striking parallels with that of Orestes and Oedipus. The protagonist of Luis Martín-Santos's classic novel *Tiempo de silencio* (1964), likewise, is referred to as a modern-day Oedipus. Fairy tales are employed in a similar manner by post-civil-war female novelists to flesh out a 'mythic' backdrop to the lives of the characters described in their novels. This is certainly the case *prima facie* with the works of Ana María Matute, Carmen Martín Gaite and Esther Tusquets studied in this chapter. However, while the motivation behind the use of a mythic backdrop may be similar in the male novel and in the female novel, it is important to point out that there is a difference in terms of the way in which the metaphoric macro-text is used. In Martín-Santos's *Tiempo de silencio*, for example, Greek mythology is used in order to cast an *esperpentesque* light on the inhabitants of post-war Madrid; the characters, thus, fall consistently short of the regal splendour of the world of Greek myths. In the female post-civil-war novel, however, the discourse of fairy tales is implemented recuperatively; its actualization is not necessarily accompanied by irony. As we shall see, Matute, Martín Gaite and Tusquets have recourse to different fairy-tale structures in their narratives (*The Little Mermaid* appears in *Primera memoria*, *Pass in Boots* and *Alice in Wonderland* in *El cuarto de atrás*, while *Snow White* is favoured in *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*). The discourse of the fairy tales serves a double purpose in their writing: it is used, on the one hand, by the narrator as a means of achieving insight into the purposeless kaleidoscope of everyday life and, on the other, as a means of delving into the social conditioning which formed the self of the narrator as she now knows herself. The fairy tale, thus, is used in order to understand the past but also as a tool for enlightenment in the here and now.

A preliminary comparison of the return-to-reality device in each of these three novels produces some indication of the way in which the fairy-tale narrative is used in each. In her article 'Magic Abjured: Closure in Children's Fantasy Fiction', Sara Gilead distinguishes between three types of return-to-reality closure present in fairy tales. In the first, she argues, 'the return completes a history of psychic growth and interprets the fantasy narrative as a salutary exposure of forbidden wishes and emotions' (example: *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum); in the second, the return 'simulates the closure effects of the first type but disrupts rather than smoothly concludes a linear socialization plot' (example: Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books); and in the third type, the return neither normalizes fantasy nor rejects it, thereby revealing, 'without an assuring sense of mediation, both the seductive force and the dangerous potentiality of fantasy' (example: J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*). These three types of return-to-reality devices roughly correspond to the narrative plotlings employed in the three novels studied in this chapter: Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás* echoes the first type, Matute's *Primera memoria* the second type, and Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* the third type. The narrator of *El cuarto de atrás* returns to reality the wiser for her nocturnal experience; the narrator of *Primera memoria* has failed to harmonize the conflicting pressures of the fantasy and the real worlds (echoed in the truncated structure of the novel); and Tusquets's narrator is simultaneously seduced by the power of fantasy but, in true postmodernist fashion, is simultaneously aware of its *kitsch* status. Yet, despite their differences, all three narrators use the discourse of fairy tales to unravel the social skin which produced their female social identity. The results of this investigative enterprise can be highly critical, as will become evident.

**ANA MARIA MATUTE: PRIMERA MEMORIA**

Janet Pérez has pointed out that *Primera memoria* (1960) by Ana María Matute (1926: Spain) uses the Cain and Abel theme 'to portray symbolically and in miniature Spain's fratricidal civil conflict from the supposedly peaceful haven of the Balearic Isles'. In this early novel, which is one of Matute's best according to Margaret E. W. Jones, the Civil War acts as a functional backdrop. Yet the main focus of the novel is provided by the feminine protagonist, Matia, who, as often occurs in Matute's fiction, is an adolescent. In some senses, *Primera memoria* is a

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7 Janet Pérez, 'Portraits of the Femme Seule by Laforet, Matute, Soriano, Martín Gaite, Galvarriato, Quiroga, and Medio', in *Feminine Concerns in Contemporary Spanish Fiction by Women*, pp. 44–77 (p. 55).
Bildungsroman, which, like Laforet’s *Nada*, focuses on a young girl who has been recently orphaned and is growing up in a man’s world. The Civil War, which is the cause of Matia’s move to Mallorca, is often suppressed by the consciousness of the narrator, as if history were an irritating interlude, diverting the characters from the business of growing up. Matia is far more preoccupied with her emotional, and sexual, awakening. Her growing awareness of herself as a woman is created by means of her inter-relations with Borja, Lauro el Chino, Guiem, Toni and Jorge. It is curious that Matia seems not to have formed relationships with girls of her own age; her experience of women seems to be restricted to the restrictive mannerisms of her aunt and the servants. What is clear is from these relationships with her male contemporaries is that the boys have total control over her, evidenced in particular by the scene in which Borja teases her about her supposed lovers, and threatens her that she will be sent to a correctional centre, a threat she takes very seriously (pp. 160–62). As she concludes rather ruefully about this episode, ‘Borja ganó y yo perdí’ (p. 162).

These, then, are the basic elements of the plot which Matute’s novel has in common with other Spanish formation-novels by women written in the post-civil-war era. Again, like *Nada*, *Primera memoria* uses fairy tales consistently as a means of structuring female imaginative and ontological experience. But, before discussing the role of fairy tales in Matute’s novel, a few preliminary points about its structural dynamics will be necessary since they will help us to focus more clearly on the fairy-tale motifs. *Primera memoria* is composed proleptically, that is, hindsight is available to the narrator. The novel opens, for example, with Matia leafing through a photo album, and settling on the photograph of the grandmother. The opening paragraphs also help to illustrate the different levels of temporal perception employed in the novel. In the second paragraph, we hear parenthetically of the atrocities of the Civil War, ‘“Dicen que en el otro lado están matando familias enteras...”’ (p. 10), a device which will prove to be common throughout the novel, as if memories of the past or of past conversations simply floated of their own accord to the surface of the text. The novel, indeed, very much works in this way, searching for the hidden truth or cause of events. The concluding image of the novel makes this quite clear. The mayor’s cock is heard to be ‘clamando... por alguna misteriosa causa perdida’.

(p. 169). This *Lost Cause* is the lost generation of the Civil War whose lives were literally destroyed by the Nationalist offensive. This *Lost Cause* is also to be understood, however, on a metaphorical level as, in Janet Díaz’s words, ‘lost innocence, lost idealism, lost hope, lost Republic’.

As Matute suggests in an interview about her own experience of the Civil War:

Nos encontramos a un lado o a otro, éramos parte de esa guerra, queríamos o no, con todas sus consecuencias. Luego, con la adolescencia, empiezas a preguntarte por qué has tenido que estar en un lugar o en otro, si a ti no te han dado opción. Entonces, uno tiene la sensación de autotraición muy extraña, por eso la traición en casi todos mis libros tiene importancia. Entonces tenemos el recuerdo de algo más limpio, más puro, que no está mezclado con los horrores de un exilio, o de un país donde se están matando los hermanos. Y siempre añoramos un mundo en que esas cosas no ocurran.  

It is this obscurely-felt sensation of self-betrayal which becomes Matia’s motivating force to know ontologically the reasons for her experience. This may not at first seem the case, since she seems to experience the events which happen to her in an alienated fashion, as if they occurred to someone else. *Primera memoria*, thus, embodies a discontinuity between the protagonist who experiences and the narrator who writes, and this slippage between the two levels is nowhere more apparent than in the parentheses which introduce information only available after the event in question has taken place. When Matia sees el Chino in church, for example, we read:

Y me dije: ‘Acaso le matarán en el frente, quizás en el frente, quizás una bala le atravesará así, tal como ahora está, por la espalda’.

(Y así fue, pues un mes más tarde lo mataron...). (p. 163)

Knowledge, as this parenthesis demonstrates, works proleptically in *Primera memoria*. The same is true of the discourse of fairy tales in the novel, a knowledge which Matute has treasures since childhood.  

The story of *The Little Mermaid* and *St George and the Dragon*, among others, punctuate Matute’s text at semantically crucial moments. The

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11 As Matute suggests in her essay, ‘Diciembre y Andersen’, fairy tales were a formative influence on her childhood; see Christopher L. Anderson and Lynne Vespe Sheavy, ‘Ana María Matute’s *Primera memoria*: A Fairy Tale Gone Awry’, *RCEH*, 14 (1989), 1–14 (p. 2).
Little Mermaid, in particular, as Suzanne Gross Reed points out, is at once the model of Matia’s change from child to woman and of her relationship with Manuel Taronji. 12 The Little Mermaid works on a primary level for Matia as an escape valve from the unpleasant realities of everyday life, just like the map which is full of exotic names that Matia used to dream about (again, note, parenthetically):

(Y me acuerdo de cuando metía medio cuerpo en el armario, con el Atlas abierto en la penumbra, y miraba el Archipiélago y me paraba extasiada en cada nombre: Lemnos, Chio, Andros, Serphos ... Karo, Mykono, Polýkandros ... Naxos, Anaphi, Psara ... Ah, sí, nombres y nombres como viento y sueños. Sóñando yo también, mi dedo recorría en una comba, sobre el azul satanizado, desde Corfú a Mytilene. Y las palabras, como una música: él iba en el Delfín, vivía en él, y no pisaba tierra apena: se iba hasta el Asia Menor ... ) (p. 136)

Fairy tales are thus seen as inhabiting the same world as the dream-world the atlas offers. Though initially associated with escapist, fairy tales come, however, to fulfil the function of refracting a specific meaning onto the events described. Guiem at one point, for example, is described as Captain Hook from Peter Pan:

Tiznado y oscuro, Guiem salió del bosque. Bajó la manga de su jersey hasta cubrirse los dedos, de forma que surgía el gancho, retorcido y siniestro. (El Capitán Garfio luchó con Peter Pan en los acantilados de la Isla de Nunca Jamás. Borja, desterrado Peter Pan, como yo misma, el niño que no quiso crecer volvió de noche a su casa y encontró la ventana cerrada. Nunca me pareció Borja tan menudo como en aquel momento. Hizo la limpieza de primavera, cuando la recogida de las hojas, en los bosques de los Niños Perdidos. Y los mismos Niños Perdidos, todos demasiados crecidos, de pronto, para jugar; demasiado niños, de pronto, para entrar en la vida, en el mundo que no queríamos — ¿no queríamos? — conocer). (p. 112)

The reference to childhood, introduced as a question in the last sentence of the quotation, makes it quite clear that fairy tales are to be seen as the childhood world which Matia does not wish to leave; the ¿no queríamos? is simply rhetorical. Borja, for his part, epiphanises Peter Pan: ‘Borja estaba solo, de pie (adiós, Peter Pan, adiós, ya no podré ir contigo la próxima Limpieza de Primavera... )’ (p. 113). Yet, despite the fact that the male participants of the intrigue are clearly part of this fairy-tale world, they are, curiously enough, alienated from its logic. The fairy-tale world is one which is purposefully projected on the men by the female protagonist, as if to reverse the unspoken rule of fiction whereby women are objects created by male vision. Manuel, for example, inhabits a world which is very different from Matia’s, as evident from the following quotation.

Recuerdo que le dije, frotándome las rodillas:
- Me gustaría que nosase. ¿Has visto la nieve alguna vez?
- No. Nunca la he visto.
El agua golpeaba las rocas, y la Joven Simón aparecía negruzca, casi sinistra. Teníamos la cara enrojecida de frío y los ojos lacrinosos. El viento zarandeó mi cabello, como una bandera negra. ( ... )
Pero Manuel no mostró demasiado interés por aquello. Al hablarle o mostrarle algo, sólo decía:
Sí, sí – distraídamente. (p. 153)

Matia’s daydreams, and her playing with the realm of the fairy tale, is presented as specifically feminine, as if it were outside the ken of mankind.

The fairy tale, thus, normally acts recuperatively in the text; it is inserted into the text, thereby existing as a metaphorical level to the text, in which symbol and image are predominant. The two levels of fairy tale and realist text are consistently brought together through image – specifically the sea which surrounds Mallorca and the sea from which the Little Mermaid emerged – and through event. Thus, the experience of emotional isolation and lack of communication between the sexes during the Civil War runs parallel to the story of The Little Mermaid. The two stories are, at first sight, brought triumphantly together at the end of the novel. As we read:

Y de pronto estaba allí el amanecer, como una realidad terrible, abominable. Y yo con los ojos abiertos, como un castigo. (No existía la Isla de Nunca Jamás y la Joven Sirena no consiguió un alma inmortal, porque los hombres y las mujeres no aman, y se queñó con un par de inútiles piernas, y se convirtió en espuma.) Eran horribles los cuentos. (p. 169)

However, there is a discontinuity between the two levels since, while The Little Mermaid has a clear and definite conclusion, Matute’s novel does not. As Christopher L. Andersen and Lynne Vespe Sheay point out, Matia’s ultimate betrayal of Manuel, her refusal to experience pain for the sake of another person’ indicates that she is not worthy of advancing to the ‘reward/salvation stage’ common in the traditional fairy-tale
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 Matia 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, Matia’s thoughts wander off to thoughts of the Little Mermaid during the religious chants:

"¿Por qué no tenemos las sirenas un alma inmortal?" No la tuvo, no la tuvo, y se convirtió en espuma. "Y cada vez que con sus pies desnudos pisaba la tierra sentía como si se le claviesen cuchillas afiladas y agujas..."

... *quos pre-ti-o-sa sanguine redi-mis-ii*... La Joven Sirena quería que la amasen, 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. Matia’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). Matia 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 fairy tale as defined by Sara Gilead; see above). Though ultimately unable to provide a finality to Matia’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.

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

