chiloé. Donoso evokes Castro in the 1930s, when it was a city of *palafitos*, or primitive houses on stilts, and invents Mañungo's mother, killed there in the 1960 earthquake. In thinking of Mañungo as bereft of a mother, Donoso takes an important step toward expressing his hero's nostalgia for Chile as a yearning for absent mother figures.

He also returns to the Chilote myth of the *Caleuche*, one of several Chilote legends to which he alludes in his 1981 notes. Mañungo, he decides, should ride on the *Caleuche*, according to Chilote lore a ship manned by one-legged *brujos* (male witches) who spirit away shipwrecked sailors to a city under the sea. However, Donoso begins with no clear idea what his hero's ride on the *Caleuche* should mean. Mañungo, he first thinks, will board the mysterious ghost ship in a dream-like scene, then jump overboard and escape, as though the vessel symbolized a diabolical Chile, or perhaps the Chilean Left Wing. Then he wonders whether Mañungo and Lidia should make love in a small boat, "bewitched by love" (2: 180), making the mythical ship with its *brujos* represent passion. Ultimately, however, Donoso returns to the idea of Mañungo's guilt; because he escapes the *Caleuche*, the singer is "maldito"—cursed or unholy. Alluding again to the proprietor who saved his warehouse by allowing the *Caleuche* to carry off his daughter, Donoso now takes an important next step. "SHIP OF ART," he muses. "The witch is the ARTIST: he causes death" (2: 206). Not only will Mañungo occasion someone's death, but he will do so *because he is an artist*. Listing Chilote elements he wishes to include, Donoso begins:

artist—artist—brujo
 ship of art (*Caleuche*)
 artist-brujo-killing
 As the "artist," Mañungo becomes a murderer.
 He kills Lidia Veloso out of love and
 he kills someone for political reasons.

. . .

Jail for Mañungo. (2: 227)

Enthused though he is by this Chilote material, Donoso is brought up short when, after sketching an ending to Part I, he turns to the Chilote half of the novel. Almost immediately, faced with the awkwardness of transporting his Santiago characters to Chiloé, he abandons the idea of writing Part II, deciding instead to incorporate Chilote material in Part I as flashbacks. Enumerating aspects of Part II he intends to insert in the Santiago chapters, Donoso begins: "1. The artist as criminal, the artist-witch of the Chilote tradition, absolutely central to this novel. 2. The Caleuche, as the Ship of art . . ." (2: 233).

Now Donoso faces the task of relating Mañungo's criminality—which before he had ascribed to filicide—to his status as an artist. He has written a story in which left-wing friends press Mañungo to declare his opposition to the regime, whether by wearing a red armband, singing the protest song "Santiago ensangrentado" at Matilde's wake or accepting the mantle as Neruda's successor. Determined to champion "the essential immorality of the artist," Donoso will make Mañungo's aloofness from Chilean politics his (admirable) transgression:

the artist-witch, the artist-criminal. He simply does not choose, he sits on the sidelines waiting and waiting for himself, watching and watching himself, and if he consumes himself in that watching of himself, well, so be it. . . . Mañungo knows that he's immoral . . . but on another level the acceptance of his personal despair, as part of the despair of the country and the world, is clearheadedness, which is perhaps another form of hope . . . what he believes has to be free, not stifled, not programmatic. He rejects the tyranny of the historical moment. (2: 234)

Having modified his view of "desesperanza" and made it a positive stance, Donoso changes the fate of Lopito. Initially he had considered having Lopito die at a political rally, trying to redeem himself by vocal adherence to the anti-Pinochet cause. Donoso now rejects this facile martyrdom, wondering whether he should end the novel with Lopito's death "en un acto de bella locura" 'in a beautiful act of madness' (2: 237), that is to say, an affirmation of "desesperanza." Perhaps, he thinks, Lopito should die reciting Rimbaud or Baudelaire at Matilde's funeral, a noble gesture that would cast Lopito, like Mañungo, as an advocate of politically dis-

interested art.

One might think that Donoso had turned aside from the motif of ambivalence of child for parent and parent for child. However, inventing the “bella locura” that should result in Lopito’s death, he devises scenes that repeatedly cast Lopito in conflicted parent-child relationships. The scene evolves through the following versions:

1. Lopito distinguishes himself at Matilde’s funeral in some unspecified way. Jean-Paul accuses him of being drunk and they fight. Mañungo intervenes to defend his son and feels guilty when Lopito is arrested.

2. Lopito is arrested for defending an old man roughly treated by police.

3. Lopito is arrested when he defends Don César, a leader among Santiago’s mendicants, whose tricycle has been destroyed.

4. A beggar boy named Arturo cries when he finds his tricycle wrecked outside the cemetery. Lopito defends Arturo when an angry policeman threatens to take the lad to jail. Lopito is furious at the unfairness of the police but abuses the child.

5. Leaving the cemetery, Lopito meets Arturo and asks him about his father and Don César. Arturo entertains the children of Lopito, Mañungo and Judit, named Lopita, Jean-Paul and Marilú respectively, until they find Arturo’s wrecked tricycle. When the police accuse Arturo of stealing wire from old funeral wreaths, Lopito defends him. Both Lopito and Arturo are taken away by the police, who release Arturo. Arturo witnesses Lopito’s death and brings word to the other characters in Chile in *Miniature*.

6. Jean-Paul and Marilú laugh at Lopita at the cemetery and Lopito intervenes to save her. A policeman then laughs at Lopita and tells Lopito not to bother the other two children.

7. Lopito, drunk, strikes Lopita when she begs him to stop the other children from teasing her.

8. Jean-Paul and Marilú leave Lopita out of their game. Lopito takes Lopita by the hand but is violent with her and makes her cry. Outside the cemetery the other two children again mistreat Lopita. When Lopito comes to her defense a policeman accuses him of mistreating Jean-Paul and Marilú.

It would be hard to imagine a set of variants that more insistently express ambivalence between symbolic fathers and children. In every version, someone attacks an old man or child and usually someone comes to the victim's defense. Split portrayals of parents and children proliferate. Each rendering contains "good" and "bad" parents—Mañungo and Lopito in version 1, Lopito and the police in versions 4 and 5, Lopito and Lopito himself in versions 6 and 8—and in many of the variants "good" child-victims coexist with children who torment. By splitting the images of parent and child, Donoso expresses on the level of the plot raw ambivalence in the parent-child relationship the story paints. The finished novel elides Lopito's aggressiveness to children, showing only his furious defense of Lopita when a policeman laughs at her. However, prior versions of the scene show how persistently Donoso at first portrays both poles of parental ambivalence.

These variants also give evidence that, as Donoso plans the end of his book, he suddenly alters his principals' role in the symbolic family relations that underlie the plot. Both of his main characters, until late in the book, function primarily as symbolic children vis-à-vis their own parents; Mañungo mourns the death of a symbolic mother in Matilde and achieves a mysterious *rapprochement* with Ulda in his dreams, while Judit inhabits a world where symbolic fathers alternately betray and protect her. At the end of the novel, though, Donoso shows both Mañungo and Lopito embracing a paternal role, Lopito as "bad" or ineffectual father and Mañungo as his "good" counterpart. The variants summarized above show Donoso in the process of shifting his view of Lopito from symbolic son, protecting an older man in variants 2 and 3, to symbolic father in the last five versions of the scene. Ultimately, Donoso will dramatize Mañungo's spiritual renewal by showing him transformed from prodigal son into the protecting surrogate father of Lopita.

Donoso moves toward this resolution intuitively at first, not following conscious intent. A Freudian slip he makes in his notes for variant 4—he calls Arturo "Arturo's son," quickly correcting himself, "no, 'Arturo,' his name is Arturo" (2: 327)—shows him ascribing the name of a son to his father. In another way, too, the novel encodes a reversal of father-son roles, although in a way no reader of the novel could detect. Between the time he finished a first draft and the publication of the finished work Donoso changed the name of the beggar boy from Arturo to Darío. In his 1981 notes he had created a young hippie named Arturo sheltered by a benevolent

older man named Darío. Whether Donoso consciously recalled these two discarded characters when he put the finishing touches on his text is impossible to say. Yet by assigning what originally was a father figure's name to a symbolic son, Donoso confirms privately the direction the end of the novel takes.

It remains to show how Donoso develops Judit. Unlike Mañungo, she never assumes the role of parent, turning aside at the end of the book from the painful task of consoling Lopita after her father's death. As Donoso develops Judit's story, he continues to portray her as a child relating to "good" and "bad" symbolic parents. We have already seen that her pursuit of the equivocally evil CNI man, whom she strangely identifies both with Mañungo and with a bureaucrat who saves her life, expresses her ambivalence for parent figures. In creating the rest of her story Donoso provides her with two other sets of symbolic parents. It is as he begins to detail Judit's early history, to be narrated to Mañungo during the night walk scene, that Donoso first alludes in his notes to Don César. The beggar king is both friend to Judit—he hides her while she is living underground—and potential betrayer; Arturo warns Judit that Don César has turned informant for the secret police. Himself a "split" father figure, Don César coexists in the text with Arturo's own less treacherous father, who proffers competing advice about the CNI man's whereabouts.

Fausta and Celedonio, too, serve as parent figures for Judit in the thrilling account of her escape from Chile. Originally Donoso invented these two without envisioning them as a couple. In complicating the relationships among the characters during the wake scene he makes them long-time lovers. However, in narrating Judit's deliverance, Donoso replaces the real parents of the woman on whose life he models Judit with Fausta and Celedonio. "I love the idea of Fausta and Celedonio as parents" (2: 263), he delightedly reflects. In this case, of course, Judit's "good" symbolic parents are not paired with "bad" counterparts, except insofar as the CNI itself embodies malevolent authority.

We have seen that Donoso, by invoking the conflicted and intense relations between parents and children as he creates the plot and characters of *La desesperanza*, grounds his story of an exile's return in a powerful experience of ambivalence that all his readers share. Evidence of this ambivalence survives in the finished text in Mañungo's relationship to maternal female characters and in Judit's tortured relationships with men. Yet the finished novel foregrounds

another theme as well, that of transformation of self, which is central to many of Donoso's works. *La desesperanza* portrays Mañungo as a man who strives not only to restore his connection to his homeland, but to alter his being in the process of doing it. By reboarding the Caleuche, which Donoso finally depicts as the Chilote ship of art, Mañungo will be transformed. It is worth knowing that nowhere in his copious notes for the first draft of *La desesperanza* does Donoso mention the idea of transformation of self. This crucial motif, which Donoso incorporates late in his development of the text, grows out of his treatment of ambivalence between parents and children, for in the end it is Mañungo's assumption of a father's role that enacts the transformation of his being and confirms his reconciliation to an imperfect homeland. The novel ends as Mañungo, determined to defend the grotesque Lopita after her father's death, raises her on his shoulders and strides toward the matronly Fausta. This final reunion with his symbolic mother, and with Chile itself, is part and parcel of his transformation from needy child to responsible parent. It is also a transformation that resolves, in a moving moment of fictive grace, Mañungo's ambivalence toward maternal figures and toward the children for whom he must care.

By studying the complex process by which Donoso arrived at the final text of *La desesperanza* one can see that, in the case of this novel at least, the writer progressed in a particular way. For Donoso, character was destiny; both plot and theme evolved as he probed to discover who his fictional figures were. Consistently, in deepening his characters and relating them to one another, Donoso resorted to favored techniques, chief among them the Kleinian splitting of character and of plot. In doing so, he embedded in the novel time and again the compelling issue of ambivalence between parent and child. The fact that the overt central theme of the finished work—Mañungo's ability to transform himself—grows belatedly out of a welter of renderings of this primal ambivalence is suggestive indeed. Many of Donoso's narratives return to the idea that human identity may alter. They explore, now with hope, now with dread, the prospect that the self may be radically transformed. A look at Donoso's creation of *La desesperanza* leads one to wonder whether in other of his texts as well the theme of parent-child ambivalence coexists with and underlies the central Donosan theme of identity transformed.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Mr. Donoso for permitting me to study his working notes for *La desesperanza*, which are housed at the Princeton University Library. They consist of some 200 pages dated December 1, 1980 to December 10, 1981, handwritten in copybooks 52 and 53, and 500 typewritten sheets dated January 16 to August 23, 1985 and paginated in two series, the first of 93 pages and the second of 407. References to these notes are made in parentheses in the text, and refer either to copybook and page or to series and page. I have translated quotations from the notes into English.
2. Z. Nelly Martínez, for example, in a Derridian reading of *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*, writes that Humberto Peñaloza, the narrator, "se exhibe como un juego infinito de diferencias y de diferimientos" 'exhibits himself as an infinite game of differences and deferrals' (59).
3. Donoso's critics regularly point out his use of paired opposites. George McMurray notes the consistency with which Donoso, as early as *Coronación* (1957), pairs upper- and lower-class characters (68-70, 79, 84-85), and by 1985 Philip Swanson, who examines not just paired characters but binary opposition generally, has a considerable critical literature to review in his own study "Binary Elements in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*." Until now, critics have seen Donoso's use of opposites as a structuring device, but have not related it to Kleinian splitting and the idea of ambivalence.
4. Don Darío and Doña Nina are the names of a real couple Donoso met in 1981 on the island of Chiloé.
5. In an interview with Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat, Donoso expresses surprise at the idea that Mañungo and Lopito might be considered as doubles (Gutiérrez Mouat 13).

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