

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-*