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University of Nevada, Reno

Isolation, Loss of Innocence, Gender, and Trauma in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria* and Juan Goytisolo's *Señas de identidad*"

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by

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Abstract

Novelists Juan Goytisolo (Barcelona, 1931) and Ana María Matute (Barcelona, 1926) represent some of the best writers that emerged in 20th century post-civil war Spain as part of the literary group known as the “generation of the 50s.” The writers, who came of age during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), evoke similar themes in their works: isolation, loss of innocence, gender identity issues and political trauma.

By focusing on these themes, I will demonstrate the wide-reaching effects of the Spanish Civil War on the writer’s masterpieces: two semi-autobiographical novels. Matute’s *Primera memoria* (1959) chronicles the adolescence of a young girl and her cousin during the Spanish Civil War. Goytisolo’s *Señas de identidad* (1966) tells the tale of a young male protagonist who leaves Spain to be exiled in France and Morocco. I will demonstrate that Matute and Goytisolo used their novels to protest the fascist regime of General Francisco Franco and gave a voice to a generation of Spaniards traumatized by the violence of the war.

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Introduction

Novelists Juan Goytisolo (Barcelona, 1931) and Ana María Matute (Barcelona, 1926) represent some of the best writers that emerged in 20th century post-civil war Spain as part of the literary group known as the “generation of the 50s.” The writers, who came of age during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), evoke similar themes in their works: isolation, loss of innocence, gender identity issues and political trauma. This thesis will compare their semi-autobiographical masterpieces, *Señas de identidad* (1966) by Goytisolo and *Primera memoria* (1959) by Matute. These novels are the first installments of the authors’ trilogies: Goytisolo’s *Trilogía Álvaro Mendiola* and Matute’s *Los mercaderes*.

By focusing on the themes of isolation, loss of innocence, gender, and trauma in these initial novels, I will demonstrate the wide-reaching impact of the Spanish Civil War on the narratives of these two writers. I will demonstrate that Matute and Goytisolo gave voice to a generation of Spaniards traumatized by the violence of war. The consequences of the major Spanish conflict, and the resulting political trauma, did not end with the last battle of the Spanish Civil War in 1939. It continued through fascist regime’s pervasive violations of censorship of literature and political and intellectual dissent. As a result, I will show how the writers use memory and trauma as vehicles for their denunciation of the intellectual repression of the era and as an exploration of their identities.

Juan Goytisolo is born January 5, 1931 in Barcelona, Catalonia, to a bourgeois family. When he was a boy, his mother was killed during a bombing raid by fascist forces. He came of age during General Francisco Franco’s rise to power in Spain and attended conservative Catholic public schools. He later attended the University of Barcelona and the University of Madrid from 1948 to 1952. The author was an outspoken critic of the Franco dictatorship, and he believed

writing should have social implications by raising consciousness and challenging the status quo (Moss 311). Goytisolo later left Spain, immigrating to Paris in 1957 to pursue his literary career with greater freedom. From his exile in the 1960's he writes *Señas de identidad*, the first novel in the trilogy entitled, *Trilogía Álvaro Mendiola*. It is followed by *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* (1970) and *Juan sin tierra* (1975).

In *Señas de identidad*, Álvaro Mendiola – the main character and Goytisolo's alter ego – returns to Spain after suffering a heart attack and spending nearly ten years in self-exile. As he pores over photographs and other documents, he begins to reflect on his past, spurring various flashbacks that start with his childhood and end in the present. Goytisolo's novel, written from outside of Spain, offers a very candid and harsh critique of the Franco regime. It was first published in 1966 in Mexico, as the Spanish government banned it. It is full of violent imagery, intense depictions of sexual relations, and denunciations of the conservative monolithic Spain that Franco sought to promulgate. I will demonstrate that the isolation and loss of childhood innocence experienced by the protagonist would later create a conflicted adult narrator who mulls over his past in an effort to understand his identity. It will also demonstrate how masculinity and violence intersect as a response to Franco's attack on leftist intellectuals and ideals.

Ana María Matute is Spain's most visible and influential woman novelist during the 1960's. Matute was born on July 16, 1926 in Barcelona, the second of five children of a Catalan industrialist. She and her two sisters were educated in convent schools, a typical practice for girls at the time. Her schooling was interrupted by the start of the Spanish Civil War, and Matute would sometimes study at home with a tutor. During periods of enforced idleness, she would begin writing stories and poems (Pérez 95). She wrote several short stories for adults, like *Los*

abel (1948) and *Los hijos muertos* (1958), as well as children's books. In 1959, Matute writes *Primera memoria*, the first novel of her trilogy, *Los mercaderes*, which chronicles the experience of the protagonist, Matia, and her cousin, Borja, who come of age during the Spanish Civil War. The second and third books in the trilogy are *Los soldados lloran de noche* (1963) and *La trampa* (1969), respectively.

In *Primera memoria*, fourteen-year-old Matia – the main character and Matute's alter ego – and Borja are cousins spending their summer on the island of Majorca with their authoritarian grandmother, doña Práxedes, when the Spanish Civil War breaks out. With her many allusions to childhood fairy tales and with adult themes like war and violence, Matute writes a unique coming-of-age novel tinged with a critique of the oppressive Franco dictatorship. That subtlety was necessary as she wrote from Spain. During the regime, writers who remained in the country had to appease censors installed by Franco. In *Primera memoria*, Matia struggles to fit in with her family, all of whom are nationalist sympathizers. She also rebels against the traditional model of femininity being forced on her by her conservative grandmother who does not fully accept Matia.

In this paper I will demonstrate how isolation and the loss of childhood innocence impacted the young protagonist. Using figurative language, the writer creates a subtle response that shows the emotional and psychological impacts of the Spanish Civil War. Additionally, through the use of a female protagonist, *Primera memoria* creates a character that rejects the traditional femininity as promulgated by a conservative Spain.

Historical Context

The Spanish Civil War was a conflict by two competing factions: Republicans and Nationalists. During its existence, the Spanish II Republic (1931-1939) was moving toward mass

political democracy. In these years, Spain saw an acceleration of many social, economic and cultural changes. In *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction*, Helen Graham says that the military uprising against Spain's government resembled the fascist takeovers by Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany (1).

The Spanish Civil War, which was sparked by a military coup in 1936, set the backdrop in which writers like Ana María Matute and Juan Goytisolo were raised. This coup “unleashed what was in effect a series of culture wars: urban culture and cosmopolitan lifestyles versus rural tradition; secular against religious; authoritarianism against liberal political cultures; centre versus periphery; traditional gender roles versus the ‘new woman’; even youth against age” (Graham 2). The coup against the II Republic began in the summer of 1936. While the military action failed to take over the whole country, it managed to paralyze the Republican regime and left the government with military in disarray. Republican officials did not know which officers to trust, thereby beginning a culture of fear and suspicion. Juan Goytisolo observed in *Señas de identidad* that Franco's regime and forces had effectively turned all Spaniards into vigilante police who would spy on their family, friends and neighbors (190).

Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses explains in his book, *Franco and the Spanish Civil War*, that the military saw itself as a different caste in Spain during the Republican government: “Without a doubt, most of its officers shared a number of basic political beliefs that made intervention in the country's public life acceptable in their eyes. Army officers were, as a rule, nationalist, conservative and authoritarian” (24). Both Matute and Goytisolo largely criticize this military culture, though it is Goytisolo who spares no words in his scathing criticism. Their representations of military offices are rigid, unapologetic and unsympathetic. In the violent clashes between the Franco's forces and Republicans, it is military that come out on top. The

author's interpretations of the military are consistent with the various atrocities committed by Franco's forces as documented by historians.

During the early stages of the coup, rebels attempting to overthrow the Republican government killed thousands. Once in power, Franco did not stop there. His propaganda continued to posit a Manichean view of the war's result. In his eyes, there were losers and there were victors. His victory in the Civil War meant the beginning of an economic modernization in Spain without the accompanying products of 'modernity:' the mass political democracy and cultural pluralism symbolized by the Republic (Graham 115). Over 400,000 Spaniards sought sanctuary in exile. Those that remained in Spain were arrested or killed. "Those excluded, broadly speaking, were defeated Republican constituencies who could not leave Spain: urban workers, the rural landless, regional nationalists, liberal professionals, and 'new' women – groups that had challenged the established order culturally, politically, or economically. For the Franco regime they were all 'reds' and, once placed beyond nation, they were deemed to be without rights (Graham 129). Many Republicans were executed or banished to concentration camps throughout the country.

Franco legitimized his new violent order by referring to an ultra-conservative reading of Spanish history. He created a repressive myth of a monolithic Spanish 'nation' born in the 15th century with the Catholic Kings, where hierarchy and cultural homogeneity, guaranteed by integrist Catholicism, had generated imperial greatness (Graham 133). In his campaign against the losing side of the war, he called for Spaniards to report and denounce Republicans. Tens of thousands reported their neighbors, acquaintances and even family. Franco's regime did not require corroboration of any of these accusations.

The rise of General Francisco Franco within the military ranks was rather quick.

Biographies of him began emerging as early as the Civil War, products of the propaganda campaign that his regime circulated. The inflated and inaccurate life sketches of Franco were intended to galvanize support and give the 1936 coup legitimacy. In them, he was depicted as charismatic and intellectual. He was anything but, de Meneses writes: “Franco read little and most of his political readings consisted of anti-communist diatribes; his world-view was built on the back of discussions with like-minded fellow officers” (33).

For Spaniards, the Civil War remains a political touchstone of huge importance precisely because of the ideological uses to which it was put by the Franco dictatorship. The regime manipulated a monolithic and highly partisan version of the war – always referring to it as the ‘crusade’ or ‘war of national liberation’, never as a civil war (Graham 138). It wasn’t until the 1970’s, after Franco’s death, that Spain began moving toward a democratic and capitalistic society.

Analysis of Señas de Identidad

In the first novel of the Mendiola trilogy, *Señas de identidad*, Juan Goytisolo introduces readers to a highly experimental and ruptured narrative style. Through the use of flashbacks, second-person narration aimed at a conflicted protagonist, inter-textual allusions and figurative language, the author manages to situate readers in a chaotic displacement of words and identity. The novel, intended as a harsh and candid critique of the Franco dictatorship, explores various themes relating to violence, masculinity and the intangible consequences of a bloody civil war.

Señas de identidad introduces a protagonist named Álvaro Mendiola that is intended to represent Goytisolo’s alter ego, an anti-Franco intellectual who sought exile in France and

Morocco. In *Álvaro*, readers are forced to actively piece together a fractured story line in an attempt to decipher exactly how the Spanish Civil War and a self-imposed exile tore apart the fabric of his identity. In this novel, Goytisolo explores how *Álvaro*'s isolation from his homeland, masculinity and shattered childhood altered his self-perception.

Isolation

When Goytisolo began writing his trilogy, he had lived in exile for ten years, allowing him to analyze Spain from a distance perspective, says Ellen Mayock in her article, "Alienation, Anarchy and Masculinity in Juan Goytisolo's *Count Julian*." This literary critic posits that Goytisolo "boldly experiments with literary techniques in order to present a narrative that not only questions the worthiness of monolithic Spanish culture, as propagated by the regime, but actually denigrates that very culture and promotes its proposed opposite" (3). As the protagonist spends more time away from Spain, he begins to experience a world far different from that in which he was raised. It was in Spain and Morocco that Goytisolo wrote several early novels that were banned in Spain during the Franco dictatorship. *Señas de identidad*, in fact, was first published in Mexico. From the safety of exile, the author was able to forcefully articulate his grievances with Spanish culture – as defined by the regime – through a protagonist that served as a stand-in for him. The novel contains various examples and incidents of censorship and violence by Franco authorities, making clear Goytisolo's disagreement with the regime's approach to redefining and rewriting the country's history and literature of Spain.

The isolation from his homeland that *Álvaro* experienced throughout his adolescent and adult life began during his childhood. When World War II broke out, his family, like other middle- and upper-class families fled Spain in an attempt to shield their children, women and the elderly from the violence:

Eran una docena de familias burguesas que, huyendo del terror y desorden de la zona republicana, se habían refugiado en el ámbito apacible de una pequeña estación termal del Midi a la espera del desenlace de la contienda que compatriotas de uno y otro bando ventilaban duramente entre sí en la Península. (Goytisolo 116)¹ (Full references of English translations of Matute's and Goytisolo's novels are contained in the Works Cited section.)

From this refuge, Álvaro becomes a passive onlooker of war – shielded from the violence because of his age, but not shielded from the subtle effects and implications of war. The young protagonist understands that the battle raging at home during the regime is one of ideology – even if he might not have understood the nuances of the politics at play between the feuding parties. The children who played together in Midi, for example, often played war games. In these innocuous activities, the children play highly symbolic roles such as a “red spy” who conducts reconnaissance work. This role is a clear allusion to the Communist infiltrators that Franco's police sought to watch, detain and stamp out.

During this time in Midi, Álvaro's family tries to instill their conservative values upon young Álvaro, argues Reed Anderson in his article “*Señas de Identidad: Chronicle of Rebellion.*” Anderson says that the boy's “experience there during the course of the Second World War, infects him with the attitudes and the outlook of an old bourgeois family which feels itself to be part of a dying class” (6). Realizing that the destruction of the old Spain was imminent, his uncles attempt to indoctrinate the young protagonist with their conservative values. This system of values later becomes problematic as the protagonist's ideology evolves – particularly during

¹ “They were a dozen bourgeois families who had fled from the terror and disorder of the Republican zone and had taken refuge in the peaceful environment of a small spa in Midi as they awaited the outcome of the struggle that their countrymen on both sides were vigorously engaged in among themselves in the Peninsula” (92).

his years as a student dabbling with anti-Franco protestors in France. It creates a deep, psychological isolation in the adult narrator because he begins to see many faults with the conservative values and social order his family strived to teach him. This disconnect pits him against his family and state, pushing him further away from his homeland.

As an adult residing in France during his exile, Álvaro evaluates his strained – and often nostalgic – relationship with the Spain he remembers. As a young boy, he is fascinated by religion and sainthood, knowledge he acquired under the tutelage of the strong-willed and dogmatic Señorita Lourdes, his teacher and caretaker. Señorita Lourdes was a strong influence during his childhood. In one telling anecdote, Álvaro recalls a confrontation between the Civil Guard and Señorita Lourdes. On a mission to get to a burning chapel, Señorita Lourdes – with young Álvaro in tow – grappled with the guards while the boy yelled vainly, “Somos mártires, somos mártires.”² While Álvaro detested most aspects of Franco’s regime, he is, nonetheless, jarred by the sudden change of cultures of two countries when he left France in his early 20’s – from a conservative and religious Spain to a liberal and secular France:

La favorable evolución de sus sentimientos y opiniones con respecto a España hallaba por otra parte su exacta correspondencia en la progresiva y desliada crítica de Francia y de los franceses, como si el creciente olvido de los defectos de una patria lejana e idealizada se compensase con el descubrimiento de nuevos e insospechados vicios en el universo real y tangible en el que vivían, admiración y desprecio perfectamente paralelos y simétricos, en fecunda y estrecha relación con el status personal del individuo y el número de años de su estancia. (Goytisolo 259)³

² “We’re martyrs, we’re martyrs” (23).

³ “The favorable evolution of his feelings and opinions with respect to Spain found for the first time its exact opposite in the progressive and pitiless criticism of France and the French, as if the growing forgetfulness of the defects of a distant and idealized homeland were being compensated for with the

As the protagonist analyzes this intersection between a perceived “idealized homeland” in Spain and his “tangible universe” in France, he begins to see discernable parallels between these two countries. This passage illuminates Goytisolo’s growing disdain with France, a country that he fled to in hopes of escaping the Franco regime. But, in fact, as time passes, Goytisolo does not connect with the other Spanish exiles in his French community of leftist intellectuals and political activists. Instead, as he reflects on his exile, he finds that he has retreated into a hazy stupor of apathy: “A fin de cuentas, ¿qué eres?: un desterrado voluntario que duerme (doce horas diarias), fuma (cajetilla y media de Gitanes-filtre), come ... bebe ... va al cine” (Goytisolo 389).⁴ Wherever Álvaro is, he fails to commit to a single ideology whole-heartedly. For example, his rebel friends in Spain – Antonio, Ricardo and Artigas – at one point wonder when Álvaro will return from France and rejoin their cause. And, even though he makes new friends and starts a romance with Dolores, a fellow film student, most of his relationships are superficial. Alcohol and his prolonged withdrawals are the “unsuspected vices” he refers to in the passage above.

During his time spent in France, mingling with other Spanish exiles, Álvaro begins to see a familiar social stratum emerge. A frequent face in the French coffee shop favored by the Spanish exiles, the protagonist grows tired of fruitless debates and brief, yet frequent, attempts at intellectual rebellion in the form of an underground magazine intended to rouse Spanish rebels:

Álvaro había sentido formarse sobre su piel un duro caparazón de escamas: la conciencia de la inutilidad del exilio y, de modo simultáneo, la imposibilidad del retorno. Las cuatro paredes del café de madame Berger lo habían acogido, como a tantos otros proscritos, para digerirlo y hacer de él un elemento más del primer estrato geológico que hablaba

discovery of new and unsuspected vices in the real and tangible universe in which they were living, admiration and disdain perfectly parallel and symmetrical, in fecund and strict relation to the personal status of the individual and the number of years of his stay” (206).

⁴ “When it’s all said and done, what are you?: a voluntary exile who sleeps (twelve hours a day), smokes (a pack and a half of Gitanes filters), eats... drinks ... goes to the movies” (313).

con nostalgia de España, pronunciaba pésimamente el francés y discutía por enésima vez con sus amigos de la histórica necesidad de una revista. (Goytisolo 269)⁵

This figurative crust that forms on the protagonist's skin is like the layer that forms on sauce that sits out too long. It is this inertia, this scaly crust that sparks this feeling of futility in the protagonist. Abigail Lee Six, a longtime scholar of Goytisolo's works, says Álvaro recognizes the same Spanish social order he detests in his homeland (29). Lee Six posits that "France is depicted as just another type of ordered society. This is conveyed powerfully in the description of Spanish laborers arriving there. The poor *émigrés*, accustomed to life in the surviving chaotic pockets of Spain, such as the old quarters of Barcelona, are shocked by the atmosphere of industrial North-western Europe" (31). In this sense, Lee Six argues that the protagonist never feels comfortable in a capitalist, Western world.

Thus, isolation plays a large role in the development of Álvaro Mendiola. The start of the Spanish Civil War was only the first interruption in the protagonist's life. But this interruption was not uncommon for the children born and raised in wartime. In many ways, his generation grew up in isolation, as families sought to escape the gunfire and violence. His exile in France and northern Africa only heightens this disconnect between his patria, his family and a vague recollection of Spanish culture. As Álvaro acknowledges, this type of isolated existence creates a very fractured identity:

Pero, a raíz de tu voluntaria expatriación a París y tu existencia errabunda por Europa, la comunión anterior se había desvanecido y, extirpado tú del solar ingrato ... por una lado ibas tú, rotos los vínculos que te ligaron antaño a la tribu, borracho y atónito de tu nueva

⁵ "Álvaro could feel forming on his skin a scaly crust: the feeling of the uselessness of his exile, and, simultaneously, the impossibility of return. The four walls of Madame Berger's café had hemmed him in, like so many other outcasts, to digest him and make of him one more component of the first geological stratum that spoke with nostalgia of Spain, had an atrocious French pronunciation, and discussed for the nth time with friends the historic necessity of a magazine" (215).

e increíble libertad. (Goytisolo 166)⁶

It's perhaps enlightening to note the language Goytisolo uses when describing Álvaro's experience in Europe. He refers to his life as an "existence" rather than a vagabond life. The former implies a passive experience whereas the latter implies a more active action of putting down roots, so to speak. It's clear the protagonist did not aim to establish himself in France or Morocco. Instead, he relished the "freedom" that his exile afforded him – even if it meant breaking ties with the uninviting soil of Spain.

Loss of Innocence

As a young child, Juan Goytisolo experienced firsthand the bloody consequences of the Spanish Civil War. Fascist forces killed his mother, and as a result, he grew up hating the Spanish dictatorship and the country's conservative religious values. In *Señas de identidad*, young Álvaro confronts a similar situation. When the boy's father is killed, his mother and Señorita Lourdes try their best to soften the blow of the news, instead telling young Álvaro that his father will return later. Try as they might to insulate the boy from the war, his mother and nanny could not mask the fear on their faces or hold back tears when members of the family began disappearing or were killed. The seven-year-old understood something was wrong: "Tu madre ignoraba aún lo sucedido en Yeste [...] pero sus lágrimas habían confirmado tus sospechas de que algo - ¿qué cosa - se tramaba entre bastidores" (Goytisolo 27).⁷

Literary critics like Lee Six have found that Goytisolo's generation of writers, born between 1920 and 1936, were placed in a peculiar position, "thrust prematurely into adulthood

⁶ "But because of your voluntary exile in Paris and your vagabond existence in Europe, that previous communion had dissolved, and when you had been uprooted from your uninviting soil... you went one way, the bonds that had once linked you to your tribe having been broken, drunk and astonished at that new and incredible freedom of yours" (133).

⁷ "Your mother still did not know what had happened in Yeste...but her tears had confirmed your suspicions that something – what? – was going on behind the scenes" (18).

by the violence they had witnessed and yet powerless to take a side other than that of their parents, when the time in their lives came to assume adult responsibilities [...] the Franco regime was at its most oppressive” (15). In a way, the war effectively stunted the childhood of Spaniards born during this era. It creates a socially and politically traumatized generation.

Despite the raging conflict, an adult Álvaro remembers vestiges of a normal childhood, memories spurred on by his reflection of photographs he has uncovered. Señorita Lourdes, in particular, does her best to foster the young boy’s imagination:

Las flores, decía, eran delicadas y susceptibles como las personas y las caricias y mimos de los niños les procuraban intensa alegría y satisfacción. Con fervor catecúmeno Álvaro corría de una flor a otra depositando en todas besos recatados y puros, balsámicos y restauradores, aliviando por turno sufrimientos y penas, sembrando el bien, el reconocimiento y la dicha en apostolado veloz y fructuoso. (Goytisolo 53)⁸

This very light-hearted and tender image of a child bouncing around bestowing kisses on flowers is lovely, which is why weaving anecdotes of politically-charged murders and kidnappings is so jarring. It is this type of idyllic childhood that the war has infringed upon. In a figurative sense, the flowers represent the children of Spain: delicate and susceptible. The children, however, had little to alleviate their sorrow and suffering as the war claimed many of their family members.

In many ways, the young boy’s childhood was a very confusing time for the protagonist. From the interrupted schooling, to the long inert summers, Álvaro’s early years lacked structure. His mother was very distant and psychologically absent, and thus, the young boy spent much time with his devout Catholic caretaker. And while Señorita Lourdes provides comfort and

⁸ “Flowers, she would say, were delicate and susceptible just like people, and children’s caresses and care brought them intense joy and satisfaction. With the fervor of a catechumen, Álvaro would run from one flower to another, depositing on all of them kisses that were modest and pure, soothing and restoring, alleviating sufferings and sorrows in turn, sowing good, recognition, and happiness in a rapid and fruitful apostolate” (40).

semblance of stability, her personal feelings and ideology toward the war imbue the young boy with these conservative values. This upbringing was supplemented by his rigid schooling: “siete cursos de bachillerato en una institución religiosa con que primero la madre y luego el consejo de familia habían intentado doblegar su rebeldía y aprisionarlo en el rígido corsé de unos principios, una moral y unas reglas que eran reglas, moral y principios particulares de su aborrecida e ignorante clase” (Goytisolo 20).⁹ That initial indoctrination into the conservative values that the protagonist grew up to detest left its mark. The young boy, who hoped one day to achieve martyrdom, tried his best to mimic the young saints he studied: “Ingenuamente habías intentado imitar las actitudes de los mártires [...] observándote horas y horas en el espejo del cuarto de baño” (Goytisolo 26).¹⁰

When the boy’s family fled to Midi, his uncles – who perceived the war with an us-versus-them mentality – urged the protagonist carry on the family’s industry and legacy, a daunting task for a child that creates worry about his future: “El miedo abstracto a la guerra se había transformado poco a poco en cuidado y desvelo respecto a su propio y personal porvenir: ¿qué otra presa podían buscar sino a él, el joven Álvaro, vástago de familia virtuosa y bienpensante, heredero frágil de un mundo delicado y caduco?” (Goytisolo 39).¹¹ Defenseless, Álvaro had become a futile hope for his family to promulgate their values. The intangible effects of the war had crept up on his existence and changed his family’s dynamics in ways he could not clearly understand:

El vendaval de la guerra civil había sacudido con furia aquellas existencias perezosas e

⁹ “Seven years of secondary school in a religious institution, by means of which mother first and then the family council had tried to ... bind him in the rigid corset of certain principles, morals, and rules” (13).

¹⁰ “You had innocently tried to imitate the expressions on the faces of the martyrs... looking at yourself for hours on end in the bathroom mirror” (17).

¹¹ “The abstract fear of war had become transformed little by little into care and concern for his own personal future, what better prey to search for than he, young Álvaro, scion of a virtuous and right-thinking family, the weak heir of a delicate and doddering world?” (28)

inertes y numerosos personajes y comparsas del mundo medieval de la familia desaparecieron de golpe como si les hubiera tragado una trampa. Álvaro asistía sin inquietarse a sus eclipses bruscos e instalado en su cómoda vida de huérfano emigrado, vegetaba en una apacible estación termal del Midi, secretamente feliz del providencial conflicto que libraba (¿hasta cuando?) de la engorrosa obligación de la escuela (monótona ronda de estaciones iguales en el recuerdo embrionario de su memoria aún confusa). (Goytisolo 54)¹²

This passage succinctly sums up how the “characters” of his “medieval” world entered and left his life. The sudden disappearances and deaths of those around him were muted. The interruption of school was welcome but effectively froze his existence for a few years.

The generation of Spaniards who came of age during the war is accounted for in *Señas de identidad*. Various characters, like Antonio and Fermín, Antonio’s childhood friend, recalled in various conversations the changes that had occurred over the years. Fermín tells a recently paroled Antonio that all their childhood friends, himself included, struggle to make a living. Objecting to Antonio’s assertion that the losing side suffered the most, Fermín tells Antonio that those who aligned themselves with Franco suffered more: “ ‘Nuestro caso es peor que el suyo. A lo menos ellos han tenido una juventud, como tú dices. Nosotros ni eso. Nos hemos preparado para algo y no ha pasado nada. Envejecemos sin conocer responsabilidades, ¿comprendes?’ ”

¹² “The storm of the civil war had furiously shaken up those lazy and inert existences and so many characters and groups in the medieval world of his family had suddenly disappeared, as if swallowed up through a trapdoor. Without getting upset, Álvaro had been present at their sudden eclipses, and once set up in his life as an emigrant orphan, he vegetated in the pleasant hot season of the Midi; secretly happy about the providential conflict that was freeing him (until when?) from the troublesome obligation of school (a monotonous round of stations that were all alike in the embryonic recollection of his still confused memory)” (40).

(Goytisolo 183).¹³ Although there is contention over the casualties suffered on both sides, it is clear that no side was spared of the psychological consequences of their youth.

As a semi-autobiographical novel, *Señas de identidad* portrays the theme of the loss of childhood innocence through the eyes of a conflicted adult narrator. Largely propelled by a series of memories and personal mementos, Álvaro is unsure of how to interpret his youth. On one hand, he recalls some of his childhood fondly. And on the other, he expresses anguish over the death of his father. Regardless, it becomes obvious that his early development comes to impact his search for his own identity later. As he pores over photographs, he sees “[el] niño pintoresco y falaz que habías sido y en el que no se reconocía el adulto de hoy, suspendido como estabas en un presente incierto, exento de pasado como de porvenir” (Goytisolo 10).¹⁴

Masculinity and Violence

While many literary critics have examined the impact on youth, others have studied how Goytisolo and other male writers of his generation portrayed the impact of violence their narratives, and by extension, their masculinity. In her article, “The Invisible War: Violences and Violations in Novels under Censorship in Franco’s Spain,” Susan Mooney argues that these violent narratives from male writers were an equal reaction to Franco’s censorship and his attack on leftist intellectuals: “These later authors develop narratives and masculine subjects that explore violence as a double aspect of the individual and collective group” (116). Thus, it follows that Álvaro’s exploration of identity is not solely for his own benefit, but rather it seeks to explore a group identity for others like him. Mooney further posits that the staging of violence in these narratives is a direct response to Franco’s oppressive regime.

¹³ “We’re worse off than they are. At least they had a youth, as you called it. We didn’t even have that. We prepared ourselves for something and nothing happened. We’re growing old without ever having had any responsibilities, understand?” (146)

¹⁴ “The picturesque and loquacious child that you had been and in whom today’s adult was hard to recognize, suspended as you were in an uncertain present, lacking a past as well as a future” (18).

One striking aspect of the novel is that the male characters are the only ones ever involved in the violent clashes. Women are portrayed only as mothers, caretakers, lovers and prostitutes – but very rarely as active, anti-Franco Republicans. Ana, one of the minor female characters, expresses her feelings on the role of women in Spain. As a mere fact of their gender, women are largely invisible: “ ‘Las mujeres, en España, vivimos oprimidas. Si fuese un hombre iría al prostíbulo con vosotros, y en paces’ . ” (Goytisolo 94).¹⁵ Ana’s statement is an excerpt of a conversation she has with her son, Sergio, and Álvaro. The liberal-minded woman detests how gender roles are constructed in her conservative country. She doesn’t mind hearing her son’s adventures involving prostitutes. In fact, she relishes the details, and her openness toward sex makes Álvaro uncomfortable at first: She asks him: “ ‘Te sorprende que te hable así? -- dijo -- ¿Cómo te imaginabas que era? ¿Una típica madre española?’ ” (Goytisolo 92).¹⁶ Except for this part of the novel, strong-willed female characters remain absent in this male-dominated narrative.

Throughout the novel, Goytisolo pens various scenes of violence that demonstrate a sort of emasculation by fascist forces. The Civil Guards, in particular, abuse their power and often make examples of poor peasant men. When a rebellious group, for example, seized communal lands, the Civil Guard arrived to reclaim them. The verbal exchange, and eventual physical confrontation, between the two parties shows a clear power relationship, in which the peasants are effectively emasculated:

“Enséñeme antes la orden.”

“¿La orden? – el movimiento del brazo fue rápido. El hombre encajó el golpe sin

pestañear –. “Tómala la orden.”

¹⁵ “ ‘We women live under oppression in Spain. If I were a man, I’d be able to go to the whorehouse with you and nobody would care’ ” (74).

¹⁶ “ ‘Are you surprised at my talking to you like that?’ she said. ‘What did you think I was, a typical Spanish mother?’ ” (72)

...Una hora después, en la pedanía, los testigos habían referido la escena. La lluvia de injurias, puntapiés, culatazos. El ensañamiento con los hombres caídos. La extinción violenta de los hornos. El pisoteo rabioso de los sembrados. (Goytisolo 143)¹⁷

The snuffing of oppression by Franco's police is swift. During his regime, the working class man felt powerless to stop the atrocities he committed in favor of capitalist policies. Goytisolo's examples of violence demonstrate the futility of the men to assert themselves. These gross violations are perhaps why his generation of writers took to their prose to protest these violations by the dictatorship.

While some might argue that this clash between the Civil Guard and the peasants should not be examined from a gendered perspective, it's important to include this observation of the Spanish male. Goytisolo describes in great detail the attitudes toward women, as well as the fragile ego of the stereotypical masculine Spaniard, which can be applied to their affront to violence:

Hasta el día fatal en que descubrieran a costa de sí mismos el viril orgullo racial del hombre español, aterrado de pronto por la escandalosa infidelidad de la mujer francesa (o alemana o escandinava) que olvidada de la noche a la mañana las encendidas promesas de amor y los juramentos eternos para caer [...] dejándolos sumidos en un abismo de celos. (Goytisolo 260)¹⁸

¹⁷ "First show me the order."

"The order?" The movement of his arm was quick. The man took the blow without blinking. "There's the order."

...An hour later, in the community, witnesses had described the scene. The rain of insults, kicks, blows with rifle butts. The beating of the fallen men. The violent extinction of the ovens. The enraged trampling of the planted fields. (113).

¹⁸ "They discovered at their own expense the inborn virile pride of the Spanish male, suddenly frightened at the scandalous infidelity of French (or German or Scandinavian) women, who would forget overnight

This passage characterizes the Spanish male as virile and proud. This archetype is unable to cope with the rejection of a woman with a strong sexual identity. Thus, I argue that because of the strict, and traditional, gender roles that calls for the male to be strong and capable of defending himself, Franco's frequent oppression, indeed, amounts to emasculation.

The constant struggle between the two factions is also male-driven. The rebel leaders – mostly male – that emerged in the narrative tried their best to opposed Franco. Goytisolo introduces Dr. Carnero, a journalist who addresses Spanish exiles in France. In a passionate speech, he denounces the regime and the power of the Catholic church, much to the chagrin of the hecklers who attempted to silence him: “[Dr. Carnero as a symbol] Un símbolo de la España ardiente y fraterna que será sin duda la España de mañana el día en que las fuerzas del idilio decidan unirse para libertar a las nacionalidades españolas de la despótica y sangrienta dictadura que las sojuzga” (Goytisolo 279).¹⁹ This clash between these parties is pervasive throughout the trilogy. In the next two installments, Goytisolo continues to attack the regime using more violent imagery and a destruction of gender roles.

In the various political discussions that occurred throughout the novel, the idea that men are the driving force in the country continues to emerge. Antonio, while on parole, has a conversation with a doctor from his hometown who has a few ideas about the future of the country: “ ‘Lo que necesita el país es una raza de hombres de empresa capacitados y emprendedores, gente que sepa hacer brotar el dinero; que lo maneje bien y logre que

their glowing promises of love and their eternal vows... leaving them sunken in the depths of jealousy, wounded self-esteem, and spiteful bitterness” (207).

¹⁹ “A symbol of the ardent and fraternal Spain that will, without a doubt, be the Spain of tomorrow on that day when the forces in exile decide to unite in order to free the Spanish nationalities from the despotic and bloody dictatorship that holds them in subjection” (223).

fructifique... Ellos son los promotores del adelanto de una nación' ” (Goytisolo 214).²⁰ The doctor, a Franco sympathizer, speaks to Antonio in noticeably gendered language. In the capitalist society that is slowly emerging, he believes that enterprising men will “know how to make money flow,” thereby providing for their country. In the traditional sense, it is the breadwinning husband that takes care of the household. And in this case, that household is Spain, which is often referred to as a feminine object: “Mira la puerta rota/ de la casa/ mira la negra hondura/ de la patria. De hermano a hermano te hablo/ de mis desgracias/ de la mísera madre/ terrible España” (Goytisolo 268).²¹ Thus, it follows that the men in the novel look to each other for leadership – and not to women.

Goytisolo’s portrayal of masculinity and violence in the novel shows his inherent disdain for the regime’s intrusion on the Spanish male. It forces the protagonist, and the reader, to attempt to decipher a fluid identity of this archetype. But even with this confusion, it is clear that Goytisolo’s narrative is male-driven. It involves the clash between male egos and largely overlooks the role of women.

Analysis of *Primera memoria*

²⁰ “ ‘What this country needs is a breed of men with enterprise, ability, and initiative, people who know how to make money flow; let them take good care of it and they’ll make it bear fruit... They’re the ones who promote the progress of a country’ ” (172).

²¹ “See the house/the broken door/ the black depths/ of the land. I speak to you as brother/ I tell you of my woes/ of our mother in her misery/ our fearful Spain” (213).

Primera memoria introduces readers to Matia, an adult narrator reflecting on her past. Using flashbacks, Matute creates a linear narrative in which the fourteen-year-old Matia begins detailing her story. She is an orphaned young girl who has been adopted by her ultra conservative grandmother, doña Práxedes, on the island of Majorca. She and her fifteen-year-old cousin, Borja, are spending their summer vacation on the island. But shortly before they are set to return to school, the Spanish Civil War commences. The conflict effectively extends their summer vacation.

In the novel, readers begin to unravel the family dynamics in which Matia is forced to participate. Matia and Borja are the central characters in the novel. It is through their eyes that readers attempt to comprehend the effects of the war. Matia, in particular, is the main point of analysis in this paper. It is through this female protagonist that Matute criticizes the Franco regime, using figurative language, intertextual allusions and metaphors. This section of the paper will analyze isolation, loss of innocence and the rejection of the traditional femininity within our female protagonist.

Isolation

Matute represents isolation in two ways in *Primera memoria*: through physical space and emotional space. When the Civil War erupts, it sets the stage for the physical isolation the characters face. Matia, and her cousin Borja, are forced to spend more time with their conservative and overly strict grandmother, doña Práxedes. Her home becomes a fortress of forced niceties, feigned good behavior and calculated deceit. “La abuela” (“the grandmother,” as Matia refers to her frequently) rules over the kingdom, ensuring that the house affairs run smoothly, if incredibly mundanely, even as the war rages on far away: “Y seguíamos los cuatro – ella, tía Emilia, mi primo Borja y yo --, empapados de calor, aburrimiento y soledad, ansiosos de

unas noticias que no acaban de ser decisivas – la guerra empezó apenas hacia mes y medio --, en el silencio de aquel rincón de la isla, en el perdido punto en el mundo que era la casa de la abuela” (Matute 10).²²

As Matia observes, “la casa de la abuela” is a “punto perdido” (“grandmother’s house” was a “lost point”) in a world entirely separated from the rest of the country. This physical isolation becomes a sort of pressure-cooker as the novel progresses. The characters at first complain of tediousness, boredom, the summer heat. But as time evolves, the “island” begins to see strife among its inhabitants. Matia and Borja’s relationship too becomes strained making it difficult for her to carry on as usual. Eventually she is forced to choose sides in her own family’s conflict, and by extension, the war.

Marie-Linda Ortega says in her article that the protagonist’s experience in the war – even as a tacit spectator – represents a choice between two distinct Spains:

La Guerra Civil, aunque presente, queda alejada, al otro lado del mar, en la medida en que la isla desconoce las batallas y los bombardeos, mas no los conflictos que viene a plasmar metafóricamente y a trasponer una realidad más profunda y transhistórica a la que parece remitir Ana María Matute en esta novela: la existencia, más allá de las apariencias, de ‘dos Españas’ de fronteras fluctuosas y movedizas desde los tiempos más remotos. (103)²³

In her analysis of the novel, Ortega points to a central theme in Matute’s novel: the clash

²² “And the four of us – grandmother, Aunt Emilia, my cousin Borja and I – stayed there, saturated with heat, boredom, and solitude, anxious for some news that never was quite decisive enough (the war had begun scarcely a month and a half before), in the silence of that corner of the island, in that lost point of the world that was my grandmother’s house” (4).

²³ All English translations other than Matute’s and Goytisolo’s are my own: “The Civil War, although present, is far away, across the sea, to the extent that the island has known battles and bombings, but not the conflicts that come to embody metaphorically and transpose a deeper and trans-historical reality that Ana Maria Matute seems to refer in this novel: the existence, beyond appearances, of ‘two Spains’ wavering and shifting borders from the most remote of times.”

between old Spain and new Spain. La abuela represents the old Spain, as she firmly believes in an antiquated morality, chivalry and the power of wealth. Her conservative regime clashes with Matia's desire to be free to enjoy her childhood and explore the ideas of a liberal Spain.

As the powerful matriarch, doña Práxedes attempts to exert her influence not just in her home, but in the town:

Desde su gabinete, las casitas de los colonos con sus luces amarillas, con sus mujeres cocinando y sus niños gritones, eran como un teatro diminuto. Ella los envolvía en su mirada dura y gris, impávida. Sus ojos, como largos tentáculos, entraban en las casas y lamían, barrían, dentro de las habitaciones, debajo de las camas y las mesas. Eran unos ojos que adivinaban, que levantaban los techos blancos y azotaban cosas: intimidad, sueño, fatiga. (Matute 60)²⁴

This passage illustrates the extent and power of doña Práxedes' leering eyes. She looks down upon the rest of the island's inhabitants, disgusted by their lifestyle and lack of morality as she sees it. Matute uses color here to discern between the opposing qualities of the masses with those of "la abuela." Doña Práxedes' gaze is described as harsh, grey and tentacle-like. Meanwhile, the homes in the town are covered in a bright yellow with colorful scenes of women tending to their children.

The physical isolation Matia experiences is heightened by the psychological and emotional isolation she feels at her grandmother's home. She always refers to her as "la abuela," an impersonal address that suggests she does not feel close to her. But Matia feels that way because she isn't fully accepted by her family. Her grandmother deems her inferior because she

²⁴ "From her boudoir, the tiny houses of the tenant farmers with their yellow lights, with their women cooking and their clamorous children, were like a miniature theater. She would be enveloping them in her hard, grey, dauntless look. Her eyes, like long tentacles, penetrated the houses, licked and swept the rooms, under the beds and tables. She had eyes which guessed, which raised the white roofs and lashed out at things: intimacy, sleep, fatigue" (53).

disapproves of Matia's father – a poor man who doña Práxedes said seduced and corrupted Matia's mother. In addition to her birth, Matia's actions that led her to be expelled from a school chosen by her grandmother cemented that bad opinion: “Fui entonces – decía ella – la discípula y mal aconsejada criatura, expulsada de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles por haber dado una patada a la subdirectora” (Matute 13).²⁵

Through the young protagonist, Matute provides a window into Matia's psychological state. This is a critical component of the novel as it has allowed critics to study the war's impact and contribute to literature based on trauma theory, even though Spanish critics have not entirely adopted a trauma-based critical approach. This approach is confusing to some critics like Scott Frame who says in his article, “A Private Portrait of Trauma in Two Novels by Ana María Matute,” that literature from the Post Spanish Civil War lends itself to this type of critical perspective: “[...] together with the theme of lost childhood evidenced in much of the work written by the group of writers known as *la generación de medio siglo*, the transfigured collective experience of the war has proven to be a ‘decisive wound’ and the prominent leitmotif of the Post Spanish Civil War Novel” (129).

Primera Memoria is more than just an allegorical novel that sympathizes with the established government facing a rebellion led by the conservative General Franco. It presents readers with a conflicted adult narrator who is writing a novel about her youth, a critical juncture in her development. Doña Práxedes remarks that the children, growing up in the midst of war, are surely affected by the violence: “A estos pobres niños no les ha tocado vivir una buena época [...] ¡Arruinados y en guerra! ¡Dios mío, Dios todopoderoso, que congoja!” (Matute 77).²⁶ The

²⁵ “I had been – she would say – a wayward and misdirected creature, expelled from Our Lady of the Angels for having kicked the sub-director” (7).

²⁶ “ ‘These poor children haven't had the luck to live in a decent period [...] We're ruined, and there's a war! Good God, Almighty God, what grief!’ ” (69).

Civil War effectively forced many adolescents to grow up quickly, as the protagonist's grandmother forced her to do, facing overwhelming situations of self-identity that have to deal with and against traditional rigid models of women's behavior established by the Catholic Church. Women, for example, were supposed to be pious, respectable, and conservative.

The novel's format gives readers clues into the emotional anguish of young Matia – as well as an adult Matia. In parenthesis, the narrator – adult Matia – provides commentary on the events of the past, sometimes with precision. Other times, her memory is rather hazy:

“Emblemáticamente la novela nos presenta una narradora desdoblada entre el ayer de los acontecimientos de sus catorce años y un hoy indefinido que corresponde al momento de la escritura” (Ortega 103).²⁷ Those parenthetical interruptions throughout the novel are often filled with memories and show how the narrator views her past: “This woman who looks back to the Civil War era with her seemingly infinite uses of ‘recuerdo’ knows from the work's first word how it ends, and like the first-person narrators of the picaresque novels she offers revealing insights into the irremediable mistakes of her past” (Anderson and Sheay 6).

The isolation that Matia experiences during her youth have clearly created an adult narrator who is struggling to understand her adolescence. Instead of acceptance, she is reluctantly adopted by an authoritarian grandmother who does not whole-heartedly accept her into the family. She is ripped away from the home she knew, dropped precipitously into a Catholic school where she is met with resentment and an agenda to transform her into a different person. Thus, this isolation she experiences forces her to retreat into her own refuge, sneaking away to play her with doll Gorogó and read the book of fairy tales she has hidden in her closet.

Loss of Innocence

²⁷ “Symbolically the novel presents us to a narrator conflicted over the past events of her youth and an indefinite today that corresponds to the penning of the narrative.”

Patrick Gallagher posits that Matute's juxtaposition of the world of the children and adult are starkly different, yet the same in how childish the adults act (Gallagher 64-5). It's a conundrum that the young protagonist struggles to understand: "Estábamos tan indefensos, tan obligados, tan – oh, sí – tan lejanos a ellos: al retrato de tío Álvaro, a los Taronjís, al recuerdo de mi padre, a Antonia, al Chino... Qué extranjera raza la de los adultos, la de los hombres y las mujeres" (Matute 114).²⁸ She sees adults as a completely different race, foreign beings whose motivations she cannot decipher. Gallagher argues that the motivations, however, are one in the same: "[...] while *Primera memoria* is certainly a coming-of-age novel, it departs from convention by subtly yet insistently reminding us that the conduct and desires of adults are essentially continuous with those of children" (64-5).

As we focus on the protagonist, we see vestiges of Matia's innocence appear in the form of a cherished doll: "Entre la piel y el pijama llevaba mi muñeco negro vestido de arlequín, estropeado y sucio, que nadie conocía" (Matute 113).²⁹ The doll, which remains hidden from view, is an amulet. When her aunt discovers her doll, Matia says it was "para otras cosas; para viajar y contarle injusticias" (Matute 127).³⁰ The injustices Matia refers to – the death of her mother, the absence of her father and the tyranny of her grandmother – have conditioned her to retreat into herself and to confide in this doll. Borja serves as a confidant, but only briefly and out of necessity: "Contra todos ellos, y sus duras o indiferentes palabras; contra el mismo Borja y Guiem, y Juan Antonio; contra la ausencia de mis padres, tenía yo mi isla: aquel rincón de mi armario donde vivía, bajo los pañuelos, los calcetines y el Atlas, mi pequeño muñeco negro"

²⁸ "We were so defenseless, living under so much pressure, so – oh, yes – so far from them: from Uncle Álvaro's portrait, the Taronjís, the recollection of my father, Antonia, the Chink [...] How foreign is the race of adults, the race of men and women!" (107)

²⁹ "I carried my black doll, which nobody knew about, worn-out and dirty and dressed as a harlequin, under my pajamas, next to my skin" (106).

³⁰ "This one is for other things: for traveling and for listening to my troubles" (119).

(Matute 114-15).³¹ This allusion to her own island where she can seek respite becomes her way of coping with her deteriorating situation.

Indeed, Matia's innocence is finally shattered when Borja reveals his discovery of his mother's love letters and why Chino so easily and pathetically bends to Borja's every whim. During this climactic revelation, her doll Gorogó appears again as a symbol of her innocence. The doll appears as bookends during this conversation between Matia and Borja. When Borja knocks, signaling to Matia that they should sneak out to talk, Matia says: "Estaba ya acostada, sin Gorogó, con la mano derecha bajo la almohada" (Matute 170).³² This conversation, an attempt by Borja to pull Matia back under his power, is full of truths Matia does not want to hear. When Borja tells her about Chino's homosexuality, the narrator breaks from the narrative to provide a memory – it's as though Matia decides to retreat into her imagination to soften the blow of the confession. Eventually, though, Matia comes to terms with all this knowledge and the passage ends with a somber, "Pobre Gorogó" (Matute 177).

Matute also highlights the loss of innocence through her constant allusion to children's fairy tales, from the running allegory of Peter Pan and Wendy, to the in-text references of "La Joven Sirena," ("The Little Mermaid") a story by Hans Christian Andersen about a young mermaid after the heart of a human prince. Borja represents Peter Pan, a commanding, arrogant figure with a troupe of friends on the "island" who function as his Lost Boys. Borja, much like his fairy tale counterpart, often engages in reckless behavior. One of his favorite pastimes on the island is to fight with the children of *los colonos*. But as Matia points out once, Borja rarely gets hurt in these bloody battles: "También Borja salió a veces con algún rasguño: pero era cauto y

³¹ "Against all of them, and their hard or indifferent words, even against Borja, and Guiem, and Juan Antonio, and against the absence of my parents, I had my island: that corner of the wardrobe where lived, under my handkerchiefs, socks, and atlas, my small black doll" (107).

³² "I was already in bed, without Gorogó, my right hand under the pillow which was still cool" (164).

huidizo como una anguila, y su carabina aterrorizaba a Guien, que le gritaba: — ¡Juega sucio, juega sucio con la carabina!” (Matute 112).³³ Borja, the fearless leader he sought to be, did not want to seem weak in front of the other boys, much like his grandmother refused to cease any power in her household.

On the other hand, Matia represents Wendy, a centrist and motherly figure. As a companion to Borja she is complicit in his activities – even when she doesn’t approve of them. And like the fictional character of Wendy, Matia does not want to grow up and become an adult. Perhaps this is why she goes along with the whims of her cousin. Together, they can be children and attempt to carry on some form of an idyllic childhood in the maelstrom of the island. They can sneak out of their rooms in the middle of the night and share stories, cigarettes and liquor. During these conversations, they often discuss this transition between being children and adults – a seemingly mysterious topic: “Ya no éramos niños. De pronto ya no sabíamos lo que éramos ... Y él decía, entre bocanadas de humo: ‘¡Cuándo acabará todo esto ...!’ Bien cierto es que no estábamos muy seguros a qué se refería: si a la guerra, la isla, o a nuestra edad” (Matute 114).³⁴ This insecurity and questioning of self-identity is a pervasive theme throughout the story. But even as they look forward to the end of the war, the children do not look forward to the responsibility that comes with adulthood. They would prefer to keep playing games and only role-playing as adults.

Within the text, Matia often relishes Andersen’s fairy tale of “The Little Mermaid,” or *La joven sirena*. In this story, the young siren seeks love and acceptance – something Matia does

³³ “Sometimes, Borja, too, emerged from the battle with some scratch or other: but he was as cautious and slippery as an eel, and his carbine terrorized Guiem, who would scream at him: ‘No fair using the carbine! It’s no fair!’ ” (105).

³⁴ “We were no longer children. We suddenly did not know what we were... And he would say, between puffs of smoke: “When will all this end...!” It is certainly true that neither of us was sure what he was referring to: if it were the war, the island, or our very age” (107).

not experience until she meets Manuel later in the novel: “La Joven Sirena quería que la amasen, pero nunca la amó nadie. ¡Pobre sirena! ¿Para eso se tuvo que parecer a los humanos? Pero no era una mujer ... (Acaso, sólo deseaba que alguien me amara alguna vez. No lo recuerdo bien)” (Matute 82-83).³⁵ As Matia remembers the story, she sees herself as the young mermaid. She views her family as unsympathetic to her romantic interest in Manuel, a character her grandmother and cousin vehemently disapprove of. In this sense, she had to emerge from her grandmother’s home to meet Manuel. And she has to keep this relationship hidden from view or risk losing it.

In most of her works, Matute has been known as a champion for children. Loss of innocence is a common thread through most of her short stories, essays and novels. In *Primera memoria*, in particular, she effectively – and very subtly – criticizes the childlike behaviors of the adults. Matia tries her best to understand the adults, who she sees as a completely different race, but Matute’s novel suggests that the adults are not that different after all. They, too, act very capriciously. The novel also portrays a conflicted protagonist at the precipice of adolescence and childhood. Matia often retreats into fairy tales in order to escape the reality of her situation. Used as a coping mechanism, Matia’s retreats into these stories show that she is fearful of growing up and the uncertainties that her future hold. Orphaned by her parents, Matia is left without a loving environment to be raised in – and this is perhaps Matute’s intention in injecting allusions to *The Little Mermaid*. Matia, after all, is looking for love and acceptance.

The Rejection of the Traditional Femininity

³⁵ “The Little Mermaid wanted to be loved, but no one ever loved her. Poor mermaid! Was it necessary then for her to be like a human? But she was not a woman... (Perhaps I only wanted someone to love me for once. I cannot remember very well.)” (75).

As the novel progresses, the characters begin to go through growth spurts – prompting a new level of scrutiny from la abuela as she begins to size up Matia’s beauty potential:

Una de las cosas más humillantes de aquel tiempo, recuerdo, era la preocupación constante de mi abuela por mi posible futura belleza. Por una supuesta belleza que debía adquirir, fuese como fuese.

— Es lo único que sirve a una mujer, si no tiene dinero. (119)³⁶

At this point, Matia’s grandmother becomes militant in her viewpoint that women must be subjected to conservative ideals of beauty and behavior – much to the chagrin of Matia: “En aquellos momentos la odiaba, no podía evitarlo. Deseaba que se muriese allí mismo, de repente y patas arriba, como los pájaros. Con el bastoncillo de bambú me reseguía la espalda y me golpeaba las rodillas”(121).³⁷ In one swift transition, the fourteen-year-old protagonist is pulled away from her childhood and forced to begin planning for her future, which is of utmost importance to her grandmother. Doña Práxedes makes it clear to Matia when she arrives on the island that she has an end in mind: “Te domaremos,” she tells her granddaughter (13).³⁸ Though, it’s not explicit, it is clear that the grandmother wants to completely reshape Matia, physically, emotionally and politically.

In one telling scene between Matia and her aunt Emilia, the young protagonist gets an intimate view of adult sexuality and seems to reject the mold of woman that is expected of her. Doña Práxedes tells Matia that she must work on her beauty, much like her aunt had to in order

³⁶ “I recall that one of the most humiliating things of those days was grandmother’s constant preoccupation with my possible future beauty: with a hypothetical beauty that I out to acquire, come what may (111).

“It’s the only thing a woman has if she doesn’t have money’ ” (112).

³⁷ “I could not help hating her then. I wanted her to drop down dead, suddenly, right then and there, with her feet up in the air like a bird. She would run her tiny bamboo cane up and down my back to straighten it and hit me on my knees and shoulders” (113).

³⁸ “We shall tame you” (7).

to marry into wealth. This perhaps prompts her visual inspection of her aunt when they lounge and nap in aunt Emilia's bedroom:

Verla así, abandonada, con la boca doblada hacia abajo y los ojos cerrados (uno más que otro y con un resplandor vidrioso entre el párpado derecho y la mejilla), sumida en su tristeza, me confundía. La carne se le salía de la bata, y contemplé las piernas extendidas, con la falda levantada sobre el tobillo derecho y el pie descalzo. (“¿Para qué se barniza las uñas?”) Mire mis piernas delgadas y oscuras, arañadas, mis pies largos de santito – como Borja –, con las uñas cuadradas y rapadas (una azuleando por un golpe y partida, que me dolía si le apretaba con el dedo) y me dije: “Yo también me barnizaré las uñas. (Matute 128-29)³⁹

In this richly detailed observation, Matia is repulsed, envious and intrigued by her aunt's femininity and sexuality. The image of her aunt's flesh spilling out from under her robe and her polished toe nails make her self-conscious as she looks upon her own body. She looks at her own youthful legs and the evidence of rough play in her bruised and scratched toenails. She decides ultimately that she, too, will use polish on her nails – the only concession she seems willing to make in her grandmother's insistence that she grow up.

As Matia becomes more independent, more adult, she begins to experience a clash between her sexual desires and the rigid, conservative values her grandmother attempts to impose on her: “Y a un tiempo me avergonzaba de aquel primer sentimiento de adulto y me daba

³⁹ “To see her in that state, abandoned, her mouth hanging open, sunken into sadness with her eyes closed (one more closed than the other, which sowed a shiny glassiness between her right eyelid and cheek), overwhelmed me. Her flesh bulged from her robe, and I contemplated her sprawling legs, with her skirt hoisted to the right, and her bare foot (‘Why does she polish her toenails?’). I looked at my own dark, skinny, scratched legs, my little saint's feet – like Borja's – with the nails cut square (one turning blue and split because of a blow, and hurting if I pressed on it with my toe) and I said to myself: ‘I'm going to polish my toenails too’ ” (121).

miedo y pena de mí misma, de mis palabras y de mi piedad” (Matute 163).⁴⁰ The shame that she experiences is an emotion instilled in her by Doña Práxedes. She is taught that women must be honorable, submissive and pure.

Matia’s gender becomes a point of conflict throughout the novel. Following the mold of her mother, she wants to be able to be free to be herself. Matia, most notably, is upset that she is barred from going to the orange grove because, according to her grandmother, it is unseemly for a girl to go to such places in the company of boys: “La abuela decía que ya era demasiado crecida para ir al Naranjal sola con ellos y pasar tres noches fuera de casa” (98).⁴¹ Though she and Borja play and study together, this realm of masculinity is shielded from Matia by both her cousin and her grandmother:

Contra todo, al regresar en la *Leontina* – desterrada por ser muchacha (ni siquiera mujer, ni siquiera) de la excursión al Naranjal –, contra todos ellos, subía a mi habitación, sacaba de bajo los pañuelos y los calcetines a mi pequeño Negro, miraba su carita y me preguntaba por qué ya no le podía amar. (116-17)⁴²

The protagonist laments that she was born female.

Her presence in the household is also largely ignored by the conservative male characters in the novel, with the exception of Borja: Mosén Mayol, the parish priest, and Chino, the children’s tutor. When Mosén Mayol visited the home, Matia was struck by his handsome features, but her admiration is only met with scorn and judgment: “A mí, casi nunca me dirigía la

⁴⁰ “And at one and the same time I was ashamed of that first adult sentiment and I was frightened and pained at myself, my words, my pity” (157).

⁴¹ “Grandmother said I was already too much of a woman to go to the Naranjal alone with them and spend three whole nights outside the house” (91).

⁴² “Turned against everyone, when I returned in the *Leontina* – banished for being a girl (not even a woman, not even that) from the excursion to the Naranjal – against all of them, I went up to my room, and took my small Negrito out from under the handkerchiefs and socks, stared into his tiny face and asked myself why I could no longer love him” (110).

palabra, pero a menudo sentí la desaprobadora mirada de sus ojos dorados, fríos y relucientes como dos monedas. En las contadas ocasiones en que me dijo algo, lo hizo a través de la abuela o de Borja” (68).⁴³ Matia appears to have developed a crush on the priest, as she thinks he is the “most handsome man” that she had ever seen before. This attraction that she experiences is an indication that Matia is, in fact, growing up and beginning to experience romantic feelings. The protagonist, however, is in many ways still a child.

Chino, on the other hand, is as indifferent to Matia as her grandmother is: “Pero a mí Lauro el Chino no me temía como a Borja” (25).⁴⁴ The few times Chino addresses Matia directly, he is often pleading with her to try to convince Borja to behave. These pitiful requests from Chino made her uncomfortable: “ – Señorita Matia, sean buenos – dijo –. Se lo ruego, sean buenos. Le miré de reajo, porque me avergonzaba cuando decía cosas así” (90).⁴⁵ The awkwardness she experiences seems to be a result of her unfamiliarity at receiving attention from an adult male, even if it comes from Chino, a man she and Borja torment with nicknames like “cura rebotado” (“rejected priest”) throughout the story.

Matia’s friendship with Borja is tinged with gender disparity. She struggles to understand why she and Chino fear him: “Miró sobre los cristales verdes, al través de la bruma amarilla de sus ojos, y otra vez, y otra, me pregunté por qué razón le temía tanto a un mocoso de quince años” (24).⁴⁶ She realizes that he is merely a young boy, but still he exerts his power over her. But Borja is an able manipulator. He is able to dominate those around him, either through

⁴³ “He almost never directed a word to me, but often I felt the disapproving glance of his golden, cold and glittering eyes, like two coins. On the rare occasions on which he said something to me, he did it through grandmother or Borja” (61).

⁴⁴ “But Lauro the Chink was not afraid of me as he was of Borja” (19).

⁴⁵ “ ‘Miss Matia, be good,’ he said. ‘I beg you both to be good.’ I looked at him out of the corner of my eye, because I was embarrassed when he said things like that” (83).

⁴⁶ “He looked over his green glasses, through the yellow haze of his eyes, and once again, and again, I asked myself why he so feared a brat of fifteen” (18).

blackmail, as he does with Chino, or through his feigned persona of a doting grandson, as he does with Doña Práxedes. With Matia, however, he takes advantage of her emotional isolation. Without any other friends, she and Borja become friends out of necessity and circumstance.

María Elena Soliño argues in “When Wendy Grew Up: The Importance of Peter Pan in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria* and Esther Tusquet's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*” that the gender dynamics in play between Matia and Borja mimic that of Wendy and Peter Pan: “Although Wendy runs the household, like a traditional mother she relinquishes her power to the man of the house, in this case Peter. Even when she thinks Peter is wrong, she imposes *his* word as law [...] Motherhood to Wendy means silence” (181). Much of the plot focuses on Matia finding her own confidence and voice. Eventually she confronts Borja’s cruelty and selfishness, albeit in a fearful way as she is still unsure of herself. When she befriends Manuel and Borja confronts her about her new relationship, she does not visibly quiver under his wrath as she would have before:

Verdaderamente, estaba lleno de rabia, de despecho. Al llegar al embarcadero nos detuvimos. Estábamos sofocados, y respirábamos con dificultad.

— Te expulsamos de la pandilla. ¡Fuera! ¡Fuera los traidores!

Me encogí de hombros, aunque las rodillas me temblaban. (Matute 153)⁴⁷

As they continue their friendship, Borja makes an observation, perhaps coming to the realization that she is, indeed, coming of age and should act more like a young woman: “Bueno, estoy pensando una cosa: ¿Qué va a ser de tí? ¡A los catorce años, fumando y bebiendo como un

⁴⁷ “He was really angry and spiteful. When we got to the pier, we stopped. We were out of breath and panting.

‘We’re throwing you out of the gang. Out! Out with the traitors!’
I shrugged my shoulders, although my knees were shaking” (147).

carretero, y andando por ahí, siempre con chicos! Tampoco lo sabe la abuela, ¿verdad?” (55-6).⁴⁸

In *Primera memoria*, it becomes clear that Matia symbolizes the “new” liberal woman. But this type of woman does not align with what her grandmother sees to be proper or respectable. Her grandmother’s attempts to groom her for marriage are met with resistance. At points throughout the novel, it seems Matia seeks strength in her mother’s model. Her mother had rejected those social norms when she fell in love with Matia’s father, and as a result, earned doña Práxedes scorn. The other problem that Matia faces during this critical junction of her adolescence is how to manage her burgeoning sexual awakening in the face of a strict, religious construct. The women in her family are of no help, and she is invisible to the men around her. But even with all these forces at play, Matia is not quite ready for that step. She attempts to latch on to any remnants of her childhood, particularly through Gorogó. But resistance is futile. Through circumstances outside of her control, Matia has no other choice than to accept this push into adulthood, however premature it may be.

⁴⁸ “Well now, I’m thinking about one thing: What’s going to become of you? At fourteen, smoking and drinking like a truck driver, and always going around with boys! Grandmother doesn’t know that either, does she?” (49).

Conclusion

Between the two books, *Primera memoria* and *Señas de identidad*, Matute and Goytisolo offer a comprehensive and nuanced view of how the war affected them and the development of their novels. Both have starkly different reactions to the war and oppression under the Franco regime. Fourteen-year-old Matia attempts to undermine the conservative system of values being forced on her. Matute's character came to represent the 'new' woman, liberal-minded, independent and capable of acting without male guardianship. Meanwhile, Álvaro, Goytisolo's character, had adopted conservative religious values early on his childhood. Born the son of industrialists, the young male protagonist was expected to uphold his family's legacy and beliefs. It was not until his later years that he denounced those values and developed a liberal ideology at odds with what his family had tried to instill in him.

The authors have a similar approach in their novels as they analyze the effects of war on

their childhood. The semi-autobiographical novels are intended to provide a generation of Spaniards and an outlet to come to terms with the social and political trauma of the era. The two protagonists, Matia and Álvaro, represent Matute and Goytisolo's alter egos. With only minor differences, these characters serve as fictional representations of the authors.

Working Through Political Trauma Through Memory

The novels are also similar in that the authors use memory as the primary vehicle for the plot development. We are presented with adult narrators reflecting on their pasts in an attempt to pinpoint their identities. As some scholars who have studied this generation of writers have written, these traumatic experiences have come to represent this generation of Spaniards:

Narration, through testimony or diaries, and in the form of literary fiction, turns out to be a very effective tool in the overcoming of trauma. The advantage of literature over discourses consists precisely in the different approach it proposes toward referentiality. If a traumatic event cannot be lived in an immediate way – since we do not experience it the moment it occurs but only as the result of our survival – a true and objective version of the facts is impossible to obtain. Literature, however, opens up an alternative way of understanding history because it does not aim at a causal, factual, referential understanding of the event. (Adriaensen 59)

In *Señas de identidad*, for example, this intersection between nonfiction and fiction occurs frequently. This book is based on personal experience and historical facts. Goytisolo uses real incidents and fictional characters based on himself and his friends who were part of the mid-twentieth-century generation of Spanish writers and activists (Moss 321). Literature then becomes Goytisolo's tool in describing the atrocities committed. In one chapter, through flashbacks, he is able to describe in detail the violent massacre of rural, landless peasants in

Yeste. He concludes his narration with a brief reference to the reporters who arrive at the scene. This is where the intersection between the objective and the subjective becomes clear. Goytisolo – and Matute – therefore affirm the notion that literature is a better tool to adequately express the emotional impact of the war.

Primera memoria uses memory differently than *Señas de identidad*. Matute uses long parenthetical asides to indicate when the adult Matia is injecting her voice into the narrative. This adult narrative voice is a representation of an entire generation. In the story, the image of a crowing rooster lamenting a “lost cause” is indicative of this: “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” (Hart 67). In an interview about her experience, Matute explains that her generation was forced to take sides in the conflict. And as a result of their circumstances, betrayal to one’s country is an important theme in her novels:

Nos encontramos a un lado o a otro, éramos parte de esa guerra, queríamos o no, contadas 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 la 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 ocurrían. (Hart 67)⁴⁹

⁴⁹ “We were on one side or the other, part of that war, whether we wanted to or not, with innumerable consequences. Then, in adolescence, you begin to wonder why you had to be in one place or another, if you had not been given any option. Then one has the strange sensation of self-betrayal, that’s why betrayal has importance in almost all my books. Then we have the memory of something cleaner, more pure, not mixed with the horrors of exile, or a country where they are killing our brothers. And we always yearn for a world where those things did not happen.”

Matute makes an apt point in her explanation of trauma. She touches on the natural tendency of youth to question whether they share any blame in their circumstances. Applied to other traumatic experiences in a child's life, like divorce, a child might wonder if they might be the cause of their parents' separation. It's a tendency that if left unanswered, leaves a rift in the development of one's identity. This is the overarching conflict in both novels. Both writers seem to be posing the same question: How has my fractured childhood and experiences turned me into the person I am today?

The answer to that question in *Señas de identidad* leaves the protagonist anguished and guilt-ridden. As Álvaro examines his actions over the course of his lifetime, he begins to see that he has accomplished nothing in his self-exile. Initially, he sets out to undermine and expose the regime from outside of Spain. Eventually, he abandons his activist friends, and his documentary fails. For much of his exile, he wallows in self-pity. Then he makes another realization. His friends who remain in Spain similarly fail to overthrow Franco's regime. The protagonist's experience creates a widespread sense of futility, delivering a debilitating blow to his and his friend's cause and collective identity: "Álvaro emerges a man with no marks of identity [...] His sense of futility and loss is the blame the novel lays on the regime and society that allowed – even forced – a generation to deny themselves, whether they stayed or left" (Moss 321).

Isolation in Álvaro and Matia

Both characters develop similar feelings of isolation, physically, psychologically and geographically. Matia is never fully accepted in her family, particularly by her grandmother: "nunca esperé nada de mi abuela: soporté su trato helado, sus frases hechas, sus oraciones a un Dios de su exclusiva invención y pertenencia, y alguna caricia indiferente, como indiferentes

fueron también sus castigos” (Matute 12).⁵⁰ Matia, thus, is perceptive to how her grandmother views her. She is also perceptive to her dogmatic religious convictions, describing them as “invented.”

Álvaro’s psychological isolation is different. It is he who pushes away from the old Spain. He flees the country and enrolls in a French film school. He feels disconnected from his homeland, and fails to connect with other exiles in Spain. He vehemently disagrees with the regime, and thus his isolation is largely ideological:

Goytisolo’s resistance to the dictatorial regime and his affinity with Communism, together with other, rather personal reasons, accounted for his decision to go into exile in 1956. From then on, he would spend most of his time in Paris, travelling to Cuba occasionally [... This] makes it clear that Goytisolo did not maintain any particular affective bonds with his native country. (Adriaensen 56)

This rejection of his patria by Goytisolo manifests itself in the novel. Álvaro, in his reflection of his roots, begins to retreat into psychological reclusion. It becomes problematic as he eschews his friends and his wife, Dolores, accuses him of never letting her get close. He chooses to erase any marks of his own identity, instead content to tell Dolores that her love is all he needs. But as time passes, his psychological isolation continues to affect his relationships. Álvaro realizes that his relationship with Dolores has become a cursory experience. In their time spent together Álvaro is emotionally absent.

Their novels also share a similar geographical isolation during the protagonist’s childhood. Matia and Borja remain with their grandmother on the island of Majorca, where supposedly they wait out the conflict. But as time continues to pass, it becomes clear that they

⁵⁰ “I never hoped for anything from my grandmother: I endured her icy treatment, her ready-made phrases, her prayers to a God of her exclusive invention, and even an occasional meaningless caress, as meaningless as her punishments” (6).

might leave the island any time soon. In *Señas de identidad*, Álvaro's family heads to Midi. From this location, they also hope to shield the boy from the war. But like the symbolic flowers that Álvaro bestows kisses on, the young protagonist is perceptive and correctly guesses that the war is a much bigger conflict than his family makes it out to be.

Loss of Innocence

The loss of childhood innocence is perhaps where the two writers best converge. Soon after the war breaks out, Matia and her cousin Borja are witnesses to a casualty of war. While at the beach, they watch as Manuel, one of the poor peasants on the island, attempts to give his dead father a proper burial. Borja lets Manuel borrow his rowboat so that he can take his father home. This scene effectively shatters that "distant" war that raged on the mainland and had shielded the children from the effects of the war. In fact, this moment is pivotal because from this point on, the novel's pace quickens and turns more violent.

In many ways, Matute is able to craft a narrative – using various references to fairy tales – that shows that the conflict between Nationalists and Republicans has permeated the children's psyche. In the war games the boys play at the Naranjal, it's clear who is who: the peasant boys represent the Republicans, Borja and his crew of friends represent the Nationalists. And Borja, in his tyrannical and aggressive behavior, pressures Matia to take a side. When she takes a stance later in befriending Manuel, Borja threatens to get her in trouble and have her sent to a reformatory school. Thus, even in the hands of her own family, she is not protected from the authoritarian regime of Franco's forces.

Álvarito's childhood is impacted in a similarly dramatic way. With the death of his father, and the disappearances of other family members, he has to try to come to terms with their absences. But this is made difficult because he never has a full account of the conflict. And,

furthermore, his family does not try to explain to him why he must grow up and assume responsibility. His uncles frighten him with their talk of their weakening family and tell the young boy he must be ready to become the head of the family. While that responsibility never comes to fruition, it would become a point of reflection for the thirty-two-year-old narrator: “pensabas... en los muertos inútiles del 36 y del 39, en la amarga generación de los tuyos, condenada a envejecer sin juventud ni responsabilidades” (Goytisoló 155).⁵¹

A Discussion on Gender

Examining collectively how gender is portrayed in these two novels, it becomes evident that Matute and Goytisoló have similar ideas and themes, as well. In *Señas de identidad*, the male-driven narrative is largely concerned with masculinity and its relationship with violence. Goytisoló represents the Spaniard male as proud and virile. Male writers like Goytisoló frequently staged violence in their novels, as Mooney, in order to create an individual and collective identity. While women are noticeably absent in his book, one particular character represents the liberal-minded and sexually free woman that the new Spain would usher in. Ana, with whom Álvaro has sexual intercourse with, is strong-willed and unapologetic in her sexual identity.

Additionally, it's interesting that in Goytisoló's male-dominated world, it is the men who see themselves as best able to manage the country – always referring to it as a feminine object. A Franco sympathizer, for example, argues that is the current regime's “breed” of “enterprising men. In *Huellas Textuales del Exilio: Autobiografía de Escritoras Republicanas*, Mar Inestrillas explains that in the eyes of Franco's dictatorship, his men are restoring “rationality” to the mother country

⁵¹ “you were thinking about... the people who died uselessly between 1936 and 1939, about that bitter generation of yours, condemned to grow old without youth or responsibilities” (129).

Al espacio femenino de la patria le ha sido impuesto la ‘racionalidad’ fascista de la España triunfadora que en *Delirio y destino* no es sino la fuente de aniquilación del pensamiento intelectual, de la posibilidad de progreso, de la tradición y de la comunidad. Es el momento en el que aparece el lado ‘oscuro’ de la madre patria, puesto que España pierde la razón, *delira*, del mismo modo que el personaje de Medea, protagonista de la tragedia griega de Eurípides, sufre un arrebató de locura y aniquila el fruto de sus entrañas. (Inestrillas 79)⁵²

Inestrillas’s analysis of Spain’s femininity supports Goytisolo’s scathing criticism of Franco’s effect on Spain. His fascist regime, once it assumes power, essentially destroys the country’s culture and people through its attempts to impose a monolithic Spanish culture. They represent a mother patria that has lost her mind and is killing her children – through the execution and forced detention of Republicans – after the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War.

Matute’s novel is unique in that it is written from the point of view of a female protagonist who is just beginning to transition from childhood to adolescence. Through this vantage point, readers gain insight into how a child reacts to the strict, social conducts imposed on her by an authoritarian grandmother. Her sexual awakening and emotional maturity stand in stark opposition to the pious and non-sexualized model of woman she is supposed to become. Matia rebels against her grandmother’s attempts to “dominate” her – a goal the matriarch had set upon Matia’s arrival in her household. It is through Matia that the author explores a new identity for women. Through the writing of female protagonist with such depth, Matute is able to give a

⁵² “The female space of the country has been given a 'rationality ' by the triumphant fascist Spain that in *Delirium and Destiny* amounts to an annihilation of intellectual thought, the possibility of progress, tradition and community. It is the moment when the 'dark' side emerges in the mother country, as Spain loses reason, *raves*, in the same way that the character of Medea, the protagonist of Euripides' Greek tragedy, suffers a fit of madness and kills the fruit of her womb.”

collective voice to the young women of Spain repressed by religious and conservative social norms. These subtle characteristics and thoughts in the protagonist embody the author's critique of Franco's reactionary gender rules.

Spain Today

The country that has since emerged after Franco's death has become a modern city with thriving capitalism and liberal values. Cristina Moreiras Menor says that the new Spain emerged in major, urban cities have a distinctive attitude: the urban youth culture movement that arose in the 1980's represent "the epiphany of the new culture of spectacle, opening up new and important spaces for the construction and representation of identities" (as qtd. in Adriaensen 53). Thus, within this context, Spaniards have been able to create new representations of their country. Writers like Matute and Goytisolo used literature as a way to come to terms with the past in order to emerge from a dark period of Spanish history. Franco may have been temporarily successful at rewriting Spain's history, but it is the later generations who have had the final say in constructing their socio-political identities.

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