structure. If anything, Primera memoria ends on a note of non-completion. Clearly this has something to do with the fact that Primera memoria is the opening novel of a trilogy entitled Los mercaderes. However, the subtext of the fairytale is brought to a conclusion, even if the novel is not. Unlike the mermaid, the protagonist of Matute’s novel does not disappear into a cloud of foam; her life, evidently, carries on.

What is intriguing about the novel is the fact that, although the discourse of the fairytale is presented as non-salvific since illusion and everyday life are shown finally to be at odds with one another, fairy tales possess a significant function in the novel as a discourse which allows female life to centre itself. Throughout the novel, the protagonist is described as alienated from the masculinist equivalent of fairy tales, namely, the doctrines of the Church. Mosén Mayol, for example, in the eyes of most of the inhabitants of the village, is a quasi-divine figure, dignified, cultured, highly refined (pp. 49–50). But Matía is not as overwhelmed as her peers and friends are by his aura of sanctity. During the mass which she, el Chino and Borja attend, Matía’s thoughts wander off to thoughts of the Little Mermaid during the religious chants:

"Pero... por qué no tenemos las sirenas un alma inmortal?" No la tuvo, no la tuvo, y se convirtió en espuma. "Yo cedo... que con sus pies desnudos pisaba la tierra sentía como si se le clavasen cuchillas afiladas y agudas..."

... quios pre-oi-osa sanguine redi-mis-i... La Joven Sirena quería que la amase, pero nunca la amó nadie. "Pobre sirena!" (p. 59)

A distinction is thus being drawn between the immortality implicit in Christ’s sacrifice for mankind and the inconstancy and perishability which characterise the Little Mermaid’s life. Matía’s alienation from the discourse of the Christian world is further suggested when Borja asks her if she goes to confession, to which she replies: ‘No tengo pecados’ (p. 164). Matía finally reveals herself as a liminal figure, standing on the outer limits of the society in which she lives, no closer now than she was before to the roots of her being.

In more ways than one, Primera memoria is a truncated text; rather than offering a tale of ‘linear socialization’, Matute’s novel is characterized by disruption and psychic inconclusion (thereby echoing the second type of fairytale as defined by Sara Gilead; see above). Though ultimately unable to provide a finality to Matía’s life which is anything but proleptic, the discourse of the fairy tale is nevertheless promoted as the only hermeneutic strategy truly available to womankind.

13 ‘Ana María Matute’s Primera memoria: A Fairy tale Gone Awry’, p. 11.


the use of fairy tales and populist literature motifs, as well as their integration into the 'novel-as-self-reflexive' device.

El cuarto de atrad is predicated on the escapism characteristic of children's fantasy literature, as Martin Gaite would be the first to point out. As she notes in an interview: 'When one experiences the dazzling impact of reading at an early age, the effect is akin to that of an arrow wound. Reading provides insight into a secret world that liberates one from the hostile pressures of the environment, from the routines and deception that confront the reality produces'. In line with the thrust of Martin Gaite's observation, El cuarto de atrad consistently draws attention to the haven provided by the world of fantasy, romantic fiction and the fairy tale in the narrator's mind. Intriguingly, however, the worlds of fantasy and reality are never presented in the novel as separate worlds; there is, indeed, often an uncanny interrelation, and even identity, between them. The novel opens, for example, in medias res with the narrator trying to establish the identity of the man who has sent her a love letter, and noting that his handwriting seems vaguely familiar. The scene suddenly changes and the beautiful girl on the cover of a magazine sitting on the table is now looking at the narrator: 'Ahora la niña provinciana que no logra dormirse me está mirando a la luz de la lamparita amarilla, cuyo resplandor ha atenuado, poniéndole encima un pañuelo; ve este cuarto dibujado por Emilio Freixas sobre una página satinada de tonos ocre, la gran cara deshecha y la mujer en pijama, leyendo una carta de amor sobre la alfombra, te brillan los ojos, idealiza mi maletín' (p. 23). The world behind the glossy magazine has come alive, rather like the world behind the mirror in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. The woman behind the mirror lives in a world of love and romance: 'estaban de moda los nombres con é. largos y exóticos, el mío no sorprendía a nadie, empezaba con la C. de cuarto, de casa, de cama y de aquel corazón que dibujaba con tiza ante la mirada aburrida del profesor, el que se me aceleraba cuando Norma Shearer besaba a Leslie Howard, el que grababan los novios, atravesado por una flecha, en los árboles de la Alamedilla' (p. 25). She is the embodiment of the pot-boiler novel in which people do not or go to work, they simply fall in love. As the first chapter of El cuarto de atrad makes clear, the narrative consciousness moves freely between different levels, from the narrator to the glossy face in the magazine, from this side of the looking-glass to the other.

12 All references are to El cuarto de atrad (Madrid: Destino, 1978).

The 'novela rosa' (especially in its Elizabeth Mulder form) itself a growth-up version of the fairy tale, is the hermeneutic sub-structure underlying the novel. This is so for sociological reasons; as the narrator suggests: 'es muy importante el papel que jugaron las novelas rosa en la formación de las chicas de los años cuarenta' (p. 138). The 'novela rosa', thus, has its documentary aspect, but also operates as a running commentary on the fiction/life interface. This becomes evident when the 'novela rosa' bursts into the interview between the narrator and her interviewer, the mysterious man in black. The man in black appears concerned and suddenly we read: 'Oh Raimundo – exclamó Esperanza, mientras brotaban las lágrimas de sus párpados cerrados –, contigo nunca tengo miedo. No te vuelvas a ir nunca.' Era de una novela que venía en 'Lecturas'. Estaba escrita la frase, según era estilo entonces, al pie de una de las ilustraciones, donde se veía a una mujer con la cabeza apoyada en el respaldo del sofá y a un hombre inclinándose geométrico sobre ella' (p. 36). We later find out that this scene is one from a novel written in her youth by the narrator-protagonist (p. 140). At this juncture the narrator expects her guest to reveal his identity: 'aquél momento en que estaba a punto de ser pronunciado el famoso "¿No te acuerdas?"' (pp. 140-41). No revelation is in fact forthcoming but the expectation created by the 'novela rosa' hovers in the background. Later on, the man in black lights two cigarettes in his mouth and passes one to her. The narrator notes: 'Muy de novela rosa este detalle' (p. 190).

Throughout the novel, the narrator-protagonist seems to live certain parts of her life according to the happy ending concept of Hollywood films in the 1950s. But she is choosy. She describes a novel she read in her childhood, for example, about a young girl who went to college and married her Latin professor, and remarks 'para ese viaje no necesitábamos alforjas... tanto ilusionarse con los estudios y desearía a la sociedad que le impidiera una mujer realizarlos, para luego salir por ahí, en plan happy end, que a saber si sería o no happy, porque aquélla chica se tuvo que sentir decepcionada tarde o temprano; además, ¿qué querían que acabara todas las novelas cuando se casa la gente?' (p. 92). Though absorbed by the dream world of film, the narrator simultaneously remembers the point at which she began to doubt the authenticity of the Hollywood dream.

The romantic novels which interrupt the present tense of the narrative at various points are not simply an example of socially-produced wish-fulfillment; the narrator herself created some of the fictions in her childhood. The protagonist mentions that in the past she was involved with one of her friends in writing a 'novela rosa' who had a protagonist called Emeralda: 'también debes haber trozos de una novela rosa que
facciones escribiendo entre las dos, aunque no llegamos a terminarla, la protagonista se llamaba emeralda, se escapó de su casa una noche porque sus padres eran demasiado ricos y ella quería conocer la aventura de vivir al raso, se encontró, junto a un acantilado, con un desconocido vestido de negro que estaba de espaldas, mirando el mar (p. 58). The present scene in which the narrator is being interviewed by a mysterious stranger is thus a duplication of a novel written by the narrator in the past. Time itself adds another dimension to the Heidelberg principle of uncertainty which already seems to be prime mover of the novel.

The ‘novela rosa’ is not introduced in a random, innocent way in *El cuarto de atrás*; it is often linked to the self-reflexivity technique. As Birutė Čipliauskaitė has pointed out, the narrative of *El cuarto de atrás* is characterized by both confession and self-analysis, themselves part of the self-reflexive stance adopted by the narrator. 19 The second page of the text provides an early example of this: ‘He dicho ‘anhelo y temor’ por decir algo, tanteando a ciegas, y cuando se dispara así, nunca se da en el blanco; las palabras son para la luz, de noche se fugen, aunque el ardor de la persecución se más febril y compulsivo a oscuras, pero también, por eso, más alegre.’ (p. 10). This sets the tone for most of the book, which is set during the night, the subconscious, where the world takes on an uncanny appearance. At the beginning of Chapter IV, for example, the narrator returns to the back room to find that the intruder dressed in black has been looking at her papers:

- ¿Por qué ha entrado en mi dormitorio? – le preguntó desabridamente, se echo a reír y mi rubia crece.
- No le veo la gracia.
- Perdone, es que parece una frase de folletín. (p. 99)

As we can see from this scene, the man in black and the narrator are both atavisms of the way in which their meeting each other echoes the plot of a romantic novel; they suddenly become like characters from an Unamuno novel (Niebla) or a Pirandello play (Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore). As this scene makes clear, the fairy-tale level of the novel is inseparable from the theme of self-reflexivity. ‘The fairy tale, like the ‘novela rosa’, is simultaneously used as an escapist space within the text to which the narrator can retreat (the “back room”), but also fulfills a kishō function within *El cuarto de atrás*; the narrator adopts an ironizing, metafictional stance towards the Never Never World of fantasy, underlining the fictionality of fiction.

19 La novela femenina contemporánea, p. 111.

The metafictional element is emphasized by the various allusions to Todrov’s work; thus the narrator mentions coming across a copy of Todrov’s *Introducción à la littérature fantastique* (p. 19). She swears that she will write a novel following Todrov’s advice; and although the narrator never makes this explicit, it is clear that this is an accurate description of the book we are holding in our hands. 20 *El cuarto de atrás*, therefore, is a book which is aware of its own gestation, rather like the French Neoveu Roman in which the creative enterprise is a part of the work’s message. The book being written is a concrete praxis of Todrov’s theory of mystery enunciated in his *Introducción à la littérature fantastique*. One of the important characteristics of the mystery novel as identified by Todrov is its ambiguity: ‘La ambigüedad es la clave de la literatura de misterio’ (p. 53). Likewise there are many mysteries in *El cuarto de atrás*: among the more prominent are i) who is the man in black? and ii) how is the novel written itself? *El cuarto de atrás*, thus, effectively echoes Todrov’s prescription. 21

Throughout the novel, the work is being written mysteriously in the pile of papeles which are being typewritten whenever the narrator leaves the room. At one point the narrator almost glimpses the novel being born: ‘He bajando los ojos, y en el espacio que separa sus botas negras y deslucidas de los dedos que asoman por mis sandalias, me parece ver alzar un casillo de papeles de papel, mejor dicho de papeles pegados unos a otros, a modo de ladrillos, y pliegues de palabras y tachaduras de mi pullo y letra, crece, sube, se va a desmoronar con el menor crujido,’ y

20 Todrov defines the fantastic as ‘that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event’. The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, translated from the French by Richard Howard (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), p. 25. This definition aptly epitomizes the reaction of the protagonist of *El cuarto de atrás* when faced with the stranger dressed in black. Of course also in the fact that the example Todrov adduces to illustrate his theory of the fantastic, Jan Potocki’s *Le Sens des Choses*, deals, like Martin Caine’s novel, with uncanny events taking place during the night yet leaving a trace of their ‘reality’ the next morning; see Todrov, pp. 27-31.

21 The man in black has been identified, as Debra A. Castillo points out, as ‘a Todrovian theorist, the ideal interlocutor, the hero of a *novela rosa*, a character from the imaginary role of Berga, a detective, the correspondent of the author’s sewing-basket love letter, a (hermenéutica) literary critic, the reader’s ideal textual representation, a Jüngian alter ego, a Lacanian Other, a figure from the engraver Lauter’s Discourse with the Devil brought to life, a Kafkaesque creature, the narrator’s envoy, her guide into the underworld (a modern rôle-reversal Beatrice to the narrator’s Dante), a psychopomp, the devil, or simply the interviewer he announces himself to be’; ‘Never-ending story: Carmen María Chávez’s *The Black Room*’, *PMLA*, 102:5 (1987), 814-28 (p. 819).

22 For further discussion of the Todrov connection, see Aleida Anitma Rodríguez, ‘Todrov en *El cuarto de atrás*, *Prisma* (Sabadell, 11, 1983), 76-90.
yo me guarecía en el interior, con la cabeza escondida entre los brazos, no me atreví a asomar" (p. 57). Their growth is a mystery: 'Pero, bueno, estos setenta y nueve folios, ¿de dónde salen?, ¿a qué se refieren? El montón de los que quedaron debajo del sombrero también parece haber engrosado, aunque no nos atreví a comprobarlo' (p. 101).

Populist fiction and the fairy-tale happy-ending of a romantic liaison are, as we have seen, actively brought to the surface of the text in El cuarto de ardi. Both are used as hermeneutic devices to understand and structure feminine experience. However, as the novel makes clear, there is a type of fairy-tale discourse which is actively rejected, and this concerns the discourse of Franconism. At one stage in the novel, the narrator says that she believes in fairy tales but not in Isabel la Católica: 'Que si creo en el diabo y en San Cristóbal gigante y en Santa Bárbara bendita, en todos los seres misteriosos, vamos. En Isabel la Católica, no' (p. 105). Isabel I was the model which Franconism promoted as the feminino ideal, as the narrator points out: 'Y si nos ponía bajo su advocación, se nos hablaba de su voluntad férrea y de su espíritu de sacrificio, había reprimido la ambición y el despotismo de los nobles, había creado la Santa Hermandad, expulsando a los judíos traidores, se había desprender de sus joyas para financiar la empresa más gloriosa de nuestra historia, y aún había quien la difamaría por la fidelidad de sus ideales, quien llamara crudeza a su abnegación' (p. 95). Based on Isabel la Católica, the two virtues which were promoted for women were hard work and happiness (p. 94). But the narrator is unconvinced; her rejection of Isabel I is in effect to offer a positizing reading of her (and indeed, Spain's) past, a new feminist version of past events. Instead the narrator turns to traditional fairy-tale figures, such as Tom Thumb and Hansel and Gretel. The later story, unlike the myth of Isabel I, is recuperated in El cuarto de ardi: the trail of breadcrumbs Hansel and Gretel left in the forest becomes a metaphor of white written memories we leave behind in our lives, and which are reconstructed in the novelistic process: 'Cuando dejó un reguero de migas de pan para hallar el camino de vuelta, se las comieron los pájaros. A la vez siguiente, ya resbaldado, dejó piedrecitas blancas, y así no se extravió, vamos, es lo que creyó Perrault, que no se extraviaba, pero yo no estoy seguro, ¿no comprende?' (p. 105). Authentic, rather than man-imposed, fairy tales are allowed to function in the text as recuperative devices: the narrator is happy to record them and the idea suggests her by the woman who telephones her that the man in black is really Blue Beard (p. 157).

The rationale behind the narrator's rejection of man-made fairy tales becomes clear in her references to Franco's daughter who, by chance, has the same name as the narrator (Carmen): 'pensaba en la niña de

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patriarchy). But at the same time, men need women in order to constitute their identity, by projecting a reflection of their identity in the Other.

El cuarto de artrás sets out to cloud over that mirror and send back a distorted image to mankind, thereby initiating a two-way channeling of images which disrupts the transmitter-receiver situation. Martin Gaite’s use of motifs derived from the ‘novela rosa’, therefore, has the specific purpose of overturning the patrocenitic fallacy. El cuarto de artrás, like the discourse of feminism, refuses simply to reflect passively the patriarchal myth and thereby produces a text which is at once metafictional and feminist. El cuarto de artrás, thus, narrates the history of a ‘psychic growth’ characteristic of the first type of fairy tales as identified by Sara Gilad (see above). When the novel concludes, as Ruth El Saffar notes, the reader is reassured that the association between dreaming and ‘madness and danger’ has been dispelled; the narrator ‘has transformed her tossing and turning, through the recording of a mysterious dialogue born out of insomnia, into a virtue’.26 Metatextuality, the ‘novela rosa’ and the fairy tale have, thus, been triumphantly woven into a new syntax designed to liberate womanhood from the law of the patriarchal master text and produce a new master text.

ESTHER TUSQUETS: EL MISMO MAR DE TODOS LOS VERANOS

El mismo mar de todos los veranos (1978), the first novel of Esther Tusquets (1936–Spain) is, as Mirella d’Ambrosio Servodido has suggested, ‘the progenitor of all her works to come’, since her subsequent novels proved to be ‘no more than the diverse intonations of an artistic universe that is already developed and in place’.27 Tusquets’s first novel has a narrative which is, indeed, echoed by her later novels, El amor es un juego solitario (1979) and Varada tras el último naufragio (1980); it traces the life experience of a middle-aged female university professor called E., beginning with her lonely childhood, the suicide of her lover, ‘her meaningless marriage and inability to find emotional fulfillment through children, followed by her intense, but short-lived, lesbian relationship with a student, Clara. In the following discussion, I shall be concentrating on the role played by fairy tales in El mismo mar de todos los veranos, and the ways in which they are used by the female characters to shun and/or subvert the laws of patriarchy. But, before