

and Harry depart. The sequence of events establishes the connection: as Oliver's innocence is endangered by the thieves, so is Rose's purity by Harry's proposal.

"To deflower Rose" is to denaturalize and domesticate the feminine ideal, through marriage, which in *Oliver Twist* is a sexual institution as well as an economic one. When Rose finally accepts Harry's offer (Ch. li), Grimwig asks to "take the liberty . . . of saluting the bride that is to be": "Mr. Grimwig lost no time in carrying this notice into effect upon the blushing girl; and the example, being contagious, was followed both by the doctor and Mr. Brownlow. Some people affirm that Harry Maylie had been observed to set it, originally, in a dark room adjoining; but the best authorities consider this downright scandal: he being young and a clergyman." Thomas aligns himself decisively with "the best authorities," Podsnap surely among them. But Dickens' intentions ineluctably include that "dark room adjoining" the happy group.

Immediately after the round of salutes to the "blushing girl," Mrs. Maylie asks Oliver, "Why do you look so sad? There are tears stealing down your face at this moment. What is the matter?" Oliver does not speak; instead the narrative voice replies: "It is a world of disappointment: often to the hopes we most cherish, and hopes that do our nature the greatest honour. Poor Dick was dead!" In direct narrative sequence Dickens juxtaposes the "contagious" kisses celebrating Rose's engagement and the death of an innocent, as earlier her sickness preceded the funeral of an unnamed child. The cause of Oliver's tears remains only momentarily ambiguous in the passage, but the moment is sufficient to reveal that sadness is congruent with either Rose's engagement or Dick's entombment. In a "world of disappointment," tears are caught "stealing" in even the happiest moments, and the rhythm and structure of the novel repeatedly disclose lament emotion that transcends moralistic intention in power and complexity.

This is the peculiar quality of the novel I tried to catch in discussing its conclusion. I find Dickens' imaginative energies divided in the closing chapters, as often throughout, between hypostatized thematic moralization and countervailing narrative intuitions of a broader moral order. His coyness about Rose's sexuality and his queasiness about Nancy's are both rooted in his continuing idealization of Mary Hogarth after her death, as analysis of the month-by-month progress of the novel's serial composition can readily demonstrate. But that's another subject.

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### The Imbunche in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*

To the Editor:

John Caviglia, in "Tradition and Monstrosity in *El obsceno pájaro de la noche*" (*PMLA*, 93 [1978], 33–45), states that the Imbunche was created as a mere nonce symbol by Donoso in the novel. In Canto ii of Pedro de Oña's *El arauco domado* (1596) there is a section that refers to the *Ibunché*. The modern critic Miguel Angel Vega M., in his book *La obra poética de Pedro de Oña*, makes reference to Oña's use of the Mapuche myth of the *Ibunché*. The spelling variant *Imbuche/Ibunché* is relatively unimportant given the state of Spanish orthography in the sixteenth century.

The pertinent strophes from Oña are:

En hondos soterraños  
Tienen capaces cuevas fabricadas,  
Sobre maderas fuertes afirmadas  
Para que estén así nestóreos años;  
Las cuales, en lugar de ricos paños,  
Están de abajo arriba entapizadas  
Con todo el suelo en ámbito de esteras  
Y de cabezas hórridas de fieras.

En esta gruta lóbrega y tremenda,  
Do los piramidales del Titano  
Para poder entrar no tienen mano,  
Por mas que por el sótano los tienda;  
Está sobre unas andas, cosa horrenda,  
Tendido un ya difunto cuerpo humano,  
Sin cosa de intestinos en el vientre  
Porque Pillán en el mas fácil entre.

El nombre es *Ibunché* del insepultado,  
Y cuando el dueño dél y de la cueva  
Quiere saber alguna cosa nueva  
De mucha calidad y fin oculto,  
Con gran veneración, respeto y culto  
(Que en esto el indio rudo nos lleva)  
Entra por la senda angosta y desmentida  
Para que no le sepan la guarida.

Y allí por el idólatra invocado  
El abismal diabólico trasunto,  
Se mete en el cadaver del difunto  
Por do responde, siendo preguntado,  
Así los negocios del Estado  
Si sube ó si declina de su punto,  
Como de los influjos celestiales,  
De buenos y de malos temporales:

En este su *Ibunché* tenido entre ellos  
Por una cosa allá como sagrada,  
Con suma religión administrada,  
Y la que por su Dios adoran ellos;  
Hélo sabido yo de muchos dellos,  
Por ser en su país mi patria amada,  
Y conocer su frásis, lengua y modo,  
Que para darme crédito es el todo.

(*Biblioteca de autores españoles*, Vol. xxix [Madrid: Rivadeneira, 1854]; my italics)

If the myth of the *Imbuche/Ibunché* is centuries old, perhaps Donoso's reasons for selecting just this myth would further clarify the underlying purpose of the novel. There is the possibility that, besides annihilating language, Donoso is also attempting to destroy time and literary genres. Caviglia stresses that "... Humberto's education is synchronically present in the diachronic progress of the novel" and that there is "an author's *Bildung* that equates synchronic and diachronic distance" (pp. 43, 44). The *Ibunché* present as a belief in precolonial Chile and in a twentieth-century novel may be Donoso's way of symbolizing the destruction of time, and once time is destroyed, space has no meaning.

As for the annihilation of genres, the old woman "un poco bruja, un poco alcahueta" might be straight out of *El libro de buen amor*, a mixture of genres if ever there was one, or *La Celestina*, the novel/drama or drama/novel. The *Imbuche* as "womb" is almost a takeoff on Carpentier's "Viaje a la semilla." Humberto, in his sickroom with only a photograph to open nonexistent perspectives, parallels the ending Cortázar gave us in "Las babas del diablo." The narrative schema provided by Caviglia reminds one very much of Vargas Llosa's technique in *La casa verde*, just as the contrast between *Casa* and *Rinconada* suggests the Peruvian's use of Piura and Santa María.

I submit, therefore, that the *Imbuche* may serve as the symbol that embraces all these annihilations and is of the utmost importance for a true understanding of Donoso's objectives in writing the novel. However, no author can create completely ex nihilo, and so they must be only partial annihilations, nullifying the norms of the past in order to create new ones—just as from Narcissus grew the beautiful new flower.

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To the Editor:

Although I was delighted to see a paper on a Latin American literary topic in the pages of *PMLA*, I was disappointed to see that John Caviglia was too hasty in his scholarship to check out thoroughly the central motif of the novel—and one of the central concerns of his paper. I refer to his note 4: "Although one is intended to believe that it is derived from Chilean folklore, it is in fact an invention of Donoso, created as a nonce symbol for his novel" (p. 45).

In fact *Imbunche* is listed in the nineteenth edition (1970) of the dictionary of the Real Academia

Española with no less than four meanings, three attributed to figurative Chilean usage. The principal definition matches perfectly the sense in which the term is used by Donoso. Moreover, a quick check in Oreste Plath's *Folklore chileno* would have revealed that the *Imbunche* does, in fact, have folkloric roots. Plath's definition on page 433 (4th ed., 1973) gives the etymology of the word and its general use. And his description on pages 139–40 of the motif of the "Cueva de Quicavi" demonstrates amply the folkloric heritage of the *Imbunche*; page 140 describes in detail various aspects of the *Imbunche*.

I will leave it for Caviglia to determine the degree to which this error affects his interpretation of the novel. Nevertheless, it would seem quite significant that the *Imbunche* motif, far from being a solipsistic nonce symbol, jibes well with how the unseen forces of the world, controlled by Peta Ponce, the witch who manipulates the *Imbunche*, exact their toll on both the aristocrat and the bourgeois "intellectual" who believe that they, in fact, are the masters of the Peta Ponces.

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### Double-Reading *Daniel Deronda*

To the Editor:

You were right; Cynthia Chase's essay "The Decomposition of the Elephants: Double-Reading *Daniel Deronda*" (*PMLA*, 93 [1978], 215–27) makes hard reading, but it is worth it in the end—not so much, I feel, for the rhetorical flourish of self-cancellation at which so much structuralist criticism seems to aim, the dizzy discovery that "narrative must cut out or cut around the cutting short of the cutting off of narrative," but for some fine local insights.

I would like to comment on two of these insights, however. First, Chase discloses the "discrediting," the "scandal," the "forgery" that the double or deconstructionist reading of *Daniel Deronda* finds embedded in the text. She builds this analysis on an extension of Eliot's own terminology about the "swindle" (Meyrick's word) and the "coercion" (narrator's word) that must occur in the movement of the mind (or the "story") from simple self-involvement or self-contemplation to contemplation of itself as part of a system. If one thinks that making this movement is worthwhile, the swindle or coercion lies exactly in seeing what is not, strictly, "there": the general system of morality (see *Middle-*