A Lizard's Tale: Irony and Immanent Critique in José Donoso's *Lagartija sin cola*.

Introduction.

The years that have passed since the posthumous publication of José Donoso's unfinished novel *Lagartija sin cola*[i] (2007) allow us to assess the spectrum of critical responses to the work. Having been found among Donoso's papers by his daughter, Pilar, during her research for a biography of her father, *Lagartija* was well received by critics and some expressed surprise that Donoso abandoned the novel. Commentators have focused on two of its aspects in particular. Firstly, sequences in the novel have contributed to the now widely-held perception of Donoso as a "closeted" homosexual writer (García Castro 2002, Náter 2006, Shaw 2009). Secondly, critics use the novel to demonstrate his shift from the confusion and contortions of his overtly "boom" or "new narrative" works, towards less spectacular, more approachable, but nonetheless equally subversive fictions within the "post-boom" (Swanson 2010).

While both positions offer important insights into Donoso's novel, they overlook the extent to which we are dealing with a nuanced and often ironic piece, in which the narrator cannot be simply read as a cipher for Donoso the man. However, the parallels between Armando Muñoz-Roa, the reclusive painter who narrates the novel from his Barcelona hideaway, and Donoso himself, undergoing one crisis or another during his Spanish exile, as well as contextual references, are revealing of the immanent critique Donoso carries out on his own position as a writer and his work in the novel. Intertextual and self-referential sequences must be read as more than simply a justification for Donoso's own decisions. An unstinting analytical eye, refusing both the security of adherence to knowledge external to oneself and the kind of Archimedes point beloved of the commercial novel, is a distinctive feature of Donoso's work, and what perhaps sets him apart from other writers of his generation.

Written but abandoned in the early 1970s, *Lagartija sin cola* is set in Spain and introduces themes of artistic failure and disillusionment that come to dominate later works, yet also has something of his earlier Chilean family sagas. The novel was planned in Aragonese village of Calaceite in 1972/3 and, according to a diary entry reproduced by Pilar Donoso (2010: 118), it was meant as the story of a solitary man, a reflection on the fear of violence, revenge, and paranoia, as well as an investigation of the limits of idealism and aestheticism, explored through the life and thoughts of the protagonist, Armando.

In the novel Armando takes flight to the little town of Dors having nursed his friend and cousin Luisa through her convalescence from a mastectomy, but also after the public disgrace of his break from the artistic movement, Catalan *informalismo*, with which his paintings were associated. Having been excluded from a touring show, Armando breaks with the *informalistas* and writes a public "autocrítica", a self-criticism, attacking the work of the group and his own association with it. Swanson and others have taken this to be Donoso's own comment on the "Boom" and contemporary literature. Yet there are important contrasts and for one to read Donoso's novel as being about the "boom", one must read more closely than has been done so far. Muñoz-Roa's crime is to have denounced the other members of *informalismo* as talentless opportunists. But, as we read later still, what has really offended the other members of the wave, the young artists who assault him outside a cinema, and the agents who now want nothing to do with his work, is that he made a "pública autocrítica" (2007: 15). In a novel written in 1973, it is almost impossible to read those words without thinking of Cuba and the Caso Padilla, and not least when one considers that the first sustained chronicle of these events was written by Donoso's great friend and fellow Chilean, Jorge Edwards, in *Persona non grata* (1971). As Luis Rebaza-Soraluz (2011) points out in his insightful reflection on the case, while the *Caso* is remembered, along with the *Mundo Nuevo* affair, as instrumental in the break-up of the political consensus that marked the apotheosis of the boom, the role of Padilla himself is a complex one. The case was not simply a matter of a government turning authoritarian and clamping down on freedom of expression. Rebaza argues

that Padilla's publication of *Fuera de juego* and its presentation in competition was part of an internal power struggle within the nascent post-revolutionary Cuban cultural establishment over the relationship between artists and the revolution, and over the direction of official artistic and cultural bodies. It was one which Padilla lost.[ii] If we are prepared to accept that Donoso is, in part, writing allegories for the boom, then we cannot overlook this reference. The figure of Muñoz-Roa, rather than the reclusive painter beloved of purity, battling against his more market-minded peers, is instead one engaged in a struggle for power and influence – one which he too loses. Furthermore, Armando's depiction of Spanish *informalismo* strips it, and in particular the work of Antoni Tàpies, from its context both in Catalonia and within the contemporary political scene. Although this is one of the first works in which Donoso references real people by name, the appearance of Tàpies and others is divorced from anything other than Armando's personal and artistic crisis.[iii]

While the presence of pets in a novel may seem a trivial basis for literary argument, in the case of Donoso the choice of domestic animals can never be overlooked. Critical essays[iv] have been dedicated to the use of dogs as symbol in Donoso's work; dogs have key roles as characters and plot drivers in many of his novels; and several characters (La Manuela in *El lugar sin límites*, Judit in *La desesperanza*), reach one sort of conclusion or another through violent encounters with dogs. Donoso himself remarked on several occasions that a mark of being at home was to have dogs. The narrator, however, has a cat, named Tàpies. His antagonist, the Italian actor and playboy, Bruno, is described throughout as "el gato negro" or "el hombre gato-negro", the black cat or the black-cat man. Lidia, the narrator's distant niece and one-time lover, is often seen surrounded by cats in the inn. And the only occasion on which a dog appears is the momentary illusion of a stray dog in the castle, which turns out to be Bruno with Barto, the young villager towards whom the narrator develops a strong erotic and emotional attraction (93). Lidia mentions dogs, "enormes, terribles, unos perros negros con ojos amarillos", but only as a relic of her past life: now she wants to stay in the town, and her attachment to the inn's cats in part motivates

that desire.[v] What's more, Armando's cat, Tàpies, is a "gran gato negro capado" (14), a big castrated black cat: the reference suggests that Armando is taking revenge on both his former artistic comrades and his erstwhile enemy in Dors, in a fashion that is at once nasty and masculinist. All of which is a way of saying that to read the narrator as a mere cipher for Donoso is to overlook a further aspect of the novel which suggests that a more nuanced understanding of the narrative position is required. Indeed what both the "closet" theorists and Swanson's "boom – post-boom" paradigm have in common is that they want to tell a story about "Donoso". The story that they tell, however, is too coherent and too linear, to be true to the fiction that Donoso wrote.

If, as most critics agree, Donoso's novel is self-referential and meta-literary, using the contemporary art world as a metaphor for the Latin American "boom", there is another way in which the novel draws attention to its fictional status, namely intertextuality. More specifically, it is hard for the reader to avoid parallels between the framing narrative (Armando's nursing of Luisa after her mastectomy) and the opening of Juan Carlos Onetti's masterpiece, *La vida breve* (1950), in which the narrator, Brausen, reflects on his relationship with his wife, Gertrudis, as she recovers from the same operation. The novels share graphic depictions of the scar, and a male narrator who struggles to overcome the change in a female body both familiar and associated with his own youth and sexual vigour. Later, Brausen appears to slash his own chest with a razor blade. Furthermore, they see the apparent destruction of the female body as a reflection on their own decrepitude and social alienation.

This reference to Onetti's earlier work initially supports the thesis that Donoso is really writing about Latin American fiction. Onetti is mentioned six or seven times in *Historia personal del "boom"* as one of the predecessors of the movement, as an author who expanded the horizons of Latin American narrative, moving beyond the deadening localism of the *costumbrista* and social realist fictions that Donoso argued still dominated national prose production in the 1930s and 40s. Onetti, who never

achieved the commercial acclaim of later Latin American novelists of his stature, or indeed the international renown of his peer across the River Plate, Jorge Luis Borges, would offer a return to Latin American fiction not only untainted by marketing, big-money prizes, and critical log-rolling, but also shorn of the theatrics of magical realism or other clichéd splashes of local colour. Onetti's world – and not least in *La vida breve* – is bitter, brutal, and unrelentingly pessimistic, with characters frequently reduced to emotional wreckage or, worse still, simply pieces of flesh. Donoso's turn to Onetti would thus find its counterpart in Armando's rejection of the accessibility and blat of informalism.

At the same time, however, Donoso's call to Onetti tells us something else about Armando. In *La vida breve* Onetti blurs the lines between different levels of fiction. The reader of *La vida breve* knows that Santa María, Dr. Díaz Grey, and much of the novel's plot, all exist as fantasies in the mind of the narrator Brausen. Likewise the character Arce, whom he invents to seduce a neighbor, La Queca. In part two, there even appears a character called Onetti. As such, the novel treads a curious path: there is no requirement of the reader that her disbelief be suspended, and yet the doubly-fictional sections, clearly marked from the outset as such by references to contracts, film treatments, pages, and so forth, come to take over the narrative. Although the reader is constantly reminded of this double-staging, the harshness of Onetti's/Brausen's prose draws us into this twice-fictional world. Meanwhile, the narrator becomes increasingly unhinged, even megalomaniacal; the people of Santa María "habían nacido de mí," (271) "todos eran míos" (278). Yet we are never allowed to forget that the fiction we enjoy is the fantasy of a bitter man, looking for something better to distract him from a brutal and alienating world. This impression is reinforced in a final sequence of Onetti's novel, in which the invented characters dress up in masks and disguises for carnival.

Dors, in Donoso's novel, would seem to be, rather than a micro-political project or architectural dream, a simple fantasy in the mind of Armando, like the escapism of Brausen who also retreats into idealized

worlds as a turning away from the terrors of vivisected flesh. This is not to say that we should read the Dors of the novel as a dream or a fiction of the narrator; it does, however, explain the crashing disappointments and moments of low comedy in the novel: the Dors that Armando creates for himself is radically disconnected from the real and historical place that he actually visits. That the opening of the text tells us in advance that he fails only reinforces our knowledge of the delusion of Dors. The structure of *Lagartija*, and in particular the order of the chapters, is such that the reader knows the outcome of the narrator's stay in Dors before it has happened.[vi]

So, we can argue that Donoso's novel is circular; after the lengthy Dors section, which we already know will end badly, we return to the narrator's seclusion in his flat. The final part takes the reader even further back in time, a brief section detailing Armando and Luisa's quasi-incestuous adolescent affair, the background to their later relationship. The novel therefore underlines, in tone and structure, its negative outlook, from the very start: "esperanza es una palabra infernal, el comienzo del horror, de lo imposible" (2007: 13). Although the long, drifting paragraphs, with their extended sentences and numerous sub-clauses are familiar to readers of Donoso's other works, many of which employ something close to a stream of consciousness to give insight into characters' thoughts (present in his very first novel, *Coronación*), this opening section, with plot and character references that will not be cleared up until much later, still functions as if to remove any hope. Irony thus comes to occupy a central position: if the narrator's despair is all consuming, it is contrasted with the hope of his friend Luisa, recovering from cancer, that her final Pap test will reveal her to be free from the illness. And, if that is the case, the narrator says, with almost a visible sneer, "no morirá jamás y será siempre luz y siempre día para ella. Esa es la buena noticia que me trae" (14).

Few critics, however, have noticed the comedy of Armando and his circle. Donoso's jokes are generally jet-black or extremely subtle, but other forms of humour can be found in this novel. For example, we

witness their comically exaggerated reactions: “al subir al Castillo, habíamos visto con desesperación, dos o tres casas de aspecto moderno, que nos habían hecho cerrar los ojos para no verlas” (54). The image of Luisa and Armando recoiling in horror is over the top and undoubtedly comic. We also see situational comedy which works against the protagonist and his circle. Having contracted Bartolomé senior to renovate their houses, Luisa and Armando are appalled when the former’s daughter launches into a tirade against the new developments in the town. Bartolomé – the main promoter of “development” in Dors – reacts in anger and storms off, breaking the deal and leaving Armando with the possibility of owning several dilapidated houses in a village where he is hated and in which the only man who can repair them has sworn on his life never to work for the outsider. After Bartolomé’s exit, Luisa turns to her daughter and asks: “¿Tomaste tu remedio después del almuerzo?” Her daughter answers her: “No. Tú lo tienes en tu bolso.” This is the kind of situational comedy only found elsewhere in Donoso’s work in the late campus novel *Donde van a morir los elefantes* (1995).

On other occasions, subtler comedy takes place at the expense of the narrator. Armando repeatedly fails to see the irony of his own observations: after a spending spree in which he has purchased houses for himself, his cousin, and his ex-wife, all to be renovated by cheap local labour, and he is set on finding further houses for his “select crowd” of friends and acquaintances, he despairs of the locals who cannot understand his desires, that he is looking for “un refugio de paz en un sitio en que no todo esté en venta” (81).[vii]

Armando, it becomes ever clearer as the novel develops, is also a terrible snob. As the narrator details the destruction of the Mediterranean coast with the arrival of mass tourism, Armando regrets the construction of chalets and snack bars, and the arrival of a form of crass commercialism that he associates with the “marchantes” and “pintores fabricantes” who prostituted *informalismo*.[viii] Worse still, Armando and those close to him are being forced out, and “éramos al fin y al cabo una élite” (20).

He sees the locals in Dors, whose town he is supposedly fighting to save, as having "rostros agudos como ratones, burdos," (77) and he talks of seeing their "codicia" (77) and their "avaricia y rapacidad pueblerina". Later, his dislike takes on cosmic proportions, as he complains of the impossibility of explaining "una mística" to rough country folk who are only interested in their next meal and "no sabían proyectarse ni agrandar sus conceptos" (121). Armando's dislike stretches beyond small-town money-grabbing and commercial overdevelopment; his thoughts on the "hombre gato-negro", whom he discovers is a former minor Italian actor, reflect another type of snobbery: Bruno Fantoni is "uno de esos chulos que ganaban acceso a Cinecittá *sleeping their way up* [*sic*] [….]: escoria de la sociedad de consumo" (96). Furthermore, as we read about Armando's artistic CV, it is hard to avoid the suspicion that he is also a fraud: with no formal training, he picks up some tips from works he sees in galleries, and concludes that "no era necesario saber pintar para pintar" (24). His success is based on his financial independence courtesy of his generous and supportive ex-wife, and his cousin Luisa's network of contacts. None of it, in the strictest terms, has anything to do with Armando's ability as a painter.[ix]

What becomes ever clearer as the novel progresses is that the narrator is desperate to distinguish himself from those he dislikes – to stay "puro" in his terms. Even in the depths of his personal and professional failure, Armando is intent on setting himself apart; Luisa, he complains, never admired his painting for its "genio", only "en términos de valor, de 'buen gusto'" (216). Again, at times the distinctions can have comic effects. Bruno complains that he does not like "la España de ahora, me gusta la de antes." Disconcerted at finding a point of agreement with his new enemy, Armando must make the distinction: "A nosotros también [….]. Pero a él solo 'le gustaba', como un plato delicioso para que un gourmet se lo devorara" (128). Armando misses the political implications of what he is saying, namely that the Spain "de antes," before mass tourism, was also the Spain before other forms of social opening up and, more pointedly, the isolated Spain high-Francoism. Perhaps, one might suggest, Armando gives away his political sympathies here. Desperate to defend his Dors from Bruno's vision, Armando hatches

a plan: “traer más y más gente a Dors, pero gente elegida por nosotros que respondiera al gusto de nosotros y a la manera de vivir de nosotros” (131). The subsequent choice of phrasing can hardly be accidental, for the artist’s plan is “colonizar Dors con gente más o menos prominente” (131). Given that Donoso would soon write a major novel which dedicates long sections to the colonization of rural Latin America (*Casa de campo*), it is hard to overlook the political implications of Armando’s plan.

Lagartija, like much of Donoso’s work, is influenced by the author’s theoretical and historical reading. In contrast, for example, to *Casa de campo* and *Pájaro*, there are open references to source material. The narrator is seeking some sort of communion with the world; after an access of passion with his cousin, Luisa, in the grounds of the castle, he comments that “no había hecho, entonces, el amor con ella, sino con las piedras del castillo, del pueblo entero, de la noche inmensa” (62).[x] Then, having concluded that, for his own well-being, he must also seduce his cousin’s daughter, Armando hits upon a strategy, namely to explain his quasi-mystical attachment to the town of Dors. By framing the conversation as a seduction, Donoso leaves the reader in some doubt over the extent to which we should believe that Armando does feel this connection, rather than simply functioning as hippy spiel to get Lidia into bed. As the seduction progresses, he says to himself that “mi superchería - ¿era superchería? – estaba dando resultados” (135). But the reference is to an author whom Donoso had read, the early anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (given without accents in the 2007 edition).[xi] Armando shows the book to Lidia, and tries to explain that in some way he has found his “alma selvática” in Dors. In his synthesis of Lévy-Bruhl’s thought, Armando states that for “pueblos primitivos”, the soul of man was fragmented, and that part of it could inhabit an object, in particular an object from the world around him, such as a tree, a rock, a house, or an animal. In Dors, Armando tells Lidia, he has encountered his “alma selvática” or primitive soul. Something, however, still escapes him for his full “matrimonio místico” with the town. This seems to prick Lidia’s interest; as she runs a hand over the nape of his neck, Armando thinks that

the shift from abstract thoughts to emotion has worked: Lidia too is a “ser primitivo”, “no sabía pensar en abstracto”.

If the seduction of Lidia, at once successful and profoundly disappointing for the protagonist, might allow us to pass off Armando’s search for the other parts of his “primitive soul” as patter, it is less feasible to dismiss his attitudes to Dors and the local population as a put-on. In Lévy-Bruhl’s most important works, such as *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910, translated as *How Natives Think*, 1926) and *L'âme primitive* (1927, translated as *The "Soul" of the Primitive*), he presents a binary and developmentalist portrait of different mentalities, with the Western mentality based on logic and reason, and the primitive mindset inclining towards a mythical and supernatural relationship with the world. Lévy-Bruhl’s terminology, speaking of “inferior” and “primitive” societies, dates him, along with many pioneers of ethnography. But as Armando returns to his earlier chat, he claims that much of what he said was true: there is a “mystical participation” with Dors, such that any insult against its stones is an insult against him (151); but his attitude to the inhabitants is also marked by quasi-ethnographic prejudices that seem hopelessly dated: “Tratar de comunicarse a un nivel más o menos civilizado con esa gente [del pueblo], yo lo sabía, era imposible, imposible totalmente imponerles mis valores” (151-2). Communication instead takes place at the level of a relationship with the concrete world, for example when he chooses pieces for his renovation project with the tellingly-named stonemason Salvador. Later, as Armando studies the town, he witnesses traditional activities: truffle hunting, the harvest, and most strikingly, the ritual slaughtering of pigs for a feast. He speaks of the “violencia ingenua de este viejo ritual salvaje” (158). The subsequent reference to the town’s gypsies, and their post-work festivities, with “un jaleo de palillos y panderetas y flamenco y peleas” (158) makes it clear that Armando’s vision of Dors is informed by the same guidebook stereotypes that have existed since the times of Washington Irving, yet coloured by his anachronistic anthropological view of Dors as a town to be discovered. And through the novel’s brief references to his son’s readings – namely Émile

Durkheim, the founder of sociology – we see that other, less divisive modes of viewing contemporary society, are available.

While Armando may be on the hunt for something pre-civilized, he and his sworn opponents share a teleological vision of Dors, based on the arrival of superior, more advanced intellects: in the case of Bruno and Bartolomé, moving forward in line with the technocracy and consumerism that ushered in mass tourism; in the case of Armando, bringing artistic sensibilities, an appreciation of certain traditions, and the money and vision to restore early architecture. What neither seems to notice is the wider political context, namely the political struggle, clandestine at times, over the post-Franco settlement; tourism of all sorts was, in part, Francoism's technocratic Faustian pact with the contemporary world.

A struggle takes place in the novel over the meaning of "civilization". Throughout it, forms of the term "civilizar" are repeated, argued about, and given a whole variety of meanings. Just like Bruno's enjoyment of Spain, his "civilización" (132) is placed in speech marks – or rather scare quotes – by the narrator. Here we must expand on Swanson's brief words on the term "civilization" as used in the novel (172). Swanson is correct to link this to seminal works such as Gallegos' *Doña Bárbara* and of course Sarmiento's life of the caudillo Facundo Quiroga, *Civilización y barbarie*. More, however, must be said about the many nuances that Donoso is able to give to the term in the novel. If Bruno's vision of "civilization" as an artificial hybrid of local colour and "más Europea" home-comfort (basically high-end mass tourism meets Ponzi scheme) is terrifying for Armando ("aterradora", 181), it also reveals what is shared between the two rival developers: a vision of this part of Spain as alien, other, non-European, and non-co-temporaneous with their own worlds. Bruno sees Armando's project as the first step, the early-adoption phase, of something far grander of his own devising. Despite all of Armando's protestations, Bruno cuts to the heart of what is really at play:

> La gente pagará para vivir en un ambiente tan poco 'estropeado' por el turismo…todos esos esnobs que huyen de los sitios estropeados, como si hubiera posibilidad alguna de que un sitio o una persona, por último, y ese es el proceso de la vida, no se estropee. (183)

Bruno, a cynic, describes how he (or rather they, for he is looking to Armando as a possible business partner) can profit from this situation, in a passage that describes with remarkable accuracy the property development cycle as it occurred on the *costas* and in places as far away as the beaches of Thailand or Buenos Aires' Palermo district. A Faustian pact is offered; indeed Bruno goes as far as to say that their eventual escape will be "al infierno, supongo". The exchange, from which Armando recoils in horror, reveals him for what he is: a snob and a real estate salesman.

Armando's select crowd also includes his English family, and the conversation with his son, Miles, a hippy musician supported by Diana, again has wider implications, beyond the twisted logic it evinces. Miles is rather taken by his father's plan, "salvar la belleza del pueblo comprando casas para rescatarlas del mal gusto y de la pretensión que estaban deformando algo tan puro" (102). Like Armando and Luisa's hands-over-eyes gesture, the overreaction itself is funny. But, more importantly, for a novel written at the height of the Vietnam War, and by a bilingual English-speaking writer, which includes a character, Diana, who gives several speeches precisely about the Vietnam War, and includes mentions of press coverage of the war, it is hard to avoid the echo of the infamous (mis)quotation about the destruction of Ben Tre, attributed to the US Army Officer responsible for its bombing, that "to save the village we had to destroy the village". Having set up Armando's and Miles' image of their salvation of the village, the eventual arrival of the scandalous hippy caravan is a moment of high comic bathos. Having lauded the peace of Dors, it is revealing that the arrival of the "third wave" of Armando's group is accompanied by "bocinazos", "bocinas estridentes" and "bocinas de varias notas absurdamente armonizadas" (167). The narrator's shock and disappointment could not be made clearer: "Parecía la entrada de un circo a un pueblo" (167).

At the end of the long second part of the book, Bruno's vision comes true. The destruction of the town comes to implicate not just the narrator, "sino al pueblo entero, y a toda la civilización" (185). In one of the many passages which repeat with slight differences an earlier section, Armando reflects, synthetically, on his project: "Colonizar Dors con gente más o menos prominente […] salvar y civilizar en nombre de la estética que creíamos también era ética" (185). Yet, instead, after the English with their refined taste comes a less select crowd, and with it crass renovations, souvenir shops, snack bars, alcohol, "locura, el crimen, la sangre derramada" (186). Perhaps the biggest surprise in this sequence is precisely that Armando blames himself: it is a mark of the narrator's megalomania, the same megalomania that made him break with *informalismo* and that led to his Dors project, which enables him to blame himself for everything that has happened there: his unreal vision of the untouched, precivilized Dors of the past has turned into his nightmare of modern consumerism, and it is all his fault. Yet the locals, Armando reflects with some distaste, are quite happy with the influx of tourists, and glad to be rid of Armando and the crowd that he had attempted to attract – seen as "gente rara" by the townspeople (192). By the end of the third section, it becomes clear that the narrator is suffering from paranoid delusions: "Empuño mi bastón para defenderme de ese ejército de paletos vestidos de pana negra" (198).

Conclusion.

Donoso's novel highlights the problems entailed when critics attempt to turn works into an *obra* and then into a story about the writer. We might ask, furthermore, whether we need to distinguish the "work" from the "obra" at all. But letters, drafts, and notes do not, in themselves, demonstrate the coherence of an authorial persona. In the case of Donoso, their use by critics may risk erasing his

humour and irony. One can talk about the novel as "pivotal" without needing to tell a coherent story about Donoso's life itself.

Thus Rowe's seminal essay (1983) on *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* reminds us, still, of just how radical Donoso's writing is. Firstly, as Rowe argues, the psychological is inextricably social. And, in Donoso's own words, behind the many masks in his fiction, one finds not a face, but always another mask (Pilar Donoso 2007: 37). Yet there are enough similarities between Donoso and Armando and between the "boom" and informalism for critical irony to be acute: Donoso is distanced from Armando to such an extent that we cannot see the latter simply as a cipher for the former, but not so much that we see Donoso holding up the narrator to ridicule at one remove. Donoso, thus, can be read as the immanent critic *par excellence*, for whom there is no high ground and no stable point. When the narrator talks about his vision for Dors (131), he is demonstrating – and Donoso appears to be analyzing – the simultaneous ability to think that one is outside bourgeois ideology while being unable to think outside it.[xii] Donoso, I maintain, could never allow himself such comfort. This is a mark of his integrity and continued relevance as a novelist.

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Notes.

[i] The novel is occasionally referred to as *La cola de la lagartija*. The subsequent publication of a novel (by Luisa Valenzuela) of a novel with a very similar name led Donoso's literary executors to opt for the different title (see Pilar Donoso 2010: 118). Henceforth I shall refer to the novel as *Lagartija*.

[ii] See also Gilman 2012, chapters 5 and 6, for further background.

[iii] Tàpies, for example, was a member of clandestine pro-democracy groups, campaigned against the death penalty under Franco, and produced both art works and texts which reflected on the political moment and the role of the artist in society. See the biography of Tàpies at www.fundaciotapies.org or the material collected in Ishaghpour and Tàpies (2006). On Tàpies and Catalan nationalism, see Gimferrer (1976).

[iv] See for example Pearson and sections in Magnarelli.

[v] A further creaturely complication comes with the appearance of the caterpillar, as the narrator laments the "voraces orugas del turismo" (73) eating up the coast. This is a reference that makes more sense coming from Donoso than from Armando; at the time of writing, Armando's children are grown up, whereas Donoso and his wife, María del Pilar, adopted a daughter in 1968 (Pilar had been born in Madrid in 1967). Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* was first published in New York in 1969. Donoso, one can only assume, had read the English version (the Spanish translation is entitled *La pequeña oruga glotona*), also unsurprising given the importance that Donoso gave to his daughter's learning English.

[vi] One can only guess as to whether this would have been Donoso's intention for the final version of the novel, as the chapter order depends on both the circumstances of Pilar Donoso's discoveries (one can only presume that her search for material was thorough) and Julio Ortega's intervention as an editor. But there are several reasons for believing that the reader should be aware that any hope in Dors is fleeting: firstly, in other novels Donoso joked

about authors who sustain interest by withholding information (in *Casa de campo*, for example); secondly, almost none of Donoso's works have a linear chronological narrative, and those which do (*La misteriosa desaparición*, *El jardín de al lado*) tend to undermine their own development; thirdly, other Donoso novels make it clear to the reader that hope will be snuffed out and that happy days are only fleeting (*Este domingo*, *El lugar sin límites*). Perhaps more importantly, the tone of the opening chapter has a prophetic feel to it, talking about hope being hellish, for example.

[vii] The phrase is echoed by a work on precisely this aspect of Spanish history and society: Jurdao Arrones' 1979 study, *España en venta*.

[viii] For a rather booster-ish appraisal, see Townson (2010). Hooper's 1995 volume is almost the standard reference; Preston (1976) takes a less celebratory approach. For a whimsical yet fascinating reflection on the arrival and effect of mass tourism on the Costa Brava, see Norman Lewis's memoir, *Voices of the Old Sea* (1984).

[ix] This is another aspect of the novel that looks forward to his later work: "me quedé en la posición en que ella me había dejado, rey de mi éxito espurio y postizo y gozándolo. Postizo. Artificial" (30). Although the means by which it occurs, namely the metatextual twist in which we discover that what we are reading is not what we thought it was and the narrator is not who we thought he was, differ, this position of artificial male success based on invisible female intervention, is highly reminiscent of the situation described in *El jardín de al lado*.

[x] As Catherine Boyle insightfully noted, this sequence could almost be read as a parody of some of the love scenes in Pablo Neruda's memoirs, *Confieso que he vivido*, in particular the "aventura erótico-cósmica" up a tower in Buenos Aires (1974: 161-3).

[xi] Donoso was not the only author of the boom to have read Lévy-Bruhl; Julio Cortázar wrote in a critical essay that the poet shared the mysticism of the primitive mind, with direct reference to the anthropologist's work *Les fonctions mentales…* (1994: 272, 276). Cortázar, it seems, took Lévy-Bruhl rather more at face value.

[xii] This is the point that the anthropologist David Graeber (2011: 402 n8) makes about many supposedly revolutionary artists and thinkers, not least among them Nietzsche and Bataille.