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CHILDHOOD AS THEME AND SYMBOL IN THE
MAJOR FICTION OF ANA MARÍA MATUTE

DISSertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
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INTRODUCTION

One outstanding characteristic of the post Civil War novel in Spain is the novelists' concern for national social problems. Ana María Matute, a member of the novelistic generation called by Castellet "la generación del medio siglo," unlike other members of that group, displays less social criticism in her works. A study of these writers reveals other common traits as a realistic orientation, influences of the traditional Spanish novel combined with those of the contemporary foreign novel, and similar themes—especially that of childhood. The latter theme is dominant in Matute's generation because of the crucial nexus between historical and biographical facts: since all the writers of her generation were children during the Spanish Civil War. Our study, however, will deal principally with this theme in Matute's major novels, *Fiesta al noroeste* and *Primera memoria*, and the collection of sketches, *Los niños tontos*.

To more accurately consider Matute's position with regard to her contemporaries, a general consideration of what Eugenio de Nora calls "la nueva oleada" is in order. This group of writers born between 1922 and 1935 includes—here listed in order of their first publications—Ana María Matute, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, Mario Lacruz,
Jesús Fernández Santos, Juan Goytisolo, Ignacio Aldecoa, Luis Goytisolo-Gay, Antonio Ferres, and Armando López Salinas.¹

In general, a basic pessimistic tone characterizes their works and a concern for social problems, not new to the Spanish novel, is evidenced. Parallel to this social awareness is an interest in experimentation with literary form. One of their prevalent themes is man's search for a meaning to his existence, and a concern with childhood misdirected by the war.

According to Eugenio de Nora, the three thematic proclivities of "la nueva oleada" are: the objective consideration of the proletariat world as seen in Ignacio Aldecoa, Antonio Ferres, and Armando López Salinas; the consideration of the bourgeois world--Juan Goytisolo, Luis Goytisolo-Gay, and Jesús Fernández Santos--(and in the case of Fernández Santos and Juan Goytisolo, both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are delineated); in the third tendency a more lyric one, lie the works of Mario Lacruz and Ana María Matute.

Included in the first division is Ignacio Aldecoa's Gran Sol, which reveals the sordid lives of the fishermen. The novel itself takes place during a two week fishing trip and while little happens during the narration, one fisherman is killed at the end. The social

¹Included below are the first publications of these writers: Ana María Matute, Los Abel (1948); Sánchez Ferlosio, Industrias y andanzas de Alfahui (1951); Mario Lacruz, El inocente (1953); Fernández Santos, Los Bravos (1954); Juan Goytisolo, Juegos de manos (1954); Ignacio Aldecoa, El fulgor y la sangre (1954); C. Martín Gaite, El balneario (1955); J. López Pacheco, Central eléctrica (1958); Lauro Olmo, Aver (1958); Luis Goytisolo-Gay, Las afueras (1958); Gracia Hortelano, Nuevas amistades (1955); Antonio Ferres, La piqueta (1959); and A. López Salinas, La mina (1960).
or critical intent of the author occurs mainly through commentary of the characters who complain of the difficulties of the life of a fisherman.

A similar social commentary is found in Antonio Ferres' *La piqueta*, in which he describes the plight of the migrant agricultural population now living in misery in the city. Finally, Armando López Salinas writes of the intolerable conditions of the life of the miners in *La mina*. In this novel, he describes the struggle of a family formerly of Andalucía now working in the mine. In all of the novels cited, the authors portray the oppressive forces in the lives of the proletariat and the renewed problems brought about by industrialization.

Considering the bourgeois world, Juan Goytisolo turns to middle class youth in *Juegos de manos*, and shows them in complete mental and moral anarchy, mistrusting their elders who lie. These young people are products of the Civil War environment which they experienced as children. The degeneration of society as depicted by Goytisolo is not limited to any one age group as he later describes adults in the contemporary Spanish society in *La isla* (1961). However, here, the adults had had dreams as youths. The adults typify the same tendencies of anarchy found in the adolescents.

In his collection of stories, *Las afueras*, Luis Goytisolo-Gay shows the injustice, lack of communication, and muted hatred among beings with specific differences between the rich and poor. Jesús Fernández Santos in *Los bravos* presents a small village isolated in the mountains which remains stagnant many years after the war. Although
there is a collective protagonist—the village as a whole—some of the representatives of the different social classes are a doctor, a banker, and a fisherman. Further in _Laberíntos_, Fernández Santos describes the life of the bourgeois world seen through simple daily events of Holy Week in Seville.

The third thematic division, the lyrical response, is most notable for Mario Lacruz and Ana María Matute, but this does not preclude the fact that many of the other members of the generation were also poetic in their writings. Note for example, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio's _Industrias y andanzas de Alfanful_. Mario Lacruz, author of _El inocente_, a police novel, and _La tarde_, a psychological novel, selects a poetic style for each work. This poetic note in his novels tends to soften harsh reality, a characteristic of Matute's style.

Nora comments upon the rich imagery of her prose:

> La escritora piensa por imágenes, intuye a ráfagas, y expresa, dejándose llevar por las palabras, un mundo sujetivo centrado en lo sensorial, en las ideas primarias, de raíz instintiva, en los impulsos casi inexplicables.²

Ana María Matute, only ten years old during the Civil War, felt the immediacy of the war and its aftermath. As witnesses to human suffering and injustice, she and her contemporaries assumed a social consciousness. They were, however, limited in the literary expression of their concerns for they endured the same problems of censorship and

Thus, there evolved her highly personalized response to these problems of novel-writing.

Our approach to Matute's work will include a general study of childhood in literature, followed by a discussion of this theme in Spanish literature. We shall include a presentation of the theme as explored by the members of Matute's literary generation. After establishing a general concept of the theme, we will examine it in the novels of Matute. Our study will attempt to demonstrate that while the theme of childhood belongs to a long literary tradition, Matute continues this, adding her personal imprint, evidenced in the thematic and symbolic aspects the theme acquires in her work.

The third part of our study will be an intensive analysis of the theme of childhood in *Fiesta al noroeste*. The fourth part will deal with the theme in *Primera memoria*, and the fifth section will treat it in *Los niños tontos*. These major works present the development of the picture of childhood as it unfolds throughout her works.

We shall now proceed with a discussion of the theme of childhood in literature in our first chapter.

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*Ibid.*, p. 109. Nora explains the restricting forces imposed upon the writers of this literary group and mentions censorship:

"... las limitaciones propiamente dichas (que circunstancias como la in comunicación relativa, la censura, la coacción difusa del medio, etc. han impuesto), y, por último, las obras realmente características de los escritores representativos (que generalmente lo son, como es fácil prever, al margen de la debilidad ente de las tendencias y a pesar de la coacción de las limitaciones aludidas)."
We will not attempt a complete consideration of the aesthetics of childhood as a literary topic, since that is beyond the scope of our study. But we will proceed with a survey of the theme of childhood as it appears in literature through the ages as a point of departure. We will then observe the appearance of the theme in Spanish literature, its reoccurrence in the post Spanish Civil War novel, and then specifically in the works of Ana María Matute.

Child in Literature

While the child as theme and symbol has appeared in literature and art of all ages, a parallel between the general regard for childhood and its literary and artistic importance was apparent for centuries.

The child seldom appears in Greek literature for childhood as a theme had little importance in classical antiquity. In general, the ancient Greek scholars held a low opinion of children and there are many instances in classical literature showing this unfavorable view. We shall quote an example from Plato:

... a child's first infant consciousness is that of pleasure and pain, this is the domain wherein the soul acquires virtue or vice. For wisdom and assured true conviction, a man is
fortunate if he acquires them even on the verge of old age, and, in every case, he that possesses them with all their attendant blessings has come to the full status of man.¹

Similarly, Aristotle attests to this negative regard for children:

We have good reasons therefore for not speaking of an ox or horse or any other animal as being happy, because none of these is able to participate in noble activities. For this case also children cannot be happy, for they are not old enough to be capable of noble acts; when children are spoken of as happy, it is in compliment to their promise for the future. Happiness, as we said, requires both complete goodness and a complete lifetime.²

The child is incapable of reasoning and in some instances he is portrayed as abnormal.

There is one exception to this censure: Ion of the tragedy by Euripides. In this work, Ion, a precocious sage, assumes importance. He served in the temple and preferred a "demotic life to a royal one; and a life of the people to that of the King."³ But the wisdom displayed by Ion did not stem from his innate childlike wisdom. Rather it must have come from the child's priestly education.

In general, the children found in Euripides' tragedies are used to help produce a pathetic effect:


He may be shown menaced by death—or dying—or deprived of his parents—but his personality is not developed and he does not give the impression of being a real person.  

There is slim evidence of any exaltation of childhood in other writings of the time, noted in pre-Socratic opinion.

When Heraclitus speaks of time as a child playing with draughts or counters, for no one can be sure what the game is, it is surely not to praise childhood. And when Democritus says that if children are allowed to do as they please, they will not learn letters, music, or that which comprehends all virtue: to have respect (Frg. B179, Diels), and adds to this that if you have to have a child, you had best adopt one (Frg. B277), for then you can choose the one you want, he is surely expressing no high opinion of them.  

On the other hand, Greek art yields many examples of the child as a popular figure. But he is exalted for his beauty, or as a love-object, not as symbolic of innocence or wisdom.

In Latin literature there is little mention of children. In the eyes of the law they were little better than the slaves of the Head of the house. The Romans carried parental authority to a greater length than any other people previously and the Father maintained absolute authority over his children. The extremes of his authority included the right to refuse his child—leaving him to die. These abandoned children, if found, were trained to beg, and so as to better

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aid their guardians, some were deformed or maimed for life to arouse compassion in the would-be giver.

In general, then, although little importance is given to the child in the literature of the Ancients, his frequent appearance in Greek sculpture was evidence of his value as an aesthetic element in plastic art.

With the coming of Christianity, scriptural material introduced childhood as a value-charged moral symbol. It appeared under different aspects, specifically two:

It was of two sorts, prophecies and similar texts extolling the wisdom of a given child and mentioning the wisdom of children as something wonderful, and New Testament texts praising the childlike nature. Of the former, Psalm VIII, 2, was the most obvious: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still enemy and the avenger."^6

Many biblical references also point to an exceptional child or a supernatural child, not to childhood in general.7

The image of the infant as Innocence does not occur until the Renaissance. The Christian imagination of earlier years was unable to handle the paradox of the child as Savior:

... one recalls the rigid Christ Child of Byzantine mosaics, his tiny hand raised in a gesture of command and blessing—not an infant at all, only a miniature Emperor of the Universe. Indeed not until the Renaissance blossoms into the Baroque does the Christ Child come fully into his own. It is then that the prototypes of sentimental religious art are

^6Ibid., p. 15.

^7Ibid.
established once and for all: playing on the appeal of motherhood and babyhood in a maudlin upsurge of self-deceptics which ends by making quite good Christians (and parents of actual children) incapable of granting the possibility of infant damnation.®

This defenseless creature seen in his mother's lap did not capture the imagination of the Protestant North, including the Anglo-Saxon world. Children were regarded as "witches" there and hanged, while infant damnation continued. This attitude towards children could perhaps be a reflection of St. Augustine's observation that the innocence of childhood is characterized by physical weakness rather than spiritual purity.

Similarly, in the Catholic South, despite the new representation of childhood assumed by painters, there was no fundamental change in the moral view of childhood. While the orthodox theory of Original Sin went unchallenged, there was no possible change of attitude. The belief that a child was by nature originally corrupted was maintained, and only the adult could attain goodness. Maturity was identified with virtue; goodness thus resulted from conscience, not impulse; children were not considered moral. The rare appearance of suffering children in such writers as Dante, or Shakespeare, was atypical.

Children were, symbolically speaking, beside the point. It was no more possible to conceive of a child as hero than of a peasant in the same role.®

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®Ibid., p. 23.
The sixteenth century saw the weakening of the principle of authority. The recovery of ancient classical texts, explorations of navigators, the new astronomy and physics, the general increase of inventions, the Protestant Reformation, and the rise of vernacular literature all combined to destroy the faith in knowledge already acquired, that is, the concept that only knowledge already acquired was worth knowing. Skepticism marked the prevalent philosophical outlook of this century, and branched out into two main trends of thought. In one, expression of skepticism suggested that traditional beliefs about morals and customs be open to criticism or even rejection. Another group who purported this philosophical skepticism directed it towards free thought in scientific matters. This direction, however, was not limited to scientific investigation, but also included religion and theology. Skepticism as an agency of religion was found in the work of Agrippa von Nettesheim and reappeared in such seventeenth-century writers as Pascal and Huet of Avranches.

Rabelais and Montaigne, among others, point to the evil effects of authoritarianism. According to these men as well as to most of the world at that time, the word "authority"--as in the Middle Ages--usually referred to tradition. There were several ways to interpret tradition as consideration of its meaning to the Church and to some Protestant sects illustrates. For the Church, the word tradition involved a return to the Covenant of Abraham and included its being passed on to Moses, the High Priests down to St. Peter, and on through the ages to the Popes. On the other hand to some Protestant sects,
tradition was not as important as Scripture itself and to others, special revelation was considered more important than tradition. Another instance where tradition was surpassed was among the mystics. Because of the very essence of the mystic who relies upon direct (self) intuition, there is no authority outside itself. As far as religious information is concerned, the mystic is anti-authoritarian.

In Agrippa's book De incertitudine et vanitate omnium scientiarum et artium which appeared in 1531, the author states that his purpose in writing the book is to demonstrate that every science and art studied conflicted with the word of God and led men towards heresy. He proclaims, as many before and after him, that learning—the acquiring of knowledge—is detrimental to man. The man of no learning may be more virtuous than the learned man. Therefore, knowledge which comes from the heart is good, while that which is learned drives out innocence. Such arguments led to the considerations that animals know good and evil without the power of reason. Some writers have gone further in praise of the animal who reasons better than man, according to them. In general, these men believed that instinct was superior to intellect. However, this concept was not applied to children until later years.

Let us consider some of Montaigne's ideas on the child as expressed in his essays. There he states that the child should not be allowed to declare his innate wisdom to surpass adults; he must receive instruction; and be allowed to develop his innate personality.

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10Boas, Childhood, p. 23.
Montaigne further recognizes that the child has a congenital character, but one which must be controlled. The pupil should question his tutor and not accept information given without question.

In his essay on the education of children, Montaigne declares that the child should be made to think and understand his lessons:

> Qu'il ne lui demande pas seulement compte des mots de sa leçon, mais du sens et de la substance, et qu'il juge du profit qu'il aura fait non par le témoignage de sa mémoire, mais de sa vie. Que ce qu'il viendra d'apprendre, il le lui fasse mettre en cent visages et accommoder à autant de divers sujets, pour voir s'il l'a encore bien pris et bien fait sien, ...\(^1\)

Montaigne realized that learning techniques were often harmful to the child in that he was made to memorize only, and throughout this essay, he provided for the improvement of the child's learning. It is the child's best interest with which he is concerned. He was even opposed to the use of violence in instructing the young. Yet, Montaigne's cause for the better treatment of children was possibly ineffectual to a large degree as the mistreatment of the young continued in many schools for years.

It was not until 1762\(^2\) with the publication of Rousseau's *Emile* that a more radical appraisal of childhood into European thought was introduced. Rousseau, much influenced by Montaigne, carried further some of the latter's ideas on the child, notably that he be


\(^{2}\)Boas, *Childhood*, p. 29.
allowed to develop his innate personality and that he be treated in a more kindly fashion.

Some of the most influential ideas expressed by Rousseau with regard to the child were related to his education. Rousseau stressed that extreme care must be given to the education of the innocent, since all is good when it leaves the creator but it is in his association with men that everything degenerates. Thus, the teacher must realize the responsibility that is his when he assumes the teaching of a child. The child needs education to overcome the weakness and helplessness which accompany him at birth and he needs to be taught the difference between right and wrong for he is not born with the power to distinguish either. Rather than stifle the child through pedagogic methods, the child can best be taught the difference between right and wrong by common sense explanations and examples taken directly from nature.

Rousseau provides detailed guidance for caring for and training the child. From infancy, the child must be free and not bound in tight wrappings—the limbs free to move. The basic idea of giving the child freedom is continued in subsequent rules so that he may do more for himself and request less of others.

Rousseau's main point of attack on education—as he conceived it to be conducted at the time—is its treatment of the child as if he were an adult. Traditionally, the nature of the child as unique was seldom considered. Consequently, the child was treated as a small adult and trained to lose his childish manners, absorbing the rational perfection of adulthood. Rousseau believed that to use reason with a
child as if he were a man is wrong because it contradicts the normal order of childhood development before manhood. Forcing early manhood upon a child through reason was to that scholar an inversion of a natural order of events which would produce a manhood that was immature. He compares it to a fruit that is not ripe and flavorless, one which will rot before it is seasoned.

This reaction against the use of reason with children is in direct opposition to the ideas of the eighteenth-century philosopher John Locke who stated his views in his work *Thoughts Concerning Education*. Against such philosophies of the rationalist, perfectionist, materialist of the eighteenth century, Rousseau (and Blake and Coleridge) were to react. Rousseau and the later Romantics were opposed to the coldness of abstract reasoning and preferred the warmth of the human feeling, and thus the "cult of sensibility" with which Rousseau is associated arose. As the eighteenth century drew closer to its end, it was discovered that the true nature of man was not his reason but his instincts, emotions, and sensibilities.

The sentimental appeal that men regard children and childhood with love was to be echoed throughout Romantic literature. One has only to consider the works of such writers as Blake, Wordsworth, Lamb, Southey, and Coleridge among others to note the continuance of this attitude toward childhood initiated by Rousseau. Among his more immediate followers, Bernadin de Saint-Pierre and Pestalozzi enjoyed some popularity and influenced their contemporaries. In Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's work *Paul et Virginie* the prolongation of childhood
into maturity is achieved under the direction of Nature. The two main characters are of high moral standing and represent the child who believes in and practices charity and the simple life. Yet, even in this story where the children live as Brother and Sister, it is the influence of Nature and not their innate goodness that accounts for the happiness they achieve.

Pestalozzi, on the other hand, greatly influenced by Rousseau, believes in man's dual nature: the animal and the human, the animal being the sensory and the human the spiritual. He maintains that the spiritual nature must be developed with the subordination of the sensory to the former.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the poets who wrote about children upheld childhood innocence—as everyone then believed in it without precise definition. In Racine's Athalie, the intimacy between God and child is evident. The character, Joas, a nine-year-old, is in the play an example of the extraordinary child. He is characterized by all innocence and innate wisdom. As we have noted, seventeenth-century France was not enthusiastic about childhood, but by the time of Rousseau, the idea that during childhood man was more "natural" than at maturity, prevailed. Rousseau's theories in education helped to focus attention on the child as an abused victim of the adult world.

13"The child in his opinion requires training, just as everyone does. But there are certain highly desirable traits of childhood which are innate." Boas, Childhood, p. 36.
In general, before Rousseau and the later Romantics, interest in the child was limited. Child characters appearing in this earlier literature conveyed the lack of importance they held in actual life and in books they emerged as little more than symbolic figures.

The appearance of the child as an important theme in English literature coincided with the change in sensibility and thought which came at the nineteenth century. The securities of the preceding age dissolved in the era of the Industrial Revolution in both England and France, and there arose social, political and intellectual problems of which the child—as men—was eventually the victim.

The Industrial Revolution was to affect the life of people both economically and culturally. While there is no definite pattern for the change or revolution that followed there were some disruptions of social patterns: A shift of the population from rural to urban communities; production was based on the corporate enterprise and less on the family or tribe; there was a rise of new social and occupational classes. These and other interrelated changes combined to produce a social as well as industrial revolution.

One of the changes which occurred during this upheaval was the increase in the size of the working class, which was now expanded to include large numbers of women and children. But it is the child who is seen particularly abused:

Domestic industry found work for children almost as soon as they could crawl and the early textile factories were
taking batches of pauper children from the age of five upwards.\textsuperscript{14}

It was not strange for men, women, and children to work from twelve to sixteen hours a day or night in continuous shifts. One doubts that the productivity of a child working fifteen to sixteen hours in the least desirable working conditions could have been more beneficial than reduced working hours in more humane conditions.

The effects of industry upon the people reached even further into their lives making changes upon their attitudes towards art. The society which was produced by the new industrial complex was often unconcerned with art. The later nineteenth-century artist found his reading public diminishing. That is to say, the proportion of the literate public was smaller.\textsuperscript{15} Nonetheless, the changing cultural attitudes which arose during this period of industrial development did not hinder the importance of the novel.

Amidst the conflicts--intellectual, social, emotional--that arose with the rapid development of this industrial society, the child


\textsuperscript{15}"The actual contraction of his audience may be debated--it is after all difficult to be precisely statistical about these things--but the proportion of the literate public to whom the serious artist could expect to address himself certainly diminished. For even if there were at the end of the century as many readers responsive to the best creative work as at the beginning, there was a new literate public who were most certainly not. A new mass literature supplied the demands of uninformed literacy; and the relative influence of the mature creative voice was proportionally diminished." (Peter Coveney, Poor Monkey: The Child in Literature [London: Richard Clay and Company, 1957], p. x)
was sought after as an appealing literary theme because he was an example of the artists' dissatisfaction with the society which was emerging. Through the symbol of the child, the artist could portray his awareness of human innocence being crushed by the pressures of social experience.\textsuperscript{16}

Romanticism with its emphasis on the individual and its love for the yet unformed had stimulated interest in children and had led to the inclusion of the child in literature, where the new and unexplored field he offered aroused the immediate attention of many great novelists. This development had reached its highest point in nineteenth-century England and France . . .\textsuperscript{17}

Among the many writers who included the theme of childhood in their writings, the three English writers—William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Charles Dickens—are outstanding. For Blake, the child was a symbol of innocence. Blake, let us recall, continues a minor tradition of interest in the child which had begun in eighteenth-century verse about children. Such writers as Bruce, Lovibond, Gray, Scott, Beattie, and Cowper initiated the path that Blake and Wordsworth were to follow.\textsuperscript{18}

In Blake's \textit{Songs of Innocence} there is an affirmation of human life in children and the children are not presented as weak or regretful. There is intensity of experience rather than a static presentation of children in the \textit{Songs}. He writes of the joy of the

\textsuperscript{16}Coveney, \textit{Poor Monkey}, p. xi.

\textsuperscript{17}Cobb, "Children in Galdós," p. 36.

\textsuperscript{18}Coveney, \textit{Poor Monkey}, p. 15.
child in nature amidst a pastoral setting. The setting is different in the *Songs of Experience*, now an urban one. Only half of these poems deal with children (who are still innocent). He writes of the inhumanity of society and its effects upon the innocent children, exposed to the corruption of man and the agents of society. In both works of Blake cited, the child is presented as innocent and open to education that he receives from his contact with life and men. The latter, of course, serve to corrupt the child, whose view of life is distorted by strict religious codes often enforced under the indifference of the Church.

Another central work of the nineteenth century is Wordsworth's ode on *Intimations of Immortality from recollections of Early Childhood*. In the ode, the poet laments the loss of his own childhood's spontaneity and enthusiasms with regard to Nature. This sense of loss and regret is repeated throughout the work. Outstanding is the importance he places upon childhood which is by nature immoral and spontaneous. Wordsworth is not original in this concept of the immortality of childhood but draws upon the Platonic myth for poetic purposes. Up until the ode, he followed the "Hartleian concept of the child as a *tabula rasa*, impressed, and only impressed by the informing, 'intertwining' influences of Nature."\(^1^9\) Wordsworth does not consider virtue innate in the same manner prescribed by Rousseau.

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Let us recall that Rousseau believed that the child had an innate sense of virtue. In Wordsworth's thought, virtue in general is apart from human nature.

While our study of Wordsworth will not attempt to cover the intricate changes in style and attitude toward childhood as expressed in his different works, we will concentrate in a general way upon the consistent philosophy which is most apparent. It has been noted that Wordsworth was to influence the nineteenth century in a spiritual manner. He wrote of the urban ill effects produced by the Industrial Revolution and the contrast between town and country. He called upon man to recognize that he needed to maintain a close relationship with nature to aid him against the crushing dehumanizing effects of an industrialized society.

His assertion for the power of the imaginative life, and especially the imaginative life of the child, became a potent romantic influence.\(^\text{20}\)

It was his portrayal of the powers of the child— that of social and personal regeneration— that must have led George Eliot to quote from Wordsworth in her *Silas Marner*, a novel in which a pure and innocent little girl softens the heart of an adult, the miserly Silas Marner, and reforms him.

Another important writer of the nineteenth century in England who also wrote of children was Charles Dickens. Although childhood was not his major theme, it is the one for which he is best

\(^{20}\text{Coveney, Image of Childhood, p. 83.}\)
remembered. In his novels, as in those of other writers of the century, there was no set pattern binding the child theme, as within a writer's works there was evidence of an inconsistency towards his treatment of children. Thus, we find that in Dickens' works there are examples of the child as a symbol of growth and development on some occasions, and on others a symbol of retreat into personal regression and self-pity.

The interest in childhood shown by Dickens carries with it the features of the romantic sensibility— that is, an increased sense of self-awareness, of individual personality, social protest, and social commentary as well as a symbol of innocence and imagination.

The condition of children in society influenced the literature of the child from the 1830's. During the Romantic period, the innocence and frailty of the child was stressed. In Victorian England, the image of the victimized child was prevalent. These attitudes were reflected not only by Dickens but other writers as well. Dickens, however, may be regarded as the transition figure between the romantic attitude and that of the Victorians.

*Oliver Twist* is the first novel in English with the center of attention upon a child. Written in 1838 it was directed against the

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21 In the same decade as *Oliver Twist* (1838), Marryat wrote *Peter Simple* (1834); and in the same decade as *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) and *Dombey and Son* (1848), we have Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong* (1840), Charlotte Yonge's *Abbeychurch* (1844), and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). These novelists of the middle century echoed Dickens' own intense concern with English childhood. (Coveney, *Image of Childhood*, p. 92.)

inhumane work laws and the devastatingly harsh working conditions imposed upon the children. The child Oliver, a pauper, is the main character upon whom the misfortunes of this existence are cast. He is lonely, helpless, and a victim of his society. Because of his miserable condition, he is subjected to the cruelty and corruption of the evil world of Fagin and Sikes. There is no reference to any joys in the tale of Oliver's childhood. For creatures like Oliver, society holds nothing.

Dickens was to write about atrocities which occurred in a private boys' school in the novel Nicholas Nickleby, which was to carry very much the same theme of Oliver Twist. Now the workhouse has been replaced by the private school, Dotheboys Hall. He vehemently attacks the schoolmasters as vile, evil, and sordid men. Once again, the child is the helpless victim of the schoolmaster.

In general, the child in Dickens lives in a world of terror, fantasy, and death. The children are most often portrayed as frail, ill, oppressed, and even moribund. It is this last aspect--the dying child--which became one of the most popular images of the portrayal of children in his works. The impact of Paul Dombey's death in Dombey and Son and Little Nell's in The Old Curiosity Shop implied that adult society was conspiring against childhood. These were the innocent victims of adult murderers.

In order to best understand the image of the Victorian child, one must first consider the basic idea of the philosophy of this era.
During the Victorian era, a new national self-consciousness arose which took political form during the Crimean War. In the social life of the people, there was more of a balance seen between the industrial north and Midlands and the less progressive countryside. Forces as the railway system, the telegraph and postal service brought the country—provincial England—closer to the cities. While there was progress, the Victorians criticized the weakness of industrialization. They felt that geology and biology challenged their belief in themselves and so they continued to accept the views of religion handed down to them from the past. They upheld the same ideal of conduct which was previously known to them: their duty was to accept standards in institutional as well as in private life. The emphasis was on a high code of morality, on religion, and a puritanical conduct of behavior.

The image of the Victorian child in literature, which is seen with Dickens and after him, is one in which the child is no longer allowed to grow up and develop into adulthood. Children die, as the Victorians have taken the romantic image of the child and denied it power or resilience. It is now the image of innocence that dies. The child, unable to grow up, is left to die rather than to face the corruption of life. This attitude is seen in The Old Curiosity Shop and Dombey and Son; and in other works such as East Lynne (Mrs. Henry Wood) in which William Carlyle dies; in The Mighty Atom (Marie Corelli) in which Lionel Valliscourt dies, a victim of his father and of the

atheism of his education. The child is saved in his death to the promise of a life with God. These are only a few of the examples of literary children who were made to die rather than face the corruption of life on earth.

For these Romantic and Victorian novelists and writers—mainly Blake, Wordsworth, and Dickens—the child was an active symbol, an expression of human potency in the face of human experience. Innocence for them was valuable for what it might become if it could successfully combat the power of corrupting experience. 24 Coveney states that the symbol of the child endows the works of these three writers with a sense of life. He points out that although writing of the child, the interest was continuously adult; children function within their total response to adult experience so that in talking of the child, the authors were talking about life. 25

Later decades show the cult of the child to be wholly different. Writers began to draw upon childhood because it created an atmosphere of nostalgia which separated them from the responsibilities of adult life. The child thus became a means of escape from the pressures of adult adjustment, a way to regress to the irresponsibilities of youth. The aim of the Romantics was to integrate the human personality by surmounting adult insensitivity to childhood. By the end of the century, the insensitivity is reversed: the acute feelings for

24Coveney, Poor Monkey, p. 148.
25Coveney, Poor Monkey, p. 192.
childhood do not become integrated with a truly adult response to and appreciation of the significance of human experience as a whole.

Included in this literature of escape through childhood are such writers as Lewis Carroll and James Barrie. In Carroll's most famous work *Alice in Wonderland*, the innocent Alice is seeking the "Garden" and her quest becomes an apparent commentary upon Victorian society. Those who consider the work as nostalgic regret for the happiness found only in childhood readily agree that the work considered as a whole is not so simply presented. It is a complex affirmation of the joys of childhood quite unlike the situation presented in *Peter Pan* of Sir James Barrie. With Peter Pan, Barrie presents the boy who does not want to grow up, who hates adults, and who even expresses regret for having been born. In both works, the apparent plot of the fantasy world and a fairy tale for children dissolves into the real plot of serious consequences expressed through child characters.

The child as a literary topic was not only popular in nineteenth-century England, but also in France where while there had been some change in attitudes toward childhood because of Montaigne's and Rousseau's writings, a strict parental formality ruled the French family. One recalls the fear of parents expressed by Chateaubriand in "Le Château de Combourg" from *Mémoires d'Otre-Tombe*. But this strict authority was to change after the revolution of 1789 so that during the nineteenth century, the French customs regarding childhood changed for the better treatment of the child. Victor Hugo expressed such interest in his poetry, especially the one written in memory
of his daughter and the presentation of an unhappy child, Cosette in
Les Miserables. Alphonse de Lamartine, Anatole France, and others
expressed similar interests in children. In general, such works
praise the child for his innocence or present it as victim; quite
similar to the child characters of English literature of the period.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the child
is presented as not exclusively good but attracted to evil as well.
This trend was present in the literature of nineteenth-century England
and America. An example of the latter would be Huck Finn. Huck
chooses evil in the person of the Duke and Dauphin over the Widow
Douglas, and because of his selection he assumes the stance of
prisoner rather than comrade. Along this same trend, we find that
Robert Louis Stevenson includes a similar situation in David Balfour
and Treasure Island through the relationships of Jim Hawkins and Long
John Silver, David Balfour and Alan Breck Stewart. The boys are drawn
to the pirate and the outlaw, both marginal figures of society. Yet,
eventually the boys choose good over evil.

While Henry James presents his central characters often as
children, and innocent ones, he is best remembered for the corrupted
Miles and Flora of The Turn of the Screw. In both What Masie Knew
and The Awkward Age he deals with childhood and adolescence in a
serious way--from an adult viewpoint--discussing personal interests
and methods as an artist.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, therefore, the romantic
assertion of child innocence was rejected in favor of scientific
investigation of child consciousness and actual behavior. This would
eventually lead to more psychological approaches in the twentieth century, when one must take into account the influence of Freud and his analysis in the re-evaluation of the child.

It is not easy to define the precise relationship between psychoanalysis and modern literature, but there can be no doubt that Freud's theories concerning human personality and motive, and especially, his emphasis on the importance of the child's consciousness in the formation of adult personality, created an intellectual climate within which many authors have, if not always consciously, developed.26

It is difficult to assign particular reasons for an author's thematic choice— one must recognize the importance of both subjective and social factors which must be considered and the vast scope such factors encompass. Yet, the frequency with which the theme of childhood appears in modern literature does suggest the presence of common external factors which probably determine the authors' thematic choice.

A general view of childhood in the twentieth century indicates that we no longer are presented with the "myth" of the innocent child alone. The theme has broadened and includes to a greater degree a more accurate and less idealized picture. The child becomes thus a complex figure through which the character searches for self in order to locate the origin of his personality traits as Martha Wolfenstein states:

Children as they appear in art, literature, drama, or films embody a complex mixture of fantasy and reality.

26Coveney, Poor Monkey, p. xiii.
They represent memories and dreams of adults about their own lost childhood, as well as feelings about those mysterious beings, their own children.

Earthly children similarly assume a variety of guises as they appear in literature and art. The ways in which they are portrayed express a complex of feelings about children prevailing in a given culture at a given time: the legend of the childhood one had or should have had, the image of the ideal child or of the demonic child, models and hazards for relations between adults and children.\textsuperscript{27}

The image of the child from innocence to experience, or evil, is exemplified in such works as Richard Hughes's \textit{The Innocent Voyage} and William Golding's \textit{The Lord of the Flies}. In both of these works, it is not a single child but a group of them ranging in age from the quite young to the adolescent who for different reasons resort to evil. In Hughes's book, the children are on a pirates' ship and the feminine figures assume the leading roles: Margaret, fourteen years old, becomes the whore; Emily kills the captain, stabbing him repeatedly. She is freed from her crime while the pirates are accused and blamed for the murder. Once the trial is over, she resumes her former life. In Golding's book, the characters—all male—are marooned on an island after an atomic explosion. These innocent children, like those of the Hughes's novel, regress to an evil state from which they have been prevented by society—quite a reversal from Rousseau's idea of original innocence. They kill, rob, beat each

other and have displayed total aggressive evil by the end of their ordeal. In the moment of crisis, children succumb to base instincts and are as much to be feared as any adult.

The same instinctive attraction toward evil appears through the character of Rhoda Penmark, the child protagonist of William March's *The Bad Seed*. She is skilled and knowledgeable as to the manner in which the innocent child is supposed to act—and assumes the role almost to the point of being too perfect and, to some adults, not normal. The questions posed in the book, whether or not one can inherit criminal traits and does a mother have the right to kill her own child, are over-shadowed by this innocent monster—Rhoda Penmark.

Another version of the innocent child-adolescent appears in the creation of the seductress Lolita in the novel *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov. Through the character of this nymphet who seduces a middle-aged professor from Europe, Nabokov parodies the myths of sentimentality linked to the image of the innocent child seduced by decadent middle age. Nabokov puts his heroine in the tradition of the child aggressor as Faulkner did with Judith in *Absalom, Absalom*—where the child is no longer the victim, but the aggressor.

Through such works as those cited by Hughes, Golding, March, Nabokov, and Faulkner, one grasps an awareness that our society no longer conspires against the child as our ancestors contended—but has produced a conspirator against itself.\(^{28}\) J. D. Salinger's

The Catcher in the Rye is in this tradition. Here the adolescents have acquired the habits of their elders: they smoke, curse, live or try to live fast and participate in sexual activities. Salinger does not seem to purport that the child is innately good or evil, but that this is what has been produced by the society in which we live.

Not all child characters of twentieth-century literature are thus presented. One has only to recall the sensitive portrayal in Carson McCullers' Member of the Wedding: the younger sister who is going through the awkward age of adolescence who feels she is no longer a child, yet not quite an adult.

To assess the whole twentieth century as one in which the child is presented as a demonic figure would be inaccurate. It would preclude his portrayal still as the innocent child—as capable of both good and evil.

Child in Spanish Literature

Since we will study in depth the theme of childhood in one twentieth-century novelist of Spain, we will include a brief survey of the child as theme in Spanish letters.

There were brief references to children as far back as the epic Poema de mio Cid in which a little nine-year-old child speaks bravely to the Cid of the King's order. She is presented as the spokesman for the people who were afraid to speak up and there is no further development of her character. The portrayal of the Cid's daughters provides a more complete picture of him as a family man.
rather than any commentary upon childhood itself. There were children in works to follow—such as Amadís de Gaula—in which Amadís, at twelve falls in love with a young princess of ten; some theatrical pieces including children, especially the "pasos," and the very famous "Las aceitunas" includes the child daughter of the couple who plans how to spend their money before their crop has even grown. The most outstanding child character to be developed was the "pícaro" with the publication of the first picaresque work, Lazarillo de Tormes. But with the advent of the "pícaro," the child was not important as such, for he was merely regarded as a small adult. The child Lazarillo must use his wits to endure and from his brief initiation into the hardships life will offer, he imitates the gimmicks, dishonesty, and mannerisms of his masters. He is to some extent the mouthpiece for the author's social criticism. Through the character of Pablos in La vida del Buscón, Quevedo satirized the hardships imposed upon the child at school going from "amo to amo." The bitterness life offered is revealed through the adventures of the child. His actual role was unimportant in Spanish literature, perhaps reflecting the idea of strict authority of the Father in Spanish society. But the efforts of people such as Luis Vives changed some ideas in education and spurred interest in child development. Later centuries were to reveal this interest. Perhaps the greatest transformation in Spanish family life, as elsewhere, occurred during the nineteenth century when the figure of the child became more important. Because there was no industrial revolution as in England and France, many old institutions remained. But with the unification of the country against the forces of
Napoleon, class privileges were reduced. After the end of the Carlist Wars, the social classes were less distinguishable and a series of social reforms were established. An emphasis upon education and the reorganization of public instruction was to benefit the child. He gained prominence as he held interest for the psychologists, artists and writers. During this period children appeared in the works of the poets, "costumbristas," and novelists. Autobiographically, childhood inspires Juan Valera's Noticia autobiográfica, children appear in Pedro Antonio de Alarcón's Historia de mis libros and Diario de un testigo de la guerra de Africa; in Galdós who was interested in education and environmental influences, and in Clarín, La Regenta, in Ana's childhood; or from the twentieth century, intellectually, in Unamuno's Recuerdos de niñez y mocedad, and Azorín's Confesiones de un pequeño filósofo. José María de Pereda's Sotileza opens by presenting six underprivileged children, all under ten years of age, but this portrayal and that of the protagonist serve to amplify the author's regional interest almost exclusively.

A frequent treatment of the child in this century appears in the works of Benito Pérez Galdós. As seen in the study of the theme by Edna Cobb:

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29 For a discussion of Sotileza, see Sherman Eoff's The Modern Spanish Novel, in which he states: "Pereda . . . proposes to recreate scenes, people, and customs of the fishing town of Santander that he had known as a boy. He therefore sets about his task of reviewing 'the good old days' by visualizing a collective picture at the outset and centering his attention on a group of children." (Sherman Eoff, The Modern Spanish Novel [New York: University Press, 1961], p. 41.)
Galdós considered the child from a sociological standpoint which felt concern for his happiness and welfare and recognized society's obligation to him both as to health and education; his fondness for and interest in children as individuals accounted for the literary creation of personalities which are natural and life-like; and his scientific attitude toward children's behavior led to the penetrating psychological studies which conform closely to modern findings in that field.\(^\text{30}\)

Most of the study of children in Galdós' works deals with children who live in the city, where they are victims of society and exposed to evil and injustice too early. While Galdós often portrays a type of pícaro in the character of Mariano in La desheredada, unlike his literary predecessors he strives to reveal the development by analysis of the interior workings of the child. Through this character, Galdós presents an accurate psychological case study, displaying an understanding of the importance of hereditary and environmental conditions upon child behavior far ahead of the advancements made in the field of child psychology at his time.

His interest in children appears in his works primarily from the sociological point of view. This coupled with a personal interest and his scientific attitude towards human behavior, provided the basis for the insights and conclusions he was able to derive from these characters.

Galdós called attention to many problems facing Spain during his life, including child delinquency, education for the young, poor schools, the plight of the underprivileged. Galdós viewed the future

\(^{30}\)Cobb, "Children in Galdós," pp. 399-400.
of children as that of the country. Therefore, child characters appear in his novels mainly because of their sociological interest rather than because of their literary value. As such, they are not symbolic figures—but true types taken from life as he saw it either in Madrid or, less frequently, in provincial towns.

Among the leading writers of the Generation of 1898, only Unamuno shows decisive interest in childhood, or rather in adolescents. Both Paz en la guerra and Abel Sánchez exemplify two different approaches to the theme. In Paz en la guerra, Pachito Zabalbide recalls the struggles of faith and doubt of the young Unamuno. Still another adolescent, Ignacio Iturriondo functions within a more novelistic-historical framework. In Abel Sánchez, the tortured portrayal of envy by a child seems a veritable forerunner of Matute's Fiesta al noroeste.

Azorín in the person of the adolescent Antonio Azorín, in several of his novels, creates an alter-ego: the adolescent being taught by the teacher. Pío Baroja presents the child as hero in Zalacaín el aventurero to celebrate the Basque race. In El árbol de la ciencia, Andrés Hurtado is a young man—still a child—who is in search of himself. With the character of Fernando Osorio in Camino de perfección, Baroja has selected a different way of expressing the same theme. In the work by Antonio Machado, Juan de Mairena, sentencias, donaires, apuntes y recuerdos de un profesor apócrifo, children are secondary. Sonata de primavera by Ramón del Valle Inclán presents the case of a child attracted to evil. The child's presence is crucial to
the development of Rosario's character: her little sister falls to her death because of her negligence, as Rosario was thinking of her feelings for the Marqués.

While in the works of the Generation of 1898 there are some instances of children as protagonists—their attention being paid primarily toward adolescents—it is only with the post Civil War writers that a consistent use of children as central figures comes about. Between the Generation of 1898 and those three novelistic generations after the Civil War, there has been scant presence of children in Spanish literature. Within the Generation of 1927, primarily a poetic one, children appear in the plays and poetry of Federico García Lorca and also in Marinero en tierra and Sobre los ángeles by Rafael Alberti. We shall now turn to the post Civil War novelists.

This latter group of writers returns to a long literary tradition devoted to child characters. As a dominant theme among these authors, there is a noticeable link between historical fact and biographical circumstance, as we have mentioned already in the introduction. In the case of Matute, some critics have cited the presence of autobiographical elements principally in En esta tierra (1955) and in Primera memoria (1960). As a whole, the writers of Matute's literary generation show an interest in the social problems of their country and in the aftermath of war, and this interest includes childhood as a topic. This same social consciousness, however, in Matute, is projected into a larger concern about man and his existence.
CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD IN THE POST SPANISH CIVIL WAR NOVEL

Child in the Post Spanish Civil War Novel

Let us now investigate some of the contemporaries of Matute who share her interest in the theme of childhood. Miguel Delibes, while chronologically not a member of Matute's literary generation—he belongs to the "generación de la guerra" as Castellet calls it—has also dealt with this topic, mostly as it appears in the relations between parents and children, nature, love and adolescence. Because he is a post war novelist, he will be considered with the group which comes later historically and literarily.

The most representative work of Delibes, *El camino* (1950) shows the conflict of an adolescent who has to abandon the country, where he has spent his childhood, for the city, where he will be

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¹The "generación de la guerra" did not try to portray children per se, while the "generación del medio siglo" established an obvious nexus (very close in time) between the shattered childhoods of the authors and their specific novelistic production. In the novelists of "la España peregrina," we find several ways of dealing with childhood: Max Aub preferred either the realm of literary memory or direct descriptions of his newly adopted country; Francisco Ayala took a more intellectual term. Only Ramón Sender pays specific attention to childhood. As early as 1942 Sender published the first novel of Crónica del Alba. Beyond the desperation of exile, beyond autobiographical disappointment, this novel represents an exclusive concern with the theme of childhood.
educated. His parents' desire for a better life for their son is echoed in the mother's words as she explains that while they are poor, they want him to make something of himself: "Puedes ser algo grande, algo muy grande en la vida." Thus, Daniel, the boy, represents a hope for improvement in the eyes of his parents, a new generation which will be blessed with the opportunities of which they were deprived. Yet Daniel prefers to live in the country and to take up his father's trade as chessemaker. There is a conflict of values here as the novel narrates the adventures of a typical country boy who denounces progress to preserve the simple life he finds more appealing. It shows Daniel's skepticism about growing up and the sadness he feels upon realizing he will not pursue the "camino" destined for him by God, which the child considers to be that of an uneducated laborer.

Delibes has portrayed the pains of growing up coupled with the added problems of one who grows up poor and must pursue his education to better himself. The conflict of this boy who hesitates to accept readily the opportunity for self-improvement could be considered as momentary nostalgia to preserve that which is familiar—his youthful environment. Once Daniel has left home, he will automatically leave behind his youth.

Because of the reluctance of the boy to leave home, one can see then that Daniel in this novel serves as a meeting point between a

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totally undefined future--through a vague undesirable "camino" to him--and a totally defined autobiography technically seen through the device of retrospective vision. At this crucial juncture in Daniel's life, and constituting the bulk of the novel as well, lies a total consideration of past events. This is decidedly a novel in which the past seems more important than the future. The use of a child as protagonist in the novel is indeed limited as it serves to show an adolescent's turning point in life. But merit lies in the portrayal of childhood in peaceful rural terms, almost idyllic, as opposed to an uncertain future. Delibes has used the child to show a view of rural Spain, and to raise the question of his future destiny. In short, Daniel's memories are just as important as his unknown destiny.

Another portrayal of childhood in Matute's literary generation is found in both novels of Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio: Industrias y andanzas de Alfanhuf (1951) and El Jarama (1956). The first novel concerns the adventures of a child hero, and the work itself is a combination of poetic and picaresque narration. Alfanhuf, a child, lives in a world of fantasy where magic is possible. But he returns to reality after his master's house is destroyed by crude peasants. It is a vision of childhood that is steeped in fantasy to be awakened to reality after a disaster. The second novel, El Jarama, deals with a

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3Aside from the novel we are now mentioning, we see that a frequent theme of the entire "generación de la guerra" is destiny. In addition to the title of this novel, the subtitle of the very important La colmena, is "caminos inciertos." What is more, an early novel of José Luis Castillo Puche is Sin Camino. In this specific instance a child has been used to illustrate the theme. (In Delibes.)
gathering of young people who spend the day together at a picnic and swim. The novel covers only some seventeen hours during which one learns these youths endure what they consider a meaningless existence. These young people who have not known war express both unfulfillment with life and unconcern for the past. Their world is monotonous, a waste of their time and potential vitality.

The novelists in this group were not to limit their writings to post war situations only. Jesús Fernández Santos, in *Cabeza rapada* (1959)—a collection of short stories including some about the Spanish Civil War—describes the bewilderment and curiosity of children caught in the evacuations of families fleeing bombardments around Madrid. Those children, forced to pursue the unknown, sense a change in their life pattern not in accord with the explanations of the adults. It is with great fear and excitement that they face the unexpected. The autobiographical note in this work is obvious, as Santos recalls his own war experience.

While in *Los bravos* (1954) the protagonist is essentially collective, we are shown a nameless boy stricken with an undisclosed illness. This child's situation while perhaps indicative of the pervading "abulia" in the nameless village, may also be seen from the professional point of view of the nameless doctor: that is, the presence of the sick child graphically illustrates the need of this village for a resident doctor. Thus, this sick boy is presented from the point of view of a wider context of adult concerns.

Juan Goytisolo—whose mother was killed during a bombing in the Civil War—showing more intense preference for childhood and
adolescence as a dominant theme than Miguel Delibes, Sánchez Ferlosio, or Jesús Fernández Santos, constantly refers to the relationship between the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War and the tragedy he sees in contemporary Spain. He stresses the effect of the war on Spanish society, particularly upon children and youth. In some novels of Goytisolo—such as Juegos de manos (1954), Duelo en el Paraíso (1955), and Fiestas (1958)—the adult world is subordinate to the child world.

Because of its direct relationship to our theme, let us first consider Duelo en el Paraíso. A critic of Goytisolo has noted that...

... some critics felt that it lacked the stature of the author's first work but Castellet saw in it imagination and technical excellence and felt it marked the debut of an authentically national literary production. Continuing to mix brutal realism, tenderness, and cruelty, Goytisolo portrays children who are so accustomed to tales of death that they burn, torture, and murder just as their parents had done during the Civil War. Yet the poetical note predominates more than in the first novel, ... and Eugenio de Nora considers this novel Goytisolo's most successful in terms of "poetic realism."4

The action of the novel relates the murder of an orphaned child, Abel, by a group of refugee children who live near him. Abel lived with his aunt, Doña Estanislaa, in her country estate, "El Paraíso." The novel opens with the child already murdered, his body found by a soldier--Martín Elósegui, a friend of the boy--and the novel itself consists of flashbacks as Martín recalls meeting Abel for the first time and initiates the events leading to the murder.

From this brief description of the plot, one can see that the theme of fratricide—the Cain and Abel theme—is a central one in this novel. And as we shall see, it is a basic one in the works of Matute. The obvious parallel to the killing of one's fellow countryman can be drawn in both writers. The motivating factor behind the murder of Abel in *Duelo en el Paraiso* is directly linked to the war, coming as a result of misunderstood propaganda broadcast on the radio. "Abel is trapped not so much by the young gangsters with whom he associated as by the tragedy of his generation and his time." These youngsters learn the tactics of war because it is all they have seen or heard about. They state their reasons for killing Abel:

... y él tenía dinero en la época en que nosotros pasábamos hambre ... además todos le echaban la culpa de lo sucedido con Pablo ...  

That is sufficient reason to execute the crime. The theme of fratricide in Goytisolo is heavily associated with the effects of the war. Contemporary society has no regard for laws and "murder and ruthlessness are the only keys to survival."  

The children of *Duelo en el Paraíso* may be classified into two categories: children who imitate the elders in performing the

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5Ibid., p. 13.


7Goytisolo, *Fiestas*, p. 13.
atrocities of war; and children who turn against other children, so that a child is ultimately victimized by his peers.

In this last category, friendship with a peer is best exemplified by the relationship between Pablo who befriends Abel, and later betrays him:

Estás acabado, Abel Sorzano, a-ca-ba-do, --Pablo, el canallita, se va con el dinero y el botín y te deja ahí plantado; se va el canallita Pablo, se va, se va.®

Abel, who had allied himself with the stronger and older Pablo, is now abandoned to the gang of assassins. Similar relationships in which a child befriends an older person are seen in other novels; for example, Antonio in La resaca and Pipo in Fiestas. In each case, a betrayal takes place. Antonio who steals money from the wife of the owner of the household in which he lives gives the money to Metralla who takes it and disappears, while in Fiestas, it is Pipo who betrays the older man, Gorilla, and the one-legged beggar who kills the young child, Pira. The betrayal is not always done by the young to the old, it may also be reversed as in the case of the beggar in Fiestas.

Pira, only ten years old, pursues her dream to join her Father who has been absent for ten years. Through her mixture of reality and fantasy, she imagines he lives in Italy in a castle. Her plan to win money at the lottery fails, and she accepts a lame beggar's offer to take her to Rome, but eventually he murders her.

®Goytisolo, Duelo en el Paraiso, p. 261.
Pira is doomed as her outward appearance exemplifies her preferences for the fantasy world:

La niña tenía alrededor de unos diez años e iba vestida de modo extravagante: su falda, muy corta, estaba adornada de un juego de volantes que, a la más mínima oscilación del cuerpo, cobraba la configuración de un miriñaque; su blusa, sin mangas, era de seda rameada; la cinta del pelo, de terciopelo verde; sus zapatos, de cuero blanco, esbozaban un asomo de tacón.⁹

Even the child's dress fits the dream world she prefers. Her dress, a disguise, is more suitable to dreams than to travels. Her death comes as an abrupt end to the attempt to fulfill her dream, shattered by her trust in another human being.

The child who steals money for his hero is the twelve-year-old boy nicknamed Pipo. He accompanies his hero, Gorilla, everywhere until one night, when the adolescent is drunk, he reveals Gorilla's crime to a policeman. The betrayal of the older friend forces the young boy to enter the unpleasant world of adulthood. Through a loss of youthful innocence, Pipo becomes a part of the reality he dislikes. Unlike Pira, he remains a part of the world. In short, both children are confronted with the harshness of reality, one succumbs physically, the other psychologically. These children as those of Duelo en el Paraiso have lost their innocence only to find sudden outlets in violent acts belonging to the adult world. For the children in Duelo en el Paraíso their attraction to the horrors of war are typical

⁹Goytisolo, Fiestas, p. 32.
of those recorded by the observations of Anna Freud as she studied the child and war:

People do not understand a child's nature if they think he will be saddened by the sight of destruction and aggression. A child's destructive and aggressive impulses must be controlled and they are trained early to curb these impulses. But contrary to what is expected, a child may not turn away in horror at war but he may turn towards the atrocities with primitive excitement.¹⁰

And we might add, he will imitate them.

There are also adolescents in Goytisolo's works. An outstanding example is his novel, Juegos de manos, in which the young people who experienced the war are unmanageable. Goytisolo portrays these characters as disillusioned, aimless, and rebellious. These young people are typically estranged, alienated, and unhappy but their vestigial sense of belonging brings them together in a peer group that plots to assassinate a minor political official.

Goytisolo, perhaps more than any other post war novelist, describes the effects of the war upon the people, especially the children and the young. This is obvious in the chasm that separates the generations: the parents who lost and lied and the children who accuse and judge. A general view of his presentation of childhood and youth strongly suggests their role as victims or victimizers whether they imitate the horror tactics to which they are exposed—as in Duelo en el Paraíso—or if they victimize society itself, as in

Juegos de manos. The fact that they are denied a normal childhood and growing up process is an indication of their victimization.

Matute's treatment of the theme of childhood differs from that of her colleagues. As opposed to the cruel disillusion of Juan Goytisolo's characters and the nostalgia of Daniel el Mochuelo in Delibes' El camino, we are given in Matute a world of individuals portrayed within infinite nuances and poetic relationships.

Matute apparently avoids that social criticism which underlies such novels as La colmena, Los bravos, and Juegos de manos. Rather than offering objective testimony of Franco's Spain, Matute's vision points rather in an aesthetic direction. It is in this aesthetic realm where childhood functions as theme. Thus, Matute's vision is less historical than it is metaphysical. It is now time to turn to this vision as it appears in the novels themselves.

Child in the Major Fiction of Ana María Matute

For this study, Matute's two most important novels—Fiesta al noroeste (1953) and Primera memoria (1959)—have been selected. Each of these novels touches on the sordidness of childhood. The first, Fiesta al noroeste, a more universal novel, gives us a portrait of the harshness of childhood in a rural setting. The second, Primera memoria, shows the link between childhood and the Civil War. From her short stories, we have selected Los niños tontos (1956) an example of the portrayal of childhood in a new dimension of reality where it is coupled with fantasy. The child cannot escape from harsh reality and he finds no consolation in fantasy, but death. This diverse selection
of her works, the most representative of her portrayal of childhood, will display the realms and aesthetic organization associated with our theme. First, we will treat *Fiesta al noroeste*. The central passages of this novel written from the point of view of retrospective vision serve to portray the "disorder and early sorrow" of Juan Medinao, cacique of a rural Spanish region. Presented within a framework of spurious religion, the central events of childhood will be examined. Next, some basic conclusions about the organization of the theme as it appears in the novel—as the Cain and Abel theme; the essential similarity of the adult and child world; precocious aptness for evil; lack of communication, isolation, and solitude—will be established. Our aim will be to present a study of childhood in *Fiesta al noroeste* and illustrate that it is a novel about both childhood and the human condition in general.

Secondly, *Primera memoria*, the first volume of Matute's trilogy, *Los mercaderes*, will be examined. This novel was chosen because it is considered by the critics as Matute's masterpiece and the subsequent novels of the trilogy—*Los soldados lloran de noche* and *La trampa*—only treat childhood in a fragmentary manner: as the children of *Primera memoria* are adults in the second and third parts of the trilogy. In addition, the author herself has stated that each novel has an independent plot structure.

The study of the theme of childhood in *Primera memoria* will concentrate primarily on Matia within the framework of accompanying incarcerating factors: such as a domineering virago grandmother, the
geography of the locale, and the war. The other tortured children—Borja, Lauro, and Manuel—will also be considered.

Although our study will basically deal with the three works mentioned, we will also briefly include Pequeño teatro (1954) written between 1944-1945 and Los Abel (1948). These novels are not ranked among her major ones but will be considered in order to better present a total picture of the theme of childhood in the fiction of Matute.

Because the two novels will be taken in the order of writing rather than of publication, we will begin with Pequeño teatro. This novel deals with what Sobejano calls "... un cuento entre fabuloso y folletinesco ..."14

The theme of childhood in Pequeño teatro is linked to the disillusionment which comes to two adolescents Ilé Eroriak and Zazu Devar from their association with Marco a stranger in the village. Ilé finds friendship and promises to flee from Oiquixa (the small fishing village) in Marco; Zazu finds love and then despair which leads to suicide. Our plan of study of the theme in this novel is to take

11Ana María Matute, Pequeño teatro (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1954). Subsequent references will be indicated by page only.


13Ana María Matute, Los Abel (2d ed.; Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1948). Subsequent references will be indicated by page only.

each adolescent individually seeing in the youth of each one an evolution towards despair.

Ilé Eroriak

Ilé Eroriak whose name means "Pelos Caídos" is described as having hair that is disheveled like the mane of a horse but with blue eyes, "... como mar que duerme" (10). His outward appearance conveys a note of disorder which is reflected in his behavior. He was slow in learning to talk; many people considered him stupid. Few people spoke with him nor understood him. Being lonely, he sought refuge in his imagination, his ignorance, and in his faith:

Su grande, su extraordinaria imaginación le salvaba milagrosamente de la vida. También su ignorancia y sobre todo, aquella fe envidiable y maravillosa. (11)

From his refuge in his imagination, Ilé felt attracted to the puppets of the old puppeteer, Anderea. Furthermore, the old man was the only person who listened to him, believed him, and showed sincerity and kindness to the boy. But, Ilé was more appreciative of the attention the old man gave him than of the food and shelter offered to him. This emphasizes the fact that his real need was of a spiritual nature.

Free and simple, but lonely, Ilé finds escape in the sea as he views the waves which become figures—friends—in his fantasy world. As the real and the fantastic fuse in his daily excursions to the beach, these become a life-sustaining portion of his routine. The sea is his "verdadero hogar" (46). Ilé found in the water and sand new
strange objects--tangible yet inexplicable. In this setting he was truly happy:

Ilé se tumbó en el suelo, y empezó a revolcarse entre la arena, con una alegría dura y animal, excesiva. (47)

As long as Ilé is at the sea he does not need anything else nor does he need anyone else to fill his spiritual needs. In fact, he gains sufficient confidence to insult the seagull--"Tonta, loca" (47). In this instance alone, Ilé assumes an attitude of superiority.

The stranger, Marco, intrudes into the world of Ilé with the offer of friendship. The innocent--yet simple--Ilé will be awakened to the realities of human emotions through his association with Marco. From the initial encounter with Marco, he is promised friendship.

Deseo ser tu amigo--repitió el hombre rubio. ... Sí, eso es. Tú eres libre, eres feliz. Solamente el que es como tú, el que nada desea, es auténticamente dueño de su vida. (49)

Suspicious of the stranger at first, he finally yields to his offer of friendship as the man further promises him an outing to the sea: "Y, además, saldremos a la mar en una lanchita" (51). It is upon the offer of hope that the friendship between the two begins. Ilé, while not truly aware of all that Marco has told him, puts his trust in the man.

Another reason Ilé trusts Marco is that he represents for Ilé the fulfillment of a desire to go out to sea like a fisherman. Being superstitious, the fishermen were afraid of Ilé, the idiot, and would not allow him to go out to sea with them. In the imaginary world of
Ilé the fishermen are poeticized and assume gigantic, even mythological proportions. Ilé sees the possibility of realizing a life-long dream when Marco offers to take him out to sea.

As the story progresses, Ilé listens to Marco, becomes his confidante, is faithful to him, and then is betrayed by him. Marco's promises to take the child away in his boat prove to be false. When Ilé has to accept the truth, he tells the old puppeteer:

---Anderea, no era verdad nada de lo que decía. ¡Ni siquiera se fue en el velero! ¿Sabes? Todo lo que decía, desde el día en que nació, eran embustes. Nadie le debía la vida, nadie. ¡Anderea, si tú supieras! Cuando ella se hundió en el mar, yo corrí a advertirle. Y entonces él tuvo miedo. Un miedo terrible. Y temblaba y lloraba. (269)

Ilé confesses the sequence of events to his one and only friend, the old man, a kind of real protector for the youth. Unable to distinguish between his real and fantasy world—until he is literally betrayed and hurt—Ilé may be considered a forerunner of the "niño tonto" which Matute develops more fully in a later work. If for no other reason, the book must be considered for this aspect.

Zazu Devar

Zazu Devar, the daughter of the wealthy Kepa Devar, a representative from a higher social class, is likewise a lonely child. (Matute was also to present all classes of society in Primera memoria.) Wealth or poverty makes no difference since all the children are similarly afflicted by loneliness and estrangement.

While the sea constitutes for Ilé a realm of fantastic escape, Zazu's frequent contemplation of it is ultimately linked to her death.
by suicidal drowning. In these moments of contemplation, Zazu is aware of her solitude and feels her weakness: the village is her prison. Zazu's family life offers her little satisfaction: her mother was dead; she is not close to her father; she is an only child. The house is cold and lonely to her. There is no love provided by Zazu's family and she must seek it elsewhere. There are no friends to replace the lack of love in her life. Her co-evils regard Zazu as an outsider and consider her as different:

y esa voz le recordaba que era distinta, que no era como las otras muchachas, que estaba marcada por una señal culpable. (27)

Zazu is an apparently complex character but Matute has not disclosed the true nature of her inner problems. It is not until later in her more mature works that Matute portrays penetrating glimpses of her characters, for she was only seventeen when Pequeño teatro was written. Therefore, we find that Zazu's life consists of forced withdrawal. While Ilé finds distractions from his loneliness, Zazu does not. Her isolation is total.

Another aspect of her character which is revealed to the reader is her sense of unwarranted guilt: "... alguien dijo una vez que tenía manos de ladrona" (27). This is merely presented and left open for the reader to ponder. The consistently mysterious quality of her personality is further amplified.

The portrayal of childhood--adolescence--as seen in Zazu is one of loneliness, unhappiness, and the need to be loved.
Zazu pensaba siempre en el amor, y nunca había amado a nadie. (28)

Her betrothal to Augusto, a wealthy man of forty, was no solution for her because she did not love him. Her life as she viewed it was a search for something even she did not know.

Nunca se preocupó nadie de mi corazón. Mi corazón y yo crecimos extrañamente, dentro de un mundo frío y distante. Yo he ido buscando siempre algo, y no sé qué he buscado. Alguna cosa me grita mi corazón, a veces, y yo no sé qué es. (41)

For Zazu, with no one who could bring her love, the entrance of Marco could fill this need, putting an end to the search for love. But Marco is no solace to her, as his kind of love increases her anguish and finally prompts her to end her life. Once again she is thrust back into her former situation.

Ojalá fuera yo una chica descalza, una chica cualquiera de San Telmo, y pudiera sentirme feliz, bebiendo, bebiendo, bebiendo. (239)

Her desire to escape is expressed in the desire to be someone else. But there is no escape for Zazu, not even in dreams, for dreams have nothing to offer her but bitterness and more despair:

No es bueno amar, no es bueno soñar. El sueño no es dulce, el sueño levanta llagas, quema, empuja. (239)

From the very first descriptions of Zazu, she is presented as a prisoner in Oiquixa, "... estaba presa en Oiquixa ... " (26) and this incarceration of location is but a parallel to the spiritual
incarceration of the young girl, to her inability to escape from despair and sorrow. The final note of despair leads Zazu to commit suicide. We find that in contrast to her, Ilé turns to the world of puppetry, his imagination, and the sea for solace. In this regard, he is the fortunate one.

Los Abel differs greatly from Pequeño teatro in that symbolism and fantasy are almost absent. This novel treats childhood as closely linked to the Cain and Abel theme, in fact, this work introduces the theme into the literary production of Matute.

Written when Matute was twenty-one, the novel relates the tragic story of the motherless Abel children and their inability to get along with each other and further, their ultimate failure to succeed in life. Noted for their misbehavior, the children can never escape this negative image of them held by the other inhabitants of the region. Even as adults, former playmates of the Abel children maintain this disapproving view of the Abel brothers and sisters. It appears that they were marked from birth—destined to be failures. Brotherhood becomes a curse rather than a source of solace for them.

The story itself is a flashback to the children's childhood through the technical device of a diary.\footnote{It is with the appearance of Los Abel that Matute found what was going to constitute the way in which she would later portray childhood in her mature fiction. A crucial discovery was the use of retrospective vision. For Matute, it has been far more effective to view childhood from afar, that is to say, from the present looking back than to see it in the present.} Recorded by Valba, one of the Abel children, the diary is discovered years later by the unnamed
narrator. The latter has returned—now as a man—to the region where, as a child, he visited and even met the Abel children. The narrator serves as a means to return to the past and his childhood is evoked only as a technical device to introduce the Abel children.

Linked to the Cain and Abel theme, the theme of childhood serves to present the intense jealousy of Aldo for his brother, Tito, which finally leads the former to commit murder. Chronologically, they are in late adolescence and the theme of childhood assumes importance in the difficult transition of Valba and her brothers to adulthood. The overall view of childhood in the novel is not a happy one; it is presented as a preview to the grief that will be a constant in their adult lives. Tito, the only child who radiates happiness, does not marry the girl he claims to love and is murdered by his brother. Thus, the only one who is gifted with happiness is thwarted from its fulfillment.

Aldo and Tito: Cain and Abel Figures

Because the characters Aldo and Tito are representative of the Cain and Abel types in the novel, they will be studied apart from the other children. Aldo is consistently referred to as the strong, rigid, inflexible type. Being the oldest child, he assumes the responsibility for operating the homeland after his mother's death. In contrast to Aldo, the father is portrayed as weak, and a poor head of the family, unable to face the problems which arise with his children. As if to counteract the laxity of his father, Aldo performs
in a strict and mechanical way the functions of the head of the household.

Valba describes her oldest brother:

Aldo era alto, nudoso. El administrava las fincas y era el verdadero amo, porque se abrazaba la tierra generosamente, sintiéndola y viviéndola de cerca ... Nuestro patrimonio estaba en sus manos, y puede decirse que nuestra vida también. (35)

Aldo maintains his position as hardened overseer and chooses to conceal his emotions. He—as the Cain figure—is marked from birth to be thus. While we are never allowed into the interior workings of his mind, our conclusions must be drawn from the facts about him as recorded by Valba. He appears to lack a zest for life which is the greatest endowment Tito possesses.

Tito, on the other hand, is lazy and irresponsible, the exact opposite of Aldo who is dependable. Therefore, it is not weakness that distinguishes Tito from Aldo, nor just physical differences—Tito is more handsome—but personality differences. Valba says of Tito:

Si fuera posible definir a Tito, diría que su vida consistía en coger con una mano lo que deseaba y apartar con la otra lo que le estorbaba. (50)

Tito's good fortune was gratuitous, not earned, but inherent. His good nature was immediately responded to by anyone with whom he associated, except for Aldo who could not tolerate his brother's lifestyle. In short, the characters of Aldo and Tito in childhood will be the same in adulthood. Tito was spirited and all were attracted to
him. Aldo was stern and withdrawn, even though on occasion Valba was able to make him respond to her:

Pero Aldo—sus ojos—rechazaban cualquier caricia. Cuando éramos pequeños, hacia balsas con ramas de chopo junto al río. Le gustaba mandar, mandar. Y pegaba fuerte. Pero cuando yo me cansaba me llevaba sobre la espalda, aunque le ahogara con los brazos alrededor del cuello. Acordándome de esto le besé rápidamente, y él se pasó la mano por la mejilla. (36)

While Aldo remains firm in rejecting affection, he is seen in this one instance as allowing his sister to express it towards him, appearing less rigid.

Aldo remains physically apart from people, locking himself in his room to work, while Tito is constantly involved with others. He befriends the miners in town from genuine concern for them because of the social injustices they endure. However, his attention towards them is short-lived.

Aldo's lack of communication with others is most obvious in his failure at marriage to Jacqueline, the former sweetheart of Tito. She still loves the younger brother and the marriage proves futile for Aldo. The latter shows in marriage—he even placates his wife's desires to live in the city—his greatest effort at relating to someone else, yet he fails. This act has been prompted by his jealousy of Tito, since taking Jacqueline, he deprives his brother of the girl he loves.

Aldo's strongest bond is to the land itself. He offers to give up even his wife to Tito in exchange for the management of the property. He is adamant in his decision to keep the land undivided as
evidenced in his rejection of Tito's suggestion that the two share in its administration. For Aldo, the possession of the land is his very existence and it eventually becomes the only thing that does not betray him, taking precedence over any other thing or person—even his wife.

Tito, unlike Aldo, cannot truly commit himself to any person or thing. He appears to be attracted to causes ephemerally. The life of the gypsy is appealing; the cause of the miners consumes his energies temporarily. Tito's association with representatives of a lower socio-economic class make him the perfect suspect for burning the village church. His guilt or innocence are of secondary concern to his father who reprimands his son for being candid and careless about his friendships.

Tito is not pure and Valba recognizes his faults. But she, as the others who know him, are won over by his laughter and love for life and do not hold him responsible for his negligent behavior. Jacqueline, who loves him, does reject his life style and will not tolerate his secret affair with her own mother. In her attempt to counteract his unfaithfulness, Jacqueline pursues Aldo and marries him. But Tito is indifferent to the marriage and seeks a new interest: the land. Valba notes the aloofness of Tito:

La vida de Tito se deslizaba sin tropiezos, sin amarguras, sin dolor. ¿Acaso no era feliz ...? Pero la felicidad él la aceptaba como algo natural, inherente a su persona ... Sí, la vida era suya, suya tan sólo. ¿Y a precio de qué? ¿A precio de qué ...? El no se doblaba sobre la tierra ni ante nada. El no se dejaba el corazón en nada; el corazón quedaba siempre intacto ... (201, 202)
But even after her marriage to Aldo, Jacqueline still loves Tito. Aldo, therefore, cannot give up the land because it is the only source of dignity remaining for him. Consequently, he tells his brother:

--Eres un condenado--silabeó Aldo con labios contraídos--, que va robando y robando. En eso consiste tu buena suerte. (232)

The life-long jealousy of Aldo for Tito culminates in this final scene with the murder of Tito. Even in Tito's death, Valba chants the refrain which has become a part of him:

¡Tito era la juventud! Y caí de rodillas, y con aquella sangre suya que iba ya deslizándose entre las junturas de los mosaicos fui mojándome el rostro, como si fuera una caricia. (234)

As mentioned previously, the same relationship between the brothers extended throughout their lives: Aldo will always be looked upon as the oldest brother not only chronologically but spiritually, and Tito will be the lovable drifter, even posthumously. For Aldo there is no refuge in religion as there is for another "cursed" one: Juan Medina in Fiesta al noroeste. Nor will Aldo hide his true self behind a mask of spurious religion. The irony of the use of "hermanos" in the novel corresponds to the strained relationship between Aldo and Tito. The jealousy between brothers, an ancient theme, is seen through these characters to the exclusion of brotherly love, and is repeated throughout the later works of Matute. While there are even within Matute's works variations on the Cain and Abel theme, we are most concerned with the difference here in its presentation in the text.
What distinguishes the theme as it is here presented from its appearance in *Fiesta al noroeste* is that the narrator is Valba and we see the entire action of the other characters through her descriptions. That is, we are never allowed to see into the minds of any other character in the novel. She relates to the reader only that information which results from her opinions of the others. In comparison to the later novel, it is clear that the theme is not as carefully and intricately developed as in *Fiesta al noroeste*.

**Valba: Transition From Child to Adult**

Another facet of childhood which is portrayed in *Los Abel* concerns the difficult transition of Valba from a child to an adult. Because of the early death of her mother, Valba has tried to assume the role of substitute-mother in the capacity of a unifying force for her brothers and sister. This is her attempt to keep them as a close-knit group.

Her change from childhood is noted, however, in the references illustrating this difficult transition:

> Me sentía a veces muy niña, tanto como la pequeña, y la llevaba junto al hogar, … y nos sentábamos una frente a la otra, con las rodillas juntas. (38)

Valba would on such occasions tell the child fantasy tales in an effort to return to childhood through fantasy. Yet, other times, Valba experienced inner turmoil which caused her to desire to abandon everyone. There were instances typical of adolescent behavior—vacillation between the child and the adult. Valba felt unwanted by
all: "... nadie me necesitaba. Ni siquiera la pequeña, ... Ni
siquiera Tavi, ..." (48). Although Valba considers herself responsible
and mature, she is still regarded as a child by Paula, the housekeeper
who insists that Valba is incapable of managing the house on her own.
In an effort to break away from the ties of their homeland, Valba goes
to the city under the pretext of taking her sister to school and stays
there with friends. In this break from home, she is exposed to another
kind of life very different from the one she has known. Her brothers
Gus and Tito are also living in the city. Just as she cannot get along
away from home, nor can the others. They all meet failure in their
attempt to sever home ties and live pending on each other's fate.
While life at home is not attractive, Valba ultimately chooses it to
life in the city.

Other Children

The other children Gus, Juan, Tavi and Ovidia are all seen in
relation to Valba and each is portrayed as a failure in their endeavor.
Gus, whose ambition was to be a sculptor, decides to paint, but his
involvement with the workers' strike leads to his arrest. His efforts
bring only negative results for him. He is jailed and when Valba sees
him, she realizes that he is not the only one who is incarcerated:

Unos hierros mucho más sólidos, cada vez más tupidos nos
apartaban uno del otro ... ¿Qué significaba la palabra
hermanos? (205)

The actual bars are but a visible indication of the distance which
separates them.
Juan Abel physically handicapped due to an illness is in spiritual as well as physical bondage. He had always been cowardly, thus his inner weakness, manifested in cowardly actions, is now paralleled by a visible physical handicap: he is lame. His selection of a religious life, never understood by his brothers and sisters, becomes for Juan a form of security and refuge from the world.

The youngest boy (not child) in the family, Tavi, dislikes school. Of all the children, he appears least, only to reveal the indifference that exists between him and his brothers and sisters. He comments: "Andáis cada uno por un lado ..." and "¿Y cómo íbamos a vivir juntos nosotros, cada uno con su infierno dentro?" (185). These comments may be considered as some of the most significant and accurate estimations of the Abel children.

The disregard shown towards a sibling is illustrated when Ovidia, the youngest child, is left in a hotel lobby by Valba who thinks Tito will care for her. However, Tito is unaware of the child's presence in his hotel lobby and it is not until much later that they discover Valba's error.

The Abel children are bound to each other more from a sense of obligation and need than from genuine brotherly love. The irony of appearances is most striking when Jacqueline repeats "nunca dejaréis de ser hermanos." The children are at odds with others and even with themselves which makes the phrase more ironic. Perhaps Valba's observations summarize their situation as she notes that the ties of blood erase all differences and distances: "Hermanos, eternamente hermanos." But her words are likewise ironic and disproved when the
children are seen as separate within their own enclosed existence. What she ultimately means is that the ties of blood may not successfully remove all differences, yet they bind one to a sense of duty, fraternal duty based on obligation rather than on love.

The theme of childhood in Los Abel and in Pequeño teatro, while a dominant one, remains to be more fully developed in Matute's later works. Nevertheless, the major contributions of these initial novels lie in their being preparatory material for the works that follow. The theme of childhood with concomitant unhappiness differs from the traditional concept of it as a golden age and is linked to the failure of dreams and fantasy in Pequeño teatro and the failure of brothers and sisters to love one another in Los Abel.

We shall now proceed with our study of the theme of childhood as it appears in Fiesta al noroeste.
CHAPTER III

FIESTA AL NOROESTE

Fiesta al noroeste, winner of the Premio Café Gijón 1952,¹ is generally considered one of Matute's major novels. Recent approaches² to this novel have observed the presence of the theme of childhood in it only in very broad terms. While these studies of FN are valid from the point of view of the novel as a whole, they do not take into account with sufficient detail and clarity the significance of this theme in relation to the rest of Matute's works.

The general theme of the novel is childhood, in which loneliness, estrangement, and solitude—all characteristics of the protagonist, Juan Medinao—cause his unhappiness and his general state of misery is intensified by the conflicts in his relations with his

¹Ana María Matute, Fiesta al noroeste (3d ed.; Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1963), title page. Throughout the present study, all references to Fiesta al noroeste will be designated by the abbreviation FN.

²The following studies include references to Fiesta al noroeste and are some of the major ones: George Wythe, "The World of Ana María Matute," Books Abroad, XL, 1 (Winter, 1966), 17-28; Rafael María de Hornedo S. I., "El mundo novelesco de Ana María Matute," Razón y fe, CLXII (July-December, 1960), 329-46; Yves Berger, "L'Espagne d' Ana María Matute," La Nouvelle Revue Française, IX (May 1, 1961), 893-901; Janet Wineoff, "Style and Solitude in the Works of Ana María Matute," Hispania, XLIX (March, 1966), 61-69; and Margaret W. Jones, "Religious Motifs and Biblical Allusions in the Works of Ana María Matute," Hispania, LI (September, 1968), 416-23.
There is noted disharmony in his relations with not only his parents, brother, and peers, but also with the society of the region as a whole—and more importantly, there is conflict within himself.

Essential to an understanding of the function of childhood in the work is a consideration of the confessional chapters which constitute a major portion of the novel and which also portray the central events of the childhood of Juan Medinao within the framework of flashback technique. Through this technique of confession, Juan Medinao recalls the central events of his childhood which not only reveal his growing consciousness but his interpersonal relations with other characters as well. Similarly, other characters—notably Dingo and Pablo as children—are presented. While the portrayal of Juan Medinao is accomplished through the major events of the novel, lesser incidents serve as contrast, or more importantly, as a point of departure towards this central portrait of the "disorder and early sorrow" of Juan Medinao.

While most of FN deals with the childhood of Juan Medinao, still two other children, Dingo and Pablo, serve to intensify the tragedy surrounding the protagonist. Their interrelationships are seen in the following roles: the child as search for self in conjunction with the child as representative of the Cain and Abel myth, and the child as the Judas-figure in a friendship. These aspects of childhood emphasize the crucial realms of Juan Medinao's personality, that is, his loneliness, his role as Cain, his envy, his hatred and pride, all presented from within confession and recollection. Our
study of Juan will now begin with his early childhood and the references to this time of his life.

Juan: Early Childhood

The mark of unhappiness and sorrow which characterizes Juan can be seen even from the very references to his birth. According to his mother, he was born on a dreadful day:

También él nació en carnaval, hacía cuarenta y dos años, en una tarde desasosegada. El viento azotaba las esquinas, pegaba las ropas al cuerpo y el cabello a la frente. Los troncos del Noroeste se doblaban, sacudidos, y en el patio ladraba un perro.\(^3\)

Juan's actual birth shares in the turbulence recorded: Juan's mother suffered incredibly during childbirth, with no consolation from her absent husband. The situation may be regarded as a preface to the misfortune that will dominate Juan's life. Even the doctor arrives unfit to deliver the child, "... y el médico llegó borracho, como de costumbre, ..." (33).

As a foreboding of his own personality, we find that his mother was an outsider to this region and to the way of life of its inhabitants. While listing the details of his birth, Juan recalls that his mother felt herself an utter stranger to this region:

Tu padre me había traído de muy lejos, de mi tierra donde había iglesia y tiendas. Aquí, a mí me parecía estar enterrada y tan sola como un muerto. (33)

\(^3\)Matute, Fiesta al noroeste, pp. 32-33. All subsequent references from this novel are taken from this edition and will be indicated in the text of this study by page numbers only.
It is into his mother's marginal and alienated world that Juan will be drawn. While Juan's mother is estranged physically and in terms of social position, we shall later see Juan assume this estranged role in more metaphysical terms. The conspicuous absence of Juan's father serves to emphasize the bond between mother and son.

The pain which one links to Juan's birth is carried through the early years of his life with his family. There is a noted absence of love in the marriage of Juan's parents and the friction which constitutes the basis of their relationship is obvious to the child and consequently affects him. He disdains his father and his coarse behavior, turning to the gentle nature of his mother and her religious faith for consolation. We may here note in passing a crucial stage in Matute's children which is the importance of the role of the family upon the young with emphasis on the spiritual shortcomings that result from poor family relations. 

Juan Medinao, the child-victim of this unhappy marriage, loses his childhood innocence through certain discoveries he makes regarding his parents. One such discovery is the awareness of his father's infidelity and his own decision to keep this new knowledge a secret:

Sin que nadie viniera a contárselo, él, Juan Niño, a los cuatro años, lo supo. Lo supo sin saber nada, sin habérles visto nunca juntos. (38)

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4The theme of the disintegration of the family appears frequently in the works of Matute. This theme has consistently appeared in the post war novels since Cela.
But this discovery does not afford Juan maturity. Although he is alert enough to understand the situation, Juan's loss of innocence causes him guilt and fear. He is both attracted to his father and his mistress, Salomé, yet afraid of them. In the eyes of the child, Salomé and his father are considered together as a force working against him and all that his mother considers good. The fear and attraction he feels for this force fills him with guilt and ultimately leads him to seek refuge in the religious world of his mother. In this way a polarization of his ethics is embodied by his parents.

Juan's early relations with his father have alienated both of them and there has never been any love between father and son. Juan's indifference toward his father is finally evidenced when his father seeks forgiveness and Juan remains detached from his father:

Juan Niño, se mantenía duro en las rodillas de su padre. Cerca de sus mejillas los labios ásperos del hombre emitían un ronquido profundamente terreno, casi palpable. Juan Niño empezó a sentirse blanco, frío y distante como un ángel. (54)

Juan dismissed his opportunity to be warm and understanding with his father. Without modifying his initial position of indifference, he realizes the true nature of his father:

5 Of the character of Cain in Lord Byron's Cain, one critic notes: "One of the strong feelings in the stormy texture of Cain's passionate life was his antipathy to his parents. He was displeased with their mental deterioration and their smugness, but it was their haste and folly in the past that he could not forgive. Four times he imputed the cause of his unhappiness to them—they were responsible for his loss of Paradise." (Truman Guy Steffan, Lord Byron's Cain: Twelve Essays and a Text with Variants and Annotations [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968], p. 41.) Juan Medinao (like Cain) must in some way hold his father responsible for his loss of happiness and disdains his father for his unacceptable behavior.
Y entonces, junto al llanto seco del hombre, Juan Niño intuyó milagrosamente a su padre, por primera vez. Adivinó que no había en él maldad auténtica. Era estúpido nada más. (54)

In this instance, Juan recognizes that of the two (father and son) he is the stronger—a complete reversal of roles, for the child up until this point has been consistently weak.

La sensación de debilidad huyó. Juan Niño era ahora el fuerte. Su fuerza era densa y podía ahogar, lenta y dulcemente, como un mal de miel. (55)

In short, one can look upon Juan's attitude as a misuse of sweetness and love. With the use of "mal de miel," there is indicated a reversal of the uses of love. Juan does not love his father, and he hardens at the moment when his father appears to be suffering. It is as if Juan can be strong only when his father is despondent, ultimately elevating himself at his father's expense. In turn, as we shall see, the father hurts his son's pride by insulting him.

From our observation of the father and son, we have seen that the muted hostility between Juan and his father is a mutual occurrence. This is significant not only in those instances where Juan denounces his father, but also in those where the father insults his son. When the father mentions Juan's adversary, his illegitimate half-brother, Pablo, he says to the son:

---¡Si hubieras visto el otro día a Pablo Zacaro! ¡Qué crió del demonio, parece que lleve un sabio en la barriga! Tiene más picardía que siete viejos, y sólo con cinco años ..., creo. Juan, hijo, ¿cómo no te da vergüenza saber que un
mocos, la mitad que tú, sabe leer y contar de corrido,
cuando ni siquiera ha podido ir a la escuela, y tal vez,
quizá, no pueda ir nunca? (63-64)

While the father's words here serve to increase the jealousy that Juan
already feels for Pablo, they also indicate the lack of sensitivity the
father has for Juan, the non-gifted son. To openly praise Pablo and
insult Juan is a callous response for the father to make as he hurts
the less intelligent child by causing him to feel ashamed.

On the other hand, Juan's mother provides the only real
tenderness in his life, but she dies while Juan is still young.
Consideration of the incidents surrounding Juan's birth and the fact
that his mother felt an outsider to the region lead to Juan's identi-
fication with her and emphasize his own marginal feelings. His
decision to follow her religious fervor in life seems a rebuke to his
father's rejection. Thus the mother heavily influences Juan, her
unhappiness in life being another link to her son. But her unhappiness,
estrangement, and suffering finally lead to her suicide, which reflects
her inability to tolerate the birth of her husband's illegitimate son.
It would seem that her own son, Juan, was not a strong enough
motivation to continue her life. Whatever the real reasons, the
outcome of the suicide is more grief for Juan Niño who lost the one
person from whom he had received love and company. In later child-
hood Juan will seek new companionship from other children.

From this brief discussion of the family and Juan, one is
aware that Matute stresses the role of the family upon children. She
underlines the loss of security that they suffer when family relations are not stable, exemplifying Ritchie and Koller's statement:

By developing personal attributes which become an integral part of children, families set the stage for personal and social consequences. The family should not be over-rated as an agent of society in the sociological process. Nevertheless, the family merits prime consideration because of its direct and lasting impact upon children.®

While one cannot attribute all of Juan's problems to his poor family relations, they induce a part of his insecurity. Denied love and trust by his parents, he eventually turns to his brother and peers who in turn reject him also.

Juan: Later Childhood

In this period we shall consider the incidents which not only involve Juan and Pablo but also his father and Dingo. The transition from early childhood comes after the suicide of his mother. Thus, the term later childhood means in this case: Juan at school between the ages of five and ten, and between the ages of ten and twelve.

The unhappiness and sorrow which were dominant in the early years of Juan continue in this phase of his life in his school experiences and at home with his father and his half-brother Pablo.

Due to his physical deformity, Juan continues to be an outsider at school—his head is out of proportion to his body. This

disables him to enjoy childhood games and also makes him the butt of cruel jokes. He is not accepted by the other children and remains friendless and more awkward:

También allí él era distinto a todos, y hubo de perdonar las mismas burlas que a los hijos de los campesinos. Era torpe, lento, sin gracia. (61)

Not only is Juan unable to become close to his schoolmates but to teachers as well. Solitary, he observes the children at play "sin amargura ni alegría," losing even emotional response to their rejection. His indifference can be paralleled to that he displayed when his father sought forgiveness from him. Juan gradually becomes less human due to this indifference. But he does display true emotion in his relations with Pablo, unable to hide his feelings and revealing the real Juan Medinao. His half-brother Pablo is the last chance for love that Juan has.

Home after fruitless years at school, Juan is now faced with what will become the antagonist of his childhood: his half-brother Pablo. The feelings of hatred and indifference towards his father will be duplicated toward his brother. Juan assumes the role of Cain in his jealousy and love for him. He and Pablo represent two antithetical approaches to life: Juan--symbol of the weak, God-fearing man who is enslaved to his passions and who must love Pablo in order to be, but Pablo will never return this love. He is, on the other hand, a symbol of the gifted, strong, handsome, and intelligent; the chosen of God who does not need Juan in order to exist. Matute has
altered the theme of Cain and Abel in as it is not presented as an inherent part of childhood, but rather as a part of the make-up of these children who do not love each other.

The source of Juan's love-hate relationship with Pablo is analyzed through the flashbacks of the protagonist as he tries to account for the deep anguish that plagues him. His hatred stems from the distant past even before Pablo's birth. Juan, ever mindful of his own mother's teachings, recalls the mother of Pablo, Salomé, and notes that Pablo is begotten as the child of sin. He is a true usurper in Juan's eyes. The possibility that this brother could provide love and an end to his loneliness is weighed against the possibility that he could be the chosen of God. The irony lies in the fact that he--Pablo, the Other--is the chosen one.

From the references to the birth of Pablo, then, Juan reveals the beginnings of his jealousy: a momentary desire to kill the brother; fear that he would be strong mixed with the hope that he might bring an end to his loneliness. This hope is in vain as Juan loses his mother and is sent away to school without even having seen his brother. Pablo's birth indirectly causes Juan even more despair as it takes away his mother--his one consolation in life. Precisely because he takes the mother away, he seems responsible for bringing some substitute to love.

The first meeting between the brothers affirms the aforementioned endowments of Pablo. Juan's weakness is emphasized as the children who are bystanders ridicule him: "Cabezón, cabezota, pobre cabezón:" (65) and stresses Pablo's strength: "El niño era alto para
su edad, fuerte, con mechones de pelo negro y brillante, cayéndole sobre los ojos" (66). Pablo's defiant strength is immediately noted as he strikes his brother with a stone: "acompañando el gesto de una risa primitiva, extrañamente cruel" (66). Pablo dominates the brief encounter with his brother and his "superhuman" attributes show him far superior. This meeting takes place in the fields amidst the harvest and sunshine. Pablo, the natural son of the sensuous Salomé, fits in that world. Juan is a pitiful and wretched creature by comparison.

The superiority of Pablo is present in the words of Juan's father who openly praises the young boy of five:

Juan, hijo, ¡cómo no te da vergüenza saber que un mocoso, la mitad que tú, sabe leer y contar de corrido, cuando ni siquiera ha podido ir a la escuela, y tal vez, quizá, no pueda ir nunca? (63-64)

The words of his father not only praise Pablo but forcefully shame Juan. The apprehensions of Juan that "Otro que quizá fuera un elegido de Dios" would apply to Pablo are proven to be valid.

Juan and Pablo can easily fit into the Cain and Abel roles:

Fue Abel pastor de ovejas, y Caín fue labrador de la tierra. Y aconteció, andando el tiempo, que Caín trajo del fruto de la tierra una ofrenda a Dios, y Abel trajo también de los primogénitos de sus ovejas y de su grosura. Y miró Dios con agrado a Abel y a su ofrenda; mas no miró propicio a Caín y a la ofrenda suya. Y ensañóse Caín en gran manera y decayó su semblante. Entonces Dios dijo a Caín "¿Por qué te has ensañado? ¿Por qué se ha inmutado tu rostro? Si bien hicieres, ¿no serás ensalzado?; y si no hicieres bien, el pecado está a la puerta."

While Juan and Pablo do not entirely conform with their biblical counterparts, there is also a chosen one while "the Other" is rejected. Furthermore, the same unanswered question arises—why is one selected rather than the other? Scholars have noted the apparent inequity of the selection, including Unamuno:

... the mystery of the Cain myth lies in the fact that its version of justice and destiny defy rational explanation. Neither Abel nor Cain show any apparent virtue that might justify the fact that God favored one at the expense of the other, and yet Abel was the chosen one.®

The inequity led Unamuno to explore certain questions about the possible implications of the myth—psychological, sociological—all as they applied to Spain. In his novel Abel Sánchez the envy of Joaquín Monegro represents the tragic flaw—envy—of the Spanish national character. Joaquín Monegro embodies the concept of envy and is thus pervaded in Unamunian terms with that agonized "querer ser" which is the dominant facet of the Unamunian hero. It is Abel Sánchez who despite success is imbued with what Unamuno calls "no querer ser."

For comparative purposes, we will recall the modern treatment of the theme of Cain and Abel as it appears in the two works of Miguel de Unamuno, Abel Sánchez and Nada menos que todo un hombre, and also the study of the theme by Paul Ilie in Unamuno: An Existential View of Self and Society. While the Cain and Abel theme appears elsewhere in

Matute's works, notably *Los Abel*, *Los hijos muertos*, *Primera memoria* and several short stories, we shall limit our references to its role in FN in this chapter.

Ilie cites that the basic Unamunian approach to the myth was to seek its cultural value. Unamuno referred to the social theories which prevailed during his formative years at the end of the nineteenth century. He began with the notion that a society was as vital an organic body as the living beings that compose it. The group evolved in much the same way that an individual organism does. The social organism projects a collective psychology through its history and institutions. In this way, the individual Spaniard will have traits that are paralleled by those of its national character.\(^9\)

Through his application of the Cain myth to Spain, Unamuno tried to link envy to the condition of solitude. He found a divisiveness on a national scale which was directly linked to the solitary nature of the envious faction of her character:

\[ \text{¡La soledad! La soledad es el meollo de nuestra esencia y con eso de congregarnos, de arrebañarnos, no hacemos sino ahondarla. Y úde dónde sino de la soledad, de nuestra soledad radical, ha nacido esa envidia, la de Cain, cuya sombra se extiende—bien lo decía mi Antonio Machado—sobre la solitaria desolación del alto páramo castellano?}  \]

Paradoxically, then, this states that people are isolated from each other and direct contact does not alleviate one's loneliness. Rather, \(^9\)\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 247-248. \(^10\)\textit{Miguel de Unamuno, Cómo se hace una novela} (Buenos Aires: Editorial Alba, 1927), p. 39.
it is intensified. He illustrates this point in _Abel Sánchez_ as we see that Joaquín, like the biblical Cain, suffers more from his envy and hatred upon his direct confrontations with Abel. Consequently, in each case, Cain's loneliness grows. When one applies this solitude to Spain, the harmful aspects of its nature are made clear. A society cannot grow from hermetic relationships but from interrelationships.\(^{11}\)

Unamuno stated that the followers of Abel were no better than the Cainites. By so doing he projected the ethical problem into Spain's social structure. In his consideration of the two groups, Abel and his descendants were shepherds—thus, nomads. On the other hand, Cain led a stationary life in that he was fixed to one site. In modern terms, Unamuno referred to the descendants of Abel as merchants. The concept of the merchant as one who transports rather than produces is the same concept of the merchant held by the descendants of Cain, the farmers. That is to say, one produces—the farmer—and the other lives off it—the merchant. The wandering element in the society of Spain can be linked to the myth. As a member of the Generation of 1898, Unamuno was the first to use the myth in this way, that is, to explain the cultural problem of the country. The problem was seen in terms of sedentary and wandering societies.

But Ilie cites that there are two points more basic to the myth than this struggle just described. First, the conflict between the sedentary farmers and the wandering shepherds was placed at the

\(^{11}\)Ilie, _Unamuno: An Existential View_, p. 248.
beginning of history. This precluded the idea that at any one time
could there have been harmony between the cultures of a society.
Secondly, the myth blamed the first murder on earth not to a struggle
for survival, but to envy. That God chose the fruits of the shepherd
rather than those of the farmer led the latter to kill out of envy.
Thus, one can say that the source of the conflict in society was
not economic but psychological. The same can be said of the conflict
between Juan Medinao and Pablo. It was not an economic one, but
psychological: that of being chosen by God gratuitously.

Besides the sociological implications of the Cain myth Unamuno
chose to include the transcendental value best expressed in Del
sentimiento trágico de la vida. The materialistic interpretations here
give way to the desire of man for immortality. Thus, Cain's act is
seen as one in which he struggled to be remembered by God. The chosen
one would be remembered divinely. By non-recognition, Cain was
rejected from occupying a place in God's mind. As Unamuno points out,
Cain's anger and envy stemmed from a spiritual hunger not a material
one.

In consideration of Matute's use of the Cain myth in FN it
would seem erroneous to link her treatment of the myth to cultural and
sociological elements in the society of the country on a national
scale. Certainly a parallel can be drawn to the fratricide of the
Civil War, as the author herself has explained the importance of the
theme and the relevance it holds in regard to the Spanish Civil War.
However, her variation of the theme of Cain and Abel transcends
purely fratricide.
Although Matute does not include the cultural aspect of the myth to the same degree as Unamuno, there is a slight hint of a sociological relevance even in Juan's role as the "cacique"--Pablo, his worker. If one considers Juan as the Cain figure, the sedentary "cacique" of the rural region and Pablo, the Abel figure, who is more of the wandering descendant of Abel, then the parallel between Unamuno's considerations of these types is at once more evident in Matute's handling of the myth. Pablo is the leader of the striking workers who seek better working conditions from his brother, Juan. It is Pablo who wants to build his own home away from the household belonging to Juan. It is Juan who lives in the old house belonging to his ancestors for the pitiful figure cannot break himself away from his past. Pablo can exist alone with no ties to the past and specifically, with no ties to Juan. Thus, when Pablo's marriage plan fails, he is free to move to the city, another indication of the nomadic traces or tendencies within him. Juan can never leave this place for the past is all he has to turn to in life aside from his properties.

It would perhaps be possible to link Pablo to the new element in society or that which is willing to break away from tradition. While on the other hand, Juan would be representative of the old, the traditional, that segment which cannot exist without its constant memories of the past. While Matute is not writing primarily from the point of view of the social or cultural critic, social criticism is dealt with, somewhat metaphorically. Juan feels a great dependency
upon his brother. It is this factor that causes his enslavement to Pablo, to sense that he is Pablo's prisoner:

Yo estaba preso allí. Preso allí para siempre, ...
Tenía que vencer a Pablo Zácaro. Tenía que poder a Pablo Zácaro. (55)

This regard for Pablo is contained within the concept of the Other, which is discussed by Ilie, and which is also evident in the handling of the relationship of the brothers as Matute has presented it. It is seen in the concept of the Other—in the structure of the self—that man objectifies a part of his personality or has a definite object he wishes to be his own. In the case of Juan, he wants to be Pablo, to conquer him, but he realizes that he is never going to achieve his goal. As Unamuno states, "Whether he 'has to use his body or other bodies, he remains bound to their rigid laws. He is a slave."\(^{12}\) The "he" in question is any man. This consideration may be applied to Juan's dependence upon Pablo which is marked by his need for "the Other"—Pablo—seen in the realm of his envy. It is through the means of this metaphysical relation that our study will include the theme of "the Other" as part of the theory of personality which emerges from the Cain and Abel myth.

The topic of el otro is hazardous, but insofar as personality structure is concerned, reference to it is made in the context of conciencia. The concept of el otro is linked to existential awareness, while the intuited experience of el otro is anguish. El otro is that ego fragment which, free of volitional stricture, is the least likely to be viewed as originating in the self.

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\(^{12}\)Ilie, Unamuno: An Existential View, p. 93.
The appearance of el otro marks the last phase of depersonalization where an intimate segment of the ego is lost through the inability or the unwillingness of the individual to recognize its source. El otro represents an alternative personality, either a different self for which the individual strives, or the result of an ego transformation.\(^3\)

The problem of "el otro" is expressed by Unamuno through Joaquín (Cain) in Abel Sánchez. There is a fusion of the cainita and abelita in Joaquín at the same time that there is a distinction made in those traits. The part of Abel in Joaquín's personality is reproduced as an objectified fragment.

This morally engendered disassociation is at once a partial severance from the self and a recognition that an "other" inhabits the personality, so that Joaquín "no era de sí mismo, dueño de sí, sino a la vez un enajenado y un poseído."\(^4\)

The paradox is simply that if Joaquín is alienated, there must remain a part of him from which he is to alienate himself. If he is possessed, there must remain a similar remnant to be possessed.

The concept of "el otro" as regards Juan Medinao does not appear to be as complex as the Unamunian portrayal through Joaquín. Juan seeks the Other—Pablo—as the one he would like to be. This desire stems from his belief that they form one person:

El hermano y él debían formar uno solo. Eran realmente un solo hombre y la separación se hacía dolorosa, tan cruel como cuando el alma abandona el cuerpo. (113)

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\(^4\)Ibid., pp. 318-319.
As the "self he would like to be," Pablo represents for Juan those
traits he lacks: strength, confidence, good looks. Juan has not
sufficiently contemplated himself to grow detached and regard himself
as if he were an Other. The dimension of the Other, then, for Juan
is only seen in the alternative personality he wants to assume, found
outside him. There is no ego transformation in Juan's personality.

Thus, Juan regards Pablo both as a part of himself--"the
Other I wish to be" and "the Other" as objectified part of me. In
this regard he does not accurately fit into the concept of self as
drawn by Paul Ilie in his study on Unamuno. Ilie stresses the Other
has its origin in the process of alienation which occurs in the
splitting of the self. The individual regards a part of himself as if
it were an Other.15 As we have seen, Juan Medinao does not appear to
contemplate any part of him as alienated in the form of the Other.
Furthermore, Juan does not appear to sense a fear of depersonalization
in becoming someone else, the fear expressed by the protagonist in
Unamuno's concept, because Juan does not know who he is. But he is
seeking in his religion and in memories of childhood to find out. The
reader does not know from Juan's confession such intimate details as
are provided in the confession of Joaquín. For this reason, one

15Ilie states in Unamuno: An Existential View of Self and
Society, p. 92: "Perhaps the best way to begin is by considering the
self in relation to what it is not: to non-self. This involves the
concept of the Other, which occupies a dualistic position in Unamuno's
psychology. It can be described by moral categories or by psycho­
logical ones, and it functions in part by antithesis."
cannot impose similarities between Juan Medinao and the Unamunian concept of self except in a general and limited way.

Juan looks within himself but rather than admit to the real knowledge of self, he selects to hide it behind the mask of a false Juan. The recollection or return to childhood will lead to the revelation of the real Juan Medinao, and this is pre-figured symbolically. As Juan is about to pray, a child abandons a mask which she has put on and taken off repeatedly. This final abandonment can be regarded as an oblique reference to the step Juan is about to take: her mask may be paralleled to the imaginary hypocritical mask Juan will shed in his return to his past and to the real Juan Medinao.

Outwardly, the use of the mask appears to be related to the "carnaval" that is being celebrated and to the world of puppetry of which Dingo is the master. Perhaps a brief reference to the problem of "self" in modern times may clarify our problem. Charles Glicksberg in The Self in Modern Literature states:

The modern writer is faced with the baffling problem of picturing a self that seems to have lost its reality. Dwelling in a universe that seems to him alien and hostile, man retreats within the fastness of the self, only to discover that he does not know himself; but the curse of the glory of being human is that he must at all costs strive to know. He cannot endure existence without some light, however uncertain, of self-knowledge.\(^{16}\)

Juan Niño turns inward to search for his true self—through his confession—and denies the existence of the real self in his refusal to recognize it. He is self-defeating, and therein lies his tragedy. Juan feels alienated from others but he is also alienated from himself. While he cannot control his passions, he appears equally incapable of living by the recognition of his interior reality. He appears as a shadow of himself misled by his desire to dominate Pablo. Maintaining a narrow view of the world and himself, he projects no search for the meaning of his life, rather he resorts to the shield of a pretentious religion.

While Juan cannot find or admit to his true self, he seeks himself in others, notably Pablo. The latter knows himself and what he wants from life. Furthermore, he is completely free in the existential sense of the word. Pablo is not bound by religious restrictions or any sense of rules of conduct. His belief is that man should live on earth and feel a sense of duty to his fellow man.

---Soy un hombre: nada más y nada menos---dijo---. Quiero tener tiempo para vivir, y que lo tengan también los demás hombres. ... No sé lo que querríais decir cuando nombráis el padre, el hermano: a todos los respeto y los quiero del mismo modo. (108)

For Pablo death does not exist. He renounces it by his total affirmation of life. He is the one who tells Juan who he is. Defined by Pablo, or his father, or even Dingo, Juan cannot grasp his own self.

---Te dije que sabía lo que tú eras, y voy a decírtelo ... Cuando tenías quince años y deseabas una mujer, en lugar de ganarte su amor, huias lejos y te masturbabas. Cuando
te pegaban y te insultaban, en lugar de defenderte,
rezabas, llorabas y huías. Cuando odias, como no puedes
matar, perdonas. ... Tú no eres nadie. Tú no eres
nada. (109-110)

In this most revealing and truthful passage of the novel, Pablo
emphasizes not only Juan's obvious weakness, but also his hypocrisy
and fear of life. The image of the pious, religious, and pure person
Juan has projected throughout his life is now totally blemished.
Juan's attempt at this pure image was his attempt at being a person as
he thought he should appear. But from Pablo's description, one learns
that Juan never defined himself in action.

Up to this point Juan has withheld his desire to avenge his
shortcomings and suffered in silence. After this verbal confrontation
with Pablo, there is a violent progression in Juan's acts: he kills
the dog his father saved years ago. The dog, a reminder of Pablo, is
killed as a desperate attempt on the part of Juan to stamp out this
memory of his brother. He forces Delia to marry him; he rapes Salomé.
Each act signifies Juan's recourse to fight back at life as he senses
defeat: his inability to keep his brother near him. It is in these
violent acts, then, that Juan assumes the strength to act which he
could not find before in his weakness. Yet these acts are all
destructive and aimed against Pablo.

The struggle of man is in the character of Cain, not Abel, in
his tortured soul. Juan acts out of desperation in his attempt to
destroy Pablo, but is unsuccessful even at that. Pablo is unique in
his freedom in that he is not bound by family—neither through love
nor hate. In this respect he is similar to Alejandro Gómez in Unamuno's *Nada menos que todo un hombre*. Abel is the independent character able to stand alone. That explains why Pablo allows Delia to marry Juan. He gives her the freedom of choice to even marry Juan for money. From his early childhood, Pablo has been independent: rejecting love and affection even from his mother. This is not to say that Pablo does not love. What he does not need is love in the same manner in which Juan does, that is, in order to exist. Juan seeks love as an exchange and it is not returned. Pablo's love, on the other hand, is given freely and returned.

There is no anguish in Pablo. It is this factor which mostly separates him from Juan: there are no personal torments which plague Pablo. However, he does express concern for his fellow man and takes the leadership of the strikers, revealing a non-personal but social concern acting from a sense of duty to his fellow man.

In Unamuno's creation of the Cain figure—Joaquín Monegro—in *Abel Sánchez*, it is Joaquín who expresses the desire that his friend "Abel" share the same torment that plagues him. He could thus endure his pain more easily with the knowledge that his adversary also suffered:

> Y se sorprendió un día a sí mismo a punto de pedir a Dios, en infame oración diabólica, que infiltrase en el alma de Abel odio a él, a Joaquín. Y otra vez: "¡Ah, si me envidiase ... si me envidiase ..."  

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This note of despair in Joaquín is similarly expressed by Juan Niño who prays the following:

... sino que estaba a punto de rezar para que Pablo Zacaró fuese pecador y terreno como Juan Padre, como Salomé, como todos. (64)

Juan, unlike Joaquín, hopes that his brother will be displeasing to God, thus his brother will not be the chosen one. He wants to be superior to his brother in order to be equally favored.

Both Juan and Joaquín are similar in that they are bound to the passions of envy, hate, and in the case of Juan, a peculiar love for Pablo. As in Unamuno's character Joaquín, in Juan we find:

Si hay amor, odio, tristeza, envidia en estas novelas, no son nunca estados de conciencia, sino modos del ser. Una pasión no es un sentimiento para Unamuno, una mera afición psíquica, sino que la entiende e interpreta como un modo de ser, ese modo apasionado; es decir, de una manera ontológica; no es algo que le pase a uno, lo que en cierto momento se siente, sino lo que se es.  

Both characters are dominated by their passions and experience them as a part of their being. Joaquín recognizes them as a spiritual sickness:

Pero ¿podía no inspirarle yo repugnancia, sobre todo cuando le descubrí la lepra de mi alma, la gangrena de mis odios? Se casó conmigo como se habría casado con un leproso, no me caba duda de ello, por divina piedad, por espíritu de abnegación y de sacrificio cristianos, para salvar mi alma y así salvar la suya,

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18 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
His wife could not cure him of the sickness that dominated his entire being. In another reference, Joaquín recognizes the extent of his hate: "Vi que aquel odio inmortal era mi alma." Thus, he is aware that his every move is directed by his passions and his need for "the Other," Abel.

Juna Medinao, likewise, is dominated by his passions and regards his envy, pride, avarice as sins in his confession: "Soy un hombre soberbio. La soberbia me envenena, ... ¡cuántas veces me ha dominado en la vida!" (60) and "Soy un hombre avaro" (67). But these passions are not so much sins as realms of his personality which explain his actions. When Juan confesses the sins of hate, envy, and lust, he singles out Pablo as the source for those sins:

No quiero culparle, pero desde que le conocí, la envidia y la ira hicieron su infierno dentro de mí. Y también el amor. Su amor, ha sido mi culpa más grave. (94)

It seems, however, that Juan has not fully realized the relation of his passions to his state of being. One may assume that he is in the process of this realization as he confesses to the priest. Joaquín, on the other hand, has reached self-awareness concerning his passion, so he can accept hate as a part of his being. But Juan by maintaining

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20 Marias, Miguel de Unamuno, p. 55.
that Pablo is the source of his anguish fails to realize that the
Other only intensified his own ontological anguish.

Juan, the loner, is seen as rejected in his pursuit for love
in relation to his brother and also to his family. Dingo offers an
escape from Juan's loneliness and an alternative to Pablo. The basis
of their friendship—unknown to Juan—is money. Dingo—the Judas-type
figure—betrays Juan, taking the money they have saved together as he
leaves with a troupe of actors. Consequently, Juan appears as a
Christ-figure—the betrayed and the forgiver. Juan accepts this
betrayal, suffers his hurt pride in silence, feels remorse for having
stolen money from his father, with the most regrettable aspect of the
incident being that he is once again friendless. Thirty years later
when the two are face to face again, Juan, in his Christ-like role,
extends pardon to his betrayer.

Dingo shows himself as a calculating, self-confident person
who knows what he wants out of life and how to use other people to
achieve his goals. Juan Niño is simply the victim who plays into
Dingo's hands, guided by his desire to overcome his loneliness. Even
as an adult Dingo still uses Juan Medinao as he seeks help before the
authorities after being apprehended after an accident. At this point
the cunningness of Dingo's personality resurges into adulthood, and
he—like Juan—is presented as basically unchanged by experience.

The only common trait between these two men who represent two
different social classes is the poor relations each has with his
father. Both suffer beatings from disappointed fathers. Dingo's
considers his son's interest in puppets a waste of time, as hard work
in the fields would be a more suitable occupation for him. Juan, on the other hand, is beaten for being afraid or for not aiming his gun well while learning to shoot.

The punishment Juan receives from his father serves to further isolate the two. But yet the father decides to give his son money to prevent him from stealing, unaware of the use he is giving to it, as he thinks: "Es un maldito avaro, como su abuelo" (86). Being a profligate, this further alienates him from his son. It seems Dingo attempts to break with the tradition of his class since the other children his age have been working in the fields for some time. He is seeking to escape precisely that fate. Dingo seeks a new life away from this region, another life style, and incidentally, he provides another possible escape to Juan's loneliness: an entrance into the world of magic. The world of puppetry symbolized by the arrival of Dingo's cart provides a break in the monotony of the sleepy lives of the inhabitants of the region. The different attitudes of the children toward the presence of the road company reflect their yearning for fantasy. The world of puppetry affords them a chance to forget la Artámila, providing an entrance into make-believe. For Dingo, the cart is a symbol of grandeur and a physical means of escape since his one desire is to leave with a road company. Like the other children,

The cart, a symbol of escape from monotony through make-believe for the village children, does not carry the same meaning for Juan Medinao. In a short story, "El incendio" from the collection Historias de la Artámila (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1961), Matute describes another incident when the world of magic fails to bring a youth happiness, but pain.
he is attracted to the world of magic, which holds no appeal for Juan Medinao who sees no splendor in the cart:

No era ningún carro espléndido: era un gran atadillo lleno de carcoma y gusanillos empolvados. Juan Niño, se estremeció. Estaba detrás de Dingo, y la nuca de su amigo se le ofrecía negra, con una inmovilidad de alucinado, de ensueño. Fue la última vez que le vio niño, abrasado de ilusión. (92)

This negative assessment of the cart and the performance parallels Juan's response to Dingo's promises to which he listens without faith:

Veremos el mar, y Madrid, compraremos cinco perros que aprenderán a bailar (96). [Juan] ... lo creyó imposible. (87)

For Juan, escape is the fantasy of Dingo's words only: as long as he can hear Dingo's promises, he can dream. Therefore, he rejects the presence of the road company as a premonition of the end of a stage of his life he will not be able to replace. Once he loses Dingo as a friend, he will lapse back into his former sadness.

With Dingo's departure, Juan's attempt to win friendship ends in failure, as he is left behind betrayed and empty-handed, with no alternative to solitude except his envy for his brother. Both Pablo and Dingo can leave and seek life elsewhere, whereas Juan is trapped to his life in the Artámila, physically and spiritually.

He has changed very little since early childhood to what he is in the present: a man of some forty plus years. Matute gives little importance to chronological age stressing rather the fusion of ages and their permanence in lieu of their passing. This is evident in the
fact that Juan is the same in childhood as in adulthood in his relations with Dingo and the rest of the household.

Paralleling his actions of years before, Dingo in adulthood comes to Juan for help, but now is open as to his intent. Equal to his response of years before, Juan is willing and does extend his help to Dingo. With pardon for his betrayer, Juan is anxious to help his "friend" because Juan the adult is in the same position as the lonely child had been in childhood, and his adult actions are a re-play of parallel ones. Juan, as always, is defined by other people. In the brief conversation between the two men, the "false" image Juan Niño portrays in life reappears. This conclusion is formed in the thoughts of Dingo, "Cada cual arma sus comedias, y las representa a su modo" ... (57). He resigns himself to the fact that Juan has always been the way he is as he thinks, "Siempre fue así, desde niños" (57). Dingo knows that Juan will eventually help him but that he will have to engage in a brief sermon regarding the past before he can consent.

The permanence of ages is also seen in Juan's childish behavior as an adult when his prayers are interrupted by the authorities who seek Juan on Dingo's behalf. The interruption seems to be upon a spurious and ineffectual religious meditation, as Juan's behavior indicates:

Entonces, el corazón se le hincho de ira. Gritó y arrojó un zapato contra la puerta. ... --Me has interrumpido, estaba rodeado de ángeles ... (21)

Juan's outburst reveals that he is still a child and that his spiritual retreat is inauthentic.
Religion in *Fiesta al noroeste*

In FN the presence of religion is a device for the introduction of the main theme of childhood. The religious framework of the novel is at once technical and thematic. Thematically, as well as formally, there is a constant insistence upon religious symbol and motif.

The novel opens with the arrival of Dingo at the Artámila Baja, and the reader is immediately acquainted with the past as he remembers his childhood there. His remembrances are presented amidst religious references: it is Sunday, three days before Ash Wednesday and Dingo (Domingo) was born on a Sunday. The presentation of Dingo among these religious elements prefaces his recalling of childhood.

Similarly, the introduction of the novel's protagonist Juan Medinao is framed by this combination of a religious setting followed by retrospective vision. Juan, in fact, is praying and is sought out by Dingo.

22With regard to the presence of religion in FN, Rafael Marfa de Hornedo has noted: "Y es lâstima que por falta de un estudio psicológico-religioso de la singular psicología y religiosidad de Juan Medinao y de lo que significa el catolicismo como camino para unir el alma con Dios, se haya frustrado la auténtica novela católica que encerraba, en potencia, *Fiesta al noroeste.*" Hornedo, "El mundo novelesco de Matute," p. 346. Margaret Jones has commented on Hornedo's remarks: "Rafael de Hornedo laments that such an abundance of religious material was not used to compose an authentic Catholic novel, but the creation of a Catholic novel was not the intention of this author. Although *Fiesta al noroeste* rests on a solid base of religious and Biblical allusions, references to Catholicism are secondary to the study of Juan's unhappy situation." Jones, "Religious Motifs in Matute," p. 418.
Todos en la casa, hasta el último mozo, sabían que Juan Medinao rezaba a aquellas horas y que no debía interrumpírsele. (21)

From his secluded moment of prayer, Juan is thrust into the past again as he meets Dingo face to face.

Still in terms of technique the central chapters of FN—five, six, and seven—illustrate in far more amplified terms the same juxtaposition of religious elements and childhood. In these passages Juan Medinao indulges in a lengthy confession. In this confession he reveals in detail his tortured childhood. Thus religion strictly on this formal level prefaced the recollections of childhood.

The Confession

Technically, the confession is a means to reassess what has been done, but certain omissions from orthodox procedure seem to cast doubt on its sincerity as a religious sacrament. First, Juan begins his confession "sin preámbulo, sin santiguarse"—in a hurried way. Similarly, the confession ends with no disclosure of the priest's reaction and the reader learns only that the confessor absolves the penitent. These omissions strongly suggest that the confession is of dubious merit as a religious expiation, furthermore, the priest is young, inexperienced, and apparently ill at ease in his role:

... y éste era nuevo en la Parroquia, desconocido aún para él. Era muy joven, pálido y llevaba lentes con montura de metal. ... El sacerdote no esperó su ayuda, y saltaba ya al suelo. El borde de la sotana estaba manchado por el barro y el agua. ... Con gesto tímido, empujó el puente de sus gafas hacia la frente, y sus labios temblaron levemente. Se esforzaba en aparecer duro, comprensivo, hombre. (59)
Quite possibly, the very manner in which the confession was conducted may be considered as further evidence of the shallowness of Juan's faith. But what is significant is that these omissions are irrelevant when one considers the confession as merely a self-revelation or demasking of Juan.

There are apparent similarities between the modern confessional novel. The confession as a literary form is best exemplified by the work of St. Augustine, and modern literature continues this traditional form. The modern confessional novel, like the Augustinian confession, deals with man's awareness of the problems and conflicts of his inner self. While St. Augustine resolves man's conflicts with Christian dogma and revelation, the modern confessional novel attempts to answer the challenge through the modern hero's search for self-understanding or greater perception. With these broad generalities in mind, let us consider one writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky, who provides a prescription for the genre of the modern confessional novel in *Notes from the Underground*. First, he employs the form of the French Romantics and his Russian predecessors like Gogol, Lermotov, and Turgenev. Where Dostoevsky differs from them, is in his intensification of the confessional form, as he turns it inward; his central

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24 Ibid., p. 2.

character is concerned not with exposition but with self-discovery.\textsuperscript{26} Unlike the romantic confessions, a central aspect of \textit{Notes from the Underground} is the preoccupation with suffering. Dostoevsky is further separated from earlier confessions in the abandonment of the concept of complete catharsis and purgation of guilt, so that confession is revelation and punishment in itself.

While Dostoevsky makes other contributions to the modern confessional novel, his most important is the quest for self-discovery. It is this aspect which closely parallels Juan Medinao's quest. There are, however, other aspects of \textit{FN} which are similar to the modern confessional novel:

\begin{quote}
The confessional novel presents a hero, at some point in his life, examining his past as well as his innermost thoughts, in an effort to achieve some form of perception.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

With regard to Juan Medinao, we find he is a man of over forty looking back to his childhood and recalling certain instances from the past—with his father, brother Pablo, and Friend, Dingo. Juan is shown in anguish and suffering but still in search of self. Unlike the confessional hero who often introduces himself to the reader at the outset, Juan does not speak about himself to anyone until he meets Dingo the friend who betrayed him.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[26]\textit{Ibid.}
\item[27]\textit{Ibid.}, p. 8.
\end{footnotes}
Like the confessional hero, Juan is afflicted and unbalanced, disillusioned and groping for meaning. The confessional hero is further described:

He faces many of the same problems which confront every modern hero but is distinguished by his reaction to them. He views his condition not with anger, but with a deep internal pain; he rejects external rebellion in favor of self-laceration. His suffering originates not in the chaos of the world but in the chaos within the self and for him the only possible order or value must be found in self-understanding.

That Juan views his "physical" condition with deep internal pain and not anger is evident from the manner in which he has learned to suffer in silence the scornful mockery of the children with regard to his physical deformities. Juan expects to be ridiculed and when he is not, he is surprised. He accepts ridicule as a part of life. The chaos that is within Juan—like that of the confessional hero—cannot be solved by external rebellion, because his suffering seems gratuitous to him. Yet, from Juan's internal chaos, stems his pursuit of a new self through others. It is this desire which prompts him to seek Pablo as an essential part of his own being. Through his brother, Juan would acquire a different dimension and this motivates his marriage to Delia—an attempt to gain a new self through her but he fails in this endeavor.

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28 Ibid., p. 9
29 Ibid.
It has been noted that the hero's confession often occurs in a cell, an underground hole, or dark city; and that on other occasions the hero relates his story to another character in a setting similar to the religious confession.\(^{30}\) As we mentioned, Juan Medinao's confession takes place at his home in a part of the house which is reminiscent of a confessional.

... Juan condujo al sacerdote a una estancia apartada donde había una cruz de madera en la pared. El curita se sentó en una silla, mirando hacia la ventana, con la estola al cuello y las manos cruzadas. (60)

The setting of the confession in Juan's house is apart from the rest of the house and the cross recalls to mind the religious note of the crucifixion, it is a confessional locus.

Juan Medinao like the confessional hero looks inward and this turn suspends the course of external events--in this case, the wake and funeral of the child--while the hero recalls his past.

Among other characteristics of the confessional genre, is the appearance of the double.

The double--a more psychological complex version of the mirror symbol--is used consistently to express the confessional hero's relations with others in terms of self-discovery.\(^{31}\)

In FN, Juan has chosen his double--Pablo--who refuses to be Juan's other self. Thus, Juan, still searching for what he does not have,

\(^{30}\)Ibid.

\(^{31}\)Ibid., p. 11.
selects his brother just as he previously sought love in family and God, and later in Delia. Failing in these endeavors, Juan is left to accept a self-fulfilling idea of the "double."

The final aspect of the basic definition of the confessional novel to be discussed is the hero's search for perception. The religious idea of purgation or absolution through confession is the forerunner of the search. The modern hero is unrelated to forgiveness of any external religion. The confession is prompted by his desire for self-understanding rather than purgation. Juan conducts his confession for that purpose also. Thus, the omissions from the orthodox confession presented at the outset of this study appear totally justified. Let us now consider Juan's confession in terms of its general content as it leads to his self-revelation to the "center of his existence":

He (the modern hero) uncovers elements of pain, humiliation, and guilt, yet continues his quest as his suffering increases, hoping at last to find some perception of the truth that lies at the center of his existence.

Juan opens his confession with "Soy un hombre soberbio. La soberbia me envenena ..." (60). He confesses his weakness and later, from his childhood recollections, we learn that he was isolated from family, society, and friends. The child Juan realizes he is different from others—not only physically, but he believes spiritually—and turns to religion for comfort.

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
El era un criatura especial, que rezaba a Dios para que lo apartara pronto de los hombres, con los que no le unía ningún lazo. (62)

This religious episode is but another indication of the failure that has marked his life. From such statements as the following, "El quería ser santo, como otros niños quieren ser aviadores o toreros" (63), one realizes that he has a mistaken sense of religion. Just as he wants to be God's chosen one, he wants to be a saint. His interest does not lie in true religious piety, but in self-interest. The search is carried out through those nearest to him—family, brother, peer—and through false religious motions.

Religion as a means of consolation for Juan has proved a failure as in childhood, which it recalls:

Juan Medina bajó la cabeza de golpe y empezó a rezar. Su oración no tenía nada que ver con su voz. Su oración era una vuelta a la adolescencia, a la infancia. (32)

Thus the religious framework is the confessional flashback. The prayers in themselves are of dubious religious intent as the flashback does not dwell upon religion per se.

In the recollections of Juan's childhood, he failed to learn his Catechism. "Su fe era como la sal del mar, que él no conocía. Aún no había leído nada del Catecismo ..." (40). Juan never expresses real interest in formal religion: "El maestro era calvo y le daba al Catecismo un tono fatigado, entre humo de tabaco" (41). His religious fervor is aroused only as a result of his denunciation of his father: he turns to pray in hopes of securing his own salvation in view of
the father's damnation. The gentle nature of his religious mother also prompts him to seek religious consolation after her death but Juan uses his religion to protect himself from life, providing a means of escape from reality. Thus the religious mask Juan wears in no way constitutes true piety.

In conclusion, from our study of childhood in PN, it may be said that Matute has chosen children to portray the loneliness, and alienation of the human condition. As a post Spanish Civil War novelist, the author's own personal experiences as a child must in some way have influenced her choice. Yet her portrayal of the human condition through childhood is not limited to a particular historical circumstance. Children appear in conflict with parents, peers, brother, and themselves. These conflicts intensify an ontological state of being which controls not only childhood but adulthood as well.
CHAPTER IV

PRIMERA MEMORIA

Primera memoria (1960), the first novel of the trilogy, Los mercaderes, won the Premio Nadal in 1959.¹ It was regarded by many critics as Matute's masterpiece. We will use this part of the trilogy since the other novels, Los soldados lloran de noche (1964) and La trampa (1969),² only treat childhood in a fragmentary manner, and the children of Primera memoria are adults in the second and third parts.³ The study of the first novel as a complete work in itself is justified by the author's statements that each novel has an independent plot structure.


²Ana María Matute, Los soldados lloran de noche (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1964); and La trampa (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1969).

³In an attempt to further clarify my reasons for the selection of Primera memoria, brief summaries of the other two novels of the trilogy will be presented:

In Los soldados lloran de noche, Manuel appears after his release from the reformatory. (Neither Matia nor Borja appears.) Other links to the first novel of the trilogy include the continuation of the "mercader" theme; Jorge de Son Major has died, leaving his inheritance to Manuel who rejects it. The story deals primarily with Manuel and his effort to learn about Jeza, a mysterious person killed during the Civil War. Through the memories of Jeza's wife, the reader is once again confronted with the theme of childhood. In this case, only in a limited and fragmentary way.
In *Primera memoria* through total retrospective vision, the adult Matia portrays her reluctant but inevitable entrance into adulthood, a progression towards maturity marked by personal disillusionment. In addition, the narrator shows life on an island (Mallorca) during the Spanish Civil War, giving the reader a description of her family, friends, the setting, and her own personalized "disorder and early sorrow." In these descriptions, the child-adolescent Matia is the central figure through whom all others in the story are seen. Thus, from a child's view of life, the main themes of the novel are developed: alienation and estrangement; escape (through the imagination); the theme of Cain and Abel; the "mercader" atmosphere. This study will show how childhood is at the center of the novel as reality is being viewed by a child.

*Primera memoria* juxtaposes the cruel world of childhood (adolescence) and the equally cruel world of adults. This aspect of the novel has prompted Yves Berger to say:

> "Throughout the present study, all references to the novel, *Primera memoria* will be designated by the abbreviation PM."
Les adolescents ne deviennent pas adultes dans l'innocence, mais dans le mal. C'est ce que Matia comprend admirablement que, loin d'en vouloir à Borja, pleure avec lui, pleure sous son épaule les vacances finies (ils en sort au dernier jour), l'enfance perdue, l'adolescence en allée, le mal accepté, en fin.  

The theme of childhood in PM is centered primarily in Matia and the incarcerating factors that surround her: a domineering virago grandmother; their geographic isolation; and the war from which they have fled. Consideration of the other equally tortured children show that childhood not only constitutes the basic theme of PM but that this theme is a constant that reaches out to all realms of the novel.

The grandmother is the most dominant figure of authority to play a significant role in the lives of the children. Other characters, such as the maid, Antonia, and Aunt Emilia, will be discussed together with the grandmother as they also represent authority and incarceration to the children.

There are secondary characters who interact with the children: Los Taronjí, the fathers, Jorge de Son Major. Taken as a whole these may be considered as figures outside the authoritarian world. Our study of this group will deal precisely with the lack of authority they exert over the children.

A major part of our discussion will deal with the children Borja and Matia, and their relations with their peers: Lauro, Manuel, "los otros"—the children from a different social class. Within our

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5Berger, "L'Espagne d' Matute," p. 899.
examination of the peers, a dominant characteristic will be the cruelty shown to one another.

In PM childhood apparently offers an escape or double plan of escape and avoidance in the face of the impositions forced by the adults. The children fearful of losing their freedom try the escapes available to them: imaginary or real. Gradually, they realize that this dreaded loss of freedom marks the entrance into adulthood: disillusion and reluctance to grow up are the results of such a discovery. We will now examine the major incarcerating factors.

Adult Figures of Authority: Women

The dominance of the grandmother over the entire household is evidenced from the very opening line of the novel as the presence of this character will dominate the lives of the children both directly and indirectly. That the novel opens with a reference to the grandmother is but one indication that she will assume a great deal of importance:

Mi abuela tenía el pelo blanco, en una ola encrespada sobre la frente, que le daba cierto aire colérico.®

Her hold on the characters' lives is maintained throughout the novel and even in La trampa—which deals with the events of Matia's adult

®Ana María Matute, Primera memoria (4th ed.; Barcelona, Ediciones Destino, 1966), p. 9. All subsequent references to PM will be indicated by page numbers only.
life—the grandmother is still portrayed as an authoritarian force.\(^7\)

The dominance of the grandmother is not limited to the house—which she rules—but extends to the whole unnamed island. The fact that her name is not revealed until the second scene and in a most inconspicuous way\(^8\) further emphasizes her particular role as the "grandmother"—instituted authority.

The presence is evoked through Matia's recollection. We are given an unfavorable picture of her: that of a choleric, pitiless jailer.

Already in the first paragraph of the story there is a direct nexus established between Borja, the much loved and hated cousin, and the grandmother:

Supongo que Borja heredó su gallardía, su falta absoluta de piedad. Yo, tal vez, esta gran tristeza. (9)

Matia sees the grandmother not only as a fearsome person, but she also endows her with a quality of vulgarity and repulsiveness. We see her hands with the brownish spots of old skin, while:

\(^7\)For another view of the grandmother's role, see Hornedo, "El mundo novelesco de Matute," p. 334. He maintains that while many critics detect a note of oppressiveness in the grandmother, the children are free and do as they please.

I would like to add that further regard for the tyrannical role of the grandmother is not unjust when one considers that in the final novel of the trilogy she still maintains her hold over the children, now adults. Hornedo's article did appear in 1960 and the final novel of the trilogy was published in 1969. But even so, the grandmother's rule is obvious in the first novel.

\(^8\)The grandmother is not named until the second "estampa": "... y ésta su casa también, doña Práxedes ..." (PM, p. 40).
The mention of the jewelry prefaces the brief description of the cane "con puño de oro" always used by the grandmother as a sceptre—another symbol of authority—and the opera glasses with false stones. Besides revealing Matia's distaste, there is suggested here the vulgarity and conspicuous wealth which we are to see as the essence of the "mercader" way of life.

The grandmother's control is not limited to the house and its occupants, but extends to other inhabitants of the island as well. Her wealth is reflected in the reference to her holdings:

Senfa, supuse, uno de la familia de Sa Malene, que tenían su casita y su huerto en el declive. Entre sus muros, vivían como en una isla perdida en medio de la tierra de la abuela, ya muy cerca del mar. (37)

For further discussion of the title Los mercaderes, the following should be considered: "It is helpful to an understanding of Los mercaderes to realize that the word 'mercaderes,' in Catalan, was long synonymous with the social class that came to be called the bourgeoisie in other countries, and that in this trilogy Ana María Matute has thrown down the gauntlet to the bourgeois mentality in a manner not dissimilar to that of Jean Stafford in the United States." Wythe, "The World of Ana María Matute," p. 26.

Matute is critical of religious hypocrisy, exemplified in PM by the grandmother: "The bejeweled grandmother in Primera memoria directed 'her prayers to a God of her exclusive invention and appurtenance,' and all the children in the novel learn to dissemble in order to please those who have money and power." Ibid., p. 24.

In addition, let us note the following: "The title of the trilogy recalls the Biblical mercaderes who defiled God's house, but the term is amplified to embrace those who remorselessly disregard the rights of others for their own profit." Jones, "Religious Motifs in Matute," p. 419.

Lack of concern for others in PM is best exemplified by Borja, his mother, and grandmother. They allow Manuel to be sent to a reform school although his innocence is revealed by Matia. These characters best express the "mercader mentality" against which Matute writes.
Very few inhabitants thus seem to eke out a living in a tiny spot surrounded by grandmother-owned land. The older woman controls not only land, but lives as well: she arranged for Antonia's marriage and sent Lauro to the seminary and paid for his schooling.

The child narrator reveals her grandmother's less admirable habits, such as her incessant spying on the neighbors with her opera glasses. The children interpreted her surveillance of the houses of the island as her desire to observe the actions of the women who lived in the "declive":

Allí estaría, como un dios panzudo y descascarillado, como un enorme y glotón muñecazo, moviendo los hilos de sus marionetas. (60)

Beyond the grotesque realm of small town gossip lies the grandmother's desire to dominate all those who are around her, and in this case, those within her sight. The surveillance of the grandmother was not confined to what her opera glasses would reach, like great powers, there is a ubiquitous quality about her vigilance that reaches through walls and fences:

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. (60)

Although very aware of the grandmother's power, Matia and Borja will not recognize the extent of her full authority until they become adults. A crucial instance of their recognition of the grandmother's
power occurs in *La trampa*. There the grandmother, now almost a century old, has called the members of the family to the island to celebrate her birthday, her ninety-ninth. The hate Matia once felt for her grandmother is forgotten, and she makes the following entries in her diary:

... ella es el tiempo. Siempre igual, viva y mortal, eterna paradoja ... Nosotros crecemos, nos agostamos, morimos. Ella triunfa, quieta y solemnemente, sin asombro ni regocijo, sin aparente bienestar. 

Her influence is still felt in the lives of Matia and Borja, now adults, who are bound to the old lady by their weaknesses. For Borja, life has become a long wait for the inheritance he will receive upon the grandmother's death. Matia now a very withdrawn adult now sees the grandmother not as an authoritarian jailer who imposes restrictions upon her life, but as sheer will that has triumphed over life itself. While the grandmother's indirect control over Matia has lessened, it has not diminished the vital impact of this old lady in the shaping of Matia's entire life. The process has changed in nature, though not in essence, from direct incarceration—as Matia's whole childhood was dominated by her grandmother—to a decidedly psychological realm of dominance. That is to say, the essential events in Matia's life have followed a similar pattern both in childhood and as an adult, and her confined childhood has turned into a shying away from life in adulthood. In the case of Borja, the grandmother's control remains decisive throughout. Unable to make his own life a financial success,
he awaits her death to inherit her wealth. Thus he upholds the mercader mentality that tyrannized his childhood. For Borja, adult incarceration is material.

Paralleling the omniscient presence of the grandmother in the lives of the children and the islanders are certain facets of the environment which constitute additional bondage for the inhabitants. References are made to the mist, wind, clouds, all of which encircle them like the sea:

... la calígine, el viento abrasado y húmedo desgarrándose en las pitas, o empujando las hojas castañas bajo los almendros; las hinchadas nubes de plomo borrando el brillo verde del mar. (9-10)

This environment defines the island in terms of a jail, yet, simultaneously, the island is a refuge.

The children are physically separated from the war—on the island—but their refuge is not entirely satisfactory. They suffer boredom:

Y seguimos los cuatro—ella, tía Emilia, mi primo Borja y yo—, empapados de calor, aburrimiento y soledad, ansiosos de unas noticias que no acababan de ser decisivas—la guerra empezó apenas hacía 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. (10)

The children are not only trapped by the grandmother, but the island itself. They are isolated from the danger of the war; protected from the visible signs of horror; but, in a sense they are "shipwrecked" there. As their stay on the island is forced upon them, this would-be
paradise is regarded as a "jail" as well as a refuge. The image of
the island as a "jail" is reinforced by the references to Matia's
arrival there: on this day, there is a strong wind and "un pedazo de
mar plomizo" (14). Matia's hotel room strongly resembles a cell in a
prison with its "cama de hierro forjado." The fact that her grand­
mother sleeps in the next room reinforces this idea. Her arrival is
marked by unpleasant memories and her fears are revealed in her
visions from her bed:

... las sombras enzarzadas de la cama, como serpientes,
dragones, o misteriosas figuras que apenas me atrevía a
mirar. (14)

The dragon image associated here with her fear, will reappear later
with Jorge de Son Major--a St. George--who becomes in her fancy the
killer of dragons as we shall see. While fear and disgust engulf
Matia in the hotel room, she retreats to her imagination in search of
the solace of a familiar setting: her house and her former governess,
Mauricia, that provide happy memories.

Matia's recollection brings back the smell of apples collected
by Mauricia, and with it the comfort she enjoyed in that past; but it
also reminds her of Mauricia's sickness which prompts the girl's
arrival to the island--and an end to happiness. On the very day of
arrival, she already feels trapped and observed.

Matia also takes imaginary refuge in the islands of her
precious Atlas. It must be noted that the reference to the Atlas
anticipates the imaginary island ("la isla mia" as Matia calls it)
that she flys to later. This reference may be contrasted with the
real island on which the children are to remain. Matia now considers
the sources of refuge available to her: one is the atlas which offers
to carry her off to imaginary places. But her imaginary trip is
interrupted by the intrusion of a frightening bed shadow, as reality
invades her imaginary haven. There is still one more source of comfort
available: her doll Gorogó. The latter has been carried surrepti­
tiously: "escondido entre el jersey y el pecho" (16)--and at this
particular time she can touch the doll which is impervious to the
intrusions of reality: past or present.

While she recollects the past, the girl discovers she has left
behind her "teatrito de cartón" and her fairy tale books. This adds
to her distress:

Y sentí una rabia sorda contra mí misma. Y contra la abuela,
porque nadie me recordó eso, y ya no lo tenfa. (16)

The absence of familiar possessions intensifies her loneliness and the
negative regard for her grandmother. Matia's arrival on the island
already reveals her future behavior: retreat into herself and her
imagination to escape the unpleasant situation embodied mainly by the
grandmother.

Later on she is enrolled in a convent school, another kind of
"jail" against which she rebells. This revolt gives her a sense of
pleasure, as it is a retort to the grandmother's statement: "Te
domaremos." Her eventual expulsion from the school represents a
victory for the girl who will no longer be subjected to its authority, although she will not be able to escape the grandmother's.

The war and its role in the novel may be summarized as another incarcerating factor in the lives of the children as it forces them to remain on the island. Its primary function is seen in the break it causes in the normal life pattern of the children who now must wait several months before they will be allowed to resume their education at their respective schools--ironically, thus allowing freedom from one kind of discipline, and postponement of their education.

Matia's Aunt Emilia (Borja's mother) assumes importance in the lives of the children--not as a figure of authority in the sense of the grandmother--but as a representative from the adult world also characterized by displeasing qualities which Matia rejects.

Through Matia's eyes Aunt Emilia is described as:

La tía Emilia estaba siempre así: como esperando algo. Como acechando. Como si estuviera empapada de alguna sustancia misteriosa y desconocida. (64)

Matia's evaluation of her aunt centers upon the latter's insincerity: Matia doubts that her aunt is sad due to the absence of her husband. Further, Matia affirms that her aunt cannot communicate in a meaningful way with children. This attitude towards her elder emerges from the aunt's inability to comprehend the real importance of the doll, Gorogó:

"No es eso, ya no duermo abrazada a Gorogó--en realidad no dormí nunca con él, sólo con un oso que se llamaba Cefín--. Este es para otras cosas; para viajar y contarle injusticias. No es un muñeco para quererle, estúpida." (126-127)
Matia's aunt, unlike the grandmother, attempts to win the girl's approval and friendship: she gives the child cigarettes; promises her free time; and offers to be her friend. Nevertheless, Matia refuses to establish friendship with her non-peer. Unlike the rigid air of inflexibility projected by the grandmother, the aunt—though ineffectual—does profess to extend compassion to the child.

While Matia rejects her aunt as a friend and confidante, in a crisis she turns to her for assistance. She confesses that Manuel is innocent and has been betrayed; a confession she cannot make to her grandmother. Since Matia's regard for her aunt is uncomplimentary in nature, the child turns to her for help only as the more accessible adult.

The grandmother sums up the awareness both she and her daughter entertain with regard to the life pattern of the children on the island:

No han conocido buenos tiempos: esta ruina, la guerra ... ¡Yo, a la edad de Matia, ya tenía cuatro o cinco pretendientes! ... Están en una edad difícil, y estos son malos tiempos. (211)

In this speech, it seems to be inferred that the children are forced into a prolonged and stifling childhood due to unavoidable circumstances of the war. It is significant that Matia does not have the occasion to participate in the normal activities of a girl her age: she has no female companions nor is there opportunity for a normal social life with young men. One can generalize that while the children react negatively to the figures of authority represented by the
The grandmother and the aunt, the latter in turn, are aware of the youngsters' predicament.

Antonia, the maid, is seen as a figure of authority only as an instrument of the grandmother's rule. Her role in life is dictated by the grandmother's will. This includes her relations with the children and with her own son. She thus acts as a figure of indirect authority.

In her relations with Matia, Antonia is portrayed in a negative way. As an extension of the grandmother, she invades Matia's privacy even as she sleeps, reflecting the incarcerating presence of the relatives:

Me molestaba que alguien me vieras dormir, como si fuera a descubrir mis sueños estando prendida en ellos, tan terriblemente indefensa. (71)

Always portrayed through the eyes of the narrator, the adults appear as representative of a definite attitude: authority—grandmother; freedom—Jorge de Son Major; or merely as symbolic figures. They are important only as they are concerned with the lives of the children, and are not as fully developed as the child characters. This trend was apparent also in *Fiesta al noroeste*. The primary importance of the protagonists of both *PM* and *FN* is as children in their remembered youth.
Adult Figures Outside of Authority: Men

Also playing a role in the lives of the children are those adult figures who do not exercise any authority: these include the Taronjí, the parents of Matia and Borja, and Jorge de Son Major.

The masculine influence is limited at this point in the lives of the children--Matia and Borja--a direct consequence of the war. Both fathers are engaged in fighting and, due to their absence, the supervision of the children remains in the realm of the feminine figures of authority--grandmother, aunt, and maid. The absence of heads of the families not only intensifies the children's loneliness, but also encourages a youthful rebellious attitude.

The fathers of Borja and Matia never appear in the novel and their association with the war make them very remote in the lives of their children. They are a part of that distant war, and as Matia says of her uncle:

Pero era como un muerto, realmente. Tan muerto como el mismo abuelo. Desde hacía dos meses apenas sabíamos de él: telegramas, vagas noticias, sólo. (65)

The uncle assumes remote proportions in the non-communication due to the war. On the other hand, the Taronjís are highly regarded by the children for their mysterious role linked to the war; they belong to "the other side." These adult figures are a visible sign of the intrigues of war, yet they are not directly involved in the lives of the children. They emerge as an enigma, as another dimension of the adult world which the children do not understand.
While the fathers and the Taronjí—masculine representatives of the adult world—indirectly affect the thoughts of the children, one strong masculine figure appears who will affect them directly: Jorge de Son Major. Although a real adult, Jorge de Son Major—mysterious and disliked by his peers—becomes a fantasy or legend to the children.

Jorge is indirectly introduced through conflicting opinions of different characters. From the point of view of the adults—he is bad; for Borja, Matia, and the children—he is a mysterious and romantic figure. Borja, for example, considers him "un ser fantástico" (50). A detailed account of Jorge as a young man is related by one of the minor figures—like Jorge, a seafaring man. This other sailor, Es Ton, who only appears briefly constitutes first of all a kind of initial step in the gradual revelation of Jorge for the children. He is after all a representative of the seafaring world of Jorge:

Estaba embrujado para las mujeres: se volvían locas y acababan marchándose con aquel diablo. ¡Tenía horrorizada la isla! ... vivía siempre en el Delfín, como en un barco fantasma, sin trabajar, sólo gastando, gastando, en sus tonterías y locuras. (102)

Jorge, in the present, is an old man who lives in seclusion. His reputation among the islanders has reached phantasmal proportions as this remark of the mothers to their children indicates: "... si no eres bueno te llevará el señor de Son Major" (102). He appears late in the novel, and his presence takes hold gradually in the lives of the children, but despite this, Jorge will play a vital role in the
lives of Matia, Manuel and Borja. With little else to think about and
tantalized by his dark reputation in the town, the children find Jorge
attractive.

Jorge is equated to St. George, the dragon killer, in the
children's minds. That is to say, Jorge's marginal and alienated
status is quite in line with the children's own isolation. The dragon
imagery creates an air of mystery as Matia is forever seeing dragons,
even in the bathroom:

El mármol rojizo del lavabo, veteado de venas sangrientas,
y el negro de la madera con entrelazados dragones de talla
que me llenaban de estupor, es uno de los recuerdos más
vivos de aquel tiempo. (73)

and later in the garden:

... en el sendero, en el declive, junto al pozo de
nuestra casa, con su dragón cubierto de musgo y hierros
forjados, rojos de orín. (89)

the vision of Jorge, the dragon-killer, is expressed even by Es
Mariné:

-- Habéis visto el San Jorge de la vidriera?--dijo aquel
día Es Mariné-. Así era don Jorge el de Son Major.
Atravesado por el sol, en Santa María, rodeado de ojos
transparentes como copas de un vino rubí, resplandecía
San Jorge, con su corona de oro, su armadura y su gran
lanza verde. (107)

Jorge, like the grandmother, is a strong influence in Matia's life,
but a benevolent one. It is the good seen in his character that
further serves to form a bond between Jorge, the killer of evil, and the children.

He appears as they are about to leave the island and childhood behind. He is the embodiment of their childlike dreams, the only acceptable adult, a link towards maturity. In reality Jorge bears little resemblance to the fabricated images in the minds of both children and adults. Matia and Borja slowly discover the real Jorge as they move away from fantasy to reality.

The profound disharmony that dominates the relationships of the children and adults result principally from attempts of the children to carry on their lives with no interference from adults. Their deep involvements occur only with their peers, so that a major part of the theme of childhood in *Primera memoria* concerns Matia and Borja in their relation with each other and with other children: Lauro, Manuel, and "los otros," representatives of a different social and economic class.

**Other Incarcerating Factors**

Matia and Borja are a refuge for each other, their personal world excludes adults. But Borja's acceptance of Matia occurs only as a result of her open conflict with their grandmother. After defying her, she observes:

Por primera vez, si no la simpatía, me ganó la oculta admiración de Borja, que me admitió en su compañía y confidencias. (17)
The continued antagonistic attitude of the grandmother toward her granddaughter is clarified later in the story as the reader learns that Matia's father is fighting on the opposite side—with forces alien to the grandmother.

The alliance of the children is initially expressed in their refuge within the house—the "logia"—a place away from the imposing figures of authority:

Así, los dos, en la logia—que a la abuela no le gustaba pisar, y que sólo veía a través de las ventanas abiertas—hallábamos el único refugio en la desesperante casa, siempre hollada por las pisadas macizas de la abuela, que olfateaba como un lebrel nuestras huidas al pueblo, al declive, a la ensenada de Santa Catalina, al Port ... (19)

This alliance is further strengthened in their joint deception of the adults so that the basis for this friendship evolves from a mutual need and a common enemy:

Borja no me tenía cariño, pero me necesitaba y prefería tenerme dentro de su aro, como tenía a Lauro. (20)

From the references to Borja, Matia presents the following image of her cousin: a shrewd, cunning youth who manipulates others to his own advantage.

No sé si Borja odiaba a la abuela, pero sabía fingir muy bien delante de ella. Supongo que desde muy niño alguien le inculcó el disimulo como una necesidad. Era dulce y suave en su presencia, y conocía muy bien el significado de las palabras herencia, dinero, tierras. Era dulce y suave, digo, cuando le convenía aparecer así ante determinadas personas mayores. (12)
Matia underlines Borja's dishonesty and covetousness, he is, with his nascent mercader mentality, very much like the grandmother. While his cousin openly admits her dislikes, Borja does not disclose his in the presence of adults.

Borja's hypocrisy is further evidenced in his religious meditation. To remain in the good graces of the grandmother and his own mother, Borja indulges in spurious piety:

Borja se persignaba, el rosario entre sus dedos dorados, como un frailecito. Eso parecía, con sus desnudos pies castaños dentro de las sandalias. (23)

Matia notes the ease with which Borja performs his deceptions, and also the manner in which he steals money from his mother and grandmother.

Borja maintains distant relations with Manuel, a contemporary who is befriended by Matia. The aloofness Borja displays for his peer turns into jealousy which erupts when he learns of Manuel's origin. Manuel, as Jorge's son, embodies the wish Borja can never achieve. Borja who idolizes Jorge would have traded places gladly with Manuel:

... aunque dijera todo eso, no quería parecerse al tío Álvaro. Quería parecerse a Jorge de Son Major, el del Delfín y las islas griegas. (156)

This intense jealousy drives Borja to falsely accuse Manuel of a crime he, Borja, has committed.
Manuel's physical prowess is established at the outset, immediately distinguishing him from Borja, the smaller, who is resentful of the fact that even Matia is taller than he is:

Era alto y corpulento para su edad, y sólo al mirarlo me pareció que no necesitaba pedirle la barca a Borja: se la podía llevar con sólo adelantar un paso y darle a mi primo un empujón. (42)

Furthermore, Manuel is quiet and honest, a member from another social class—"los otros"—who becomes linked to the group including Borja and Matia. It is compatibility instead of social rank, or birth, or political persuasion which constitutes the basis for his friendship with Matia.

The initial encounter between Matia and Manuel consists of a dialogue—a type of "confession" of their past—and is chiefly concerned with their respective families. The gesture made by Manuel—he puts his hand on Matia's—reflects this mutual understanding and attraction which transcends social and economic bounds.

Como si con él, con su mano, con mi infancia que se perdía, con nuestra ignorancia y bondad, quisiera hundir nuestras manos para siempre, clavarlas en la tierra aún limpia, vieja y sabia. (144)

This relationship between Matia and Manuel constitutes another cause of envy for Borja, but, the main motive of it is that he is the real son of Jorge de Son Major, Borja's idol. Thus for him, Manuel remains a rival and represents all that he, Borja, is not. Let us recall that Borja's jealousy of Manuel is aroused not for the personal attributes
of Manuel alone, as in the case of Juan Medinao and Pablo. Rather, here Borja wishes to be Manuel so that he can be the son of Jorge. Through Borja's jealousy we see a new turn to the Cain and Abel theme: a child wants another child's father. Borja wants to be a little like Jorge. This desire motivates Borja to seek revenge as he feels victimized by a circumstance he cannot change.

Apparent in Borja's response to his passions is his attempt to mold reality into conformity with his own desires. Borja, "gran farsante" (23) is now faced with a reality he truly cannot alter. Therefore, he instigates a plan--a farce--to destroy his rival. Through his actions, Borja affects grown-up ways: expose, intrigue, but is unable to assume more positive forms of maturity.

The betrayal itself occurs shortly before Borja and Matia leave the island, and comes about as a final desperate act on Borja's part: he has asked Manuel to keep a box of money which he has stolen from his grandmother. Subsequently, Borja accuses Manuel of the robbery and Matia does not speak on Manuel's behalf until it is too late. Manuel is then sent to a reform school for a felony he did not commit.

This act of betrayal occurs almost at the novel's end. The end of the vacation--also the end of the novel--parallels the end of childhood as this last act indicates:

Algo había en aquel sol invernal, que repetía: "el último día" o "la última vez." (235)
Borja's plot initiated in the church extends to the home of his grandmother and includes a second false confessional to her. In the events that follow, other family members participate playing each their roles.

Borja's betrayal of Manuel initiates him into adulthood through evil, while on the side of the adult world the aunt's attitude toward Matia's revelation of Manuel's innocence shows a similar pattern:

"Bueno, bueno, no te atormentes. Gracias a Dios vais a ir al colegio, y todo volverá a normalizarse." ... "No lo tomes así, ya te darás cuenta algún día de que esto son chiquilladas, cosas de niños." (243)

At this moment tía Emilia adopts an attitude similar to Borja's in her disregard for truth, becoming like Matia, an accomplice of Borja's. In presenting this collective betrayal, Matute reveals the constant Judas-like quality of human nature:

She does not expect much of human nature but she is tolerant of weakness. After all, we are poor suffering mortals caught in the toils of our passions and of human circumstance. Poor infirm Juan Niño comes to understand his burly father: perhaps he drinks too much, neglects his family, and has a weakness for country wenches, but there was no real evil in him; "he was stupid, nothing more." Matia forgives Borja his pretentiousness, his arrogance, his hard heart: "... my poor brother, were you not merely a solitary creature like me, like nearly all the children in the world?"

Borja, striving to achieve his goal of self-prophecy is unsuccessful.

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Rather than submit to his failure, he attempts to mold reality to his satisfaction even at the expense of someone else's freedom.\textsuperscript{12}

At the story's end, Manuel's imprisonment continues with the theme of incarceration revealed throughout the novel. While Borja and Matia may leave the island at last, to learn that in adulthood there is no real freedom, Manuel's incarceration seems doubly ironic as he is an innocent adolescent.

The same cruelty pervades Matia and Borja's relationship with Lauro, their tutor. The latter, like his mother Antonia, is an extension of the grandmother's authority, but in turn, he becomes the victim of such authority as he is the link between the adults who command, and peer groups that blackmail: a mediator between the two generations who also fails.

The representative of abusive authority, Lauro finds no escape from his circumstances: a failure at the priestly vocation that the grandmother had set for him, he now has to please her by being the tutor for her grandchildren. Indebted to her for her generosity, he is more of a dependent than a protegé, further ridiculed and rejected by the rebellious children. The interior conflicts and sufferings of

\textsuperscript{12}A similar circumstance occurs in Richard Hughes's A High Wind in Jamaica. "Critics have compared it (Primera memoria) favorably with Richard Hughes's A High Wind in Jamaica as a tragedy of innocence in evil." \textit{Ibid.}, p. 25.

In Hughes's novel, it is primarily one character, Emily who condemns the crew members for a crime she has committed. Another girl, the fourteen-year-old Margaret, becomes a whore. Hughes presents, then, counter-stereotypes of the child, in this case--girls. They are no longer victims, but aggressors.
this young person are never presented in detail nor does he express his true feelings. One must assume from his actions and remarks, and from those of the children towards him, that Lauro is one of the most tortured youngsters.

A member of another class, Lauro is one of the "others." This explains the rudeness of Borja and Matia towards him, and also his own behavior. He is different from the rest and suffers because of this. The frequent references to his nervousness and constant perspiring are proof of this uneasiness and his physical awkwardness is enhanced by his clothes:

Su camisa estaba sucia, Antonia no tuvo tiempo para lavársela, seguramente, porque lavaba y planchaba nuestra ropa. (92)

Neglected by his mother who has to care for others, Lauro's latent homosexuality further sets him apart. The discovery of this deviance is the club Borja uses to keep Lauro in perpetual blackmail. This condition could have also been a possible reason for his leaving the seminary.

Lauro bears Borja's cruelty but admits his true feeling to Matia who recognizes his anger even as he manages to control his temper and suffers insults. Only on one occasion does he allow his true feelings to surface: in his denunciation of the "mercaderes" of the island. As a member of a subordinate class, Lauro is a fitting spokesman for this criticism:
"Esta es una isla vieja y malvada. Una isla de fenicios y de mercaderes, de sanguijuelas y de farsantes. Oh, avaros comerciantes. En las casas de este pueblo, en sus muros y en sus secretas paredes, en todo lugar, hay monedas de oro enterradas." (20-21)

Because of his economic and social dependency upon the grandmother, the bitterness which he hides towards the class she represents emerges through this vehement attack of the "mercader" class.

At the very end of the novel, it is learned that he will go off to fight, as his role as tutor has ended because the children will leave. Before his departure, Matia notes for the first time the small difference in age between Lauro and them:

Vi su tembloroso perfil, con el bigote escaso, ralo ... Y, de pronto, ¡qué joven me pareció! Hasta aquel momento nunca di cuenta de que era un muchacho, sólo un muchacho; apenas mayor que nosotros, metido de lleno en las sucias cosas de los hombres y de las mujeres; hundido hasta los hombros en el mundo, en aquel pozo al que todos estábamos ya resbalando. (162)

This point marks Lauro's entry into the adult world: he goes off to war where he is killed. That he should die—denied the opportunity to overcome his social condition—emphasizes the gift of life and escape awarded to the chosen ones: Borja and Matia.

Lauro is not the only member of the "other" group who is restrained from entry into the world of Matia and Borja. Matia recalls a representative group from another social class, which she calls "ellos": Guiem, the blacksmith's son; Toni, the driver's son; and others. These boys as a group belong to the proletariat. On the opposing side, she refers to "nosotros" meaning herself, Borja, Juan
Antonio, the doctor's son, and the two sons of the grandmother's manager, León and Carlos. These boys are representative of the middle class. The interactions of the two groups is limited to childish war play and only on days of truce are they able to socialize.

Within the child's world, the struggle of the classes is carried on as a parallel to those affecting the adult world. The fighting also exemplifies the class friction of the proletariat and the middle class, scaled down from a national level to local size. The struggle includes the children who inherit the parents' feuds.

This reference to the children's war is further indication of the authenticity to the real class struggle rampant in the Civil War. One has only to refer to such an account of the war as Gabriel Jackson's to fully comprehend the extent to which the internal struggle between workers and industry, rural workers and local land owners, was to divide the country through revolution and terror.13

In general, the discussion of the opposing groups of children is limited to specific references to the workers involved. Only in one instance, with Guiem, does the character appear in his role isolated from the struggle itself. He is portrayed in his home and garden. Matia notes that he helps his father and relations with his mother show little conflict in comparison to those of Matia and Borja.

Guiem is the link to the other class—economic—to which Borja shares interrelations. As the head of his group, Guiem is Borja's counterpart and rival. On days of truce, he represents for Borja an element from another world from which he can learn. Although Guiem is only a year older than Borja, he has matured more from his experiences of life. Thus, in keeping with his ability to use people to his own advantage, Borja also senses an appeal and a need for Guiem.

While Borja never voices his desires either to stay a child, or to become an adult, Matia does. Her fear of growing up and entering the adult world is expressed on several occasions:

No, no me descubras más cosas, no me digas oscuras cosas de hombres y mujeres porque no quiero saber nada del mundo que no entiendo. (143)

Her frustrations at her present state are expressed:

"¿Qué clase de monstruo que ya no tengo mi niñez y no soy, de ninguna manera, una mujer?" (148)

Her disdain for adulthood takes the form of a personal denunciation of her aunt, after she learns of her illicit love affair:

(Oh, sucias y cursis, patéticas personas mayores) ... (Oh tontísimas, tontísimas personas mayores; y dijo tía Emilia: --Yo también dormía con un muñeco hasta la víspera de casarme.) (177)

The frustrations and awkwardness typical of an adolescent and her lack of compassion for adults' foibles are reflected in these mental reactions. However, Matia is aware of her approaching adulthood:
The change taking place within her—from child to adult—is completed through an evil act. Matia, while not as wicked as Borja, is not free from evil. Both characters are more in keeping with the twentieth-century conception of the child as ailing from the same weaknesses as adults. It is this aspect of both Borja and Matia which can be termed "metaphysical evil." It directs their actions emerging in specific instances when they feel threatened. They act in a diabolical way—they are guilty but accuse Manuel—and they go free while he is held responsible. Matia's entrance into adulthood, then, is marked by her betrayal—as accomplice of Borja. This act is symbolically accompanied by the loss of her doll, Gorogó, at the story's end. The lost toy represents the growing unacceptability of fantasy as a source of escape for Matia. While her stepping into the adult world is less traumatic than Borja's, she has resorted even then to her imagination and her escape mechanisms for support. We shall consider the different forms of escape—real and imaginary—which were available to the two children.

Matia resorts to her imagination rather than attempt to alter the unchangeable circumstances of the real world as Borja does. For Matia, we have noted that imagination becomes a source of comfort from fear, and a way to cope with an undesirable situation. Other recourses to her imagination are found at tense moments in her life.
and serve as parallels to the action. That is to say, through fragments and parentheses, the realm of fantasy—basic to Matia's life—parallels the real actions taking place. Such an instance occurs when she considers the gang war, comparing the real people to the fictitious ones in 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 ...) (162)

These moments include the election of her own island to escape the real one she is on: she even refers to her own private island. She also seeks refuge in fairy tales as she mentions the characters Kay and Gerda from the Andersen fairy tale, "The Snow Queen," and also characters from Peter Pan, both of which reflect her desire to avoid or delay adulthood. Her reliance on her doll, Gorogó, is an imaginary refuge also. In contrast to Borja who fabricates a world of fantasy that is a distortion of the world of others, and may destroy innocent victims in the process, Matia's resort to fantasy is a personal and private means of escape albeit a temporary one. Consequently, they will end and she will be faced with the disillusionment that is typical of her life as an adult in La trampa.

Matia, not unlike other children described in Matute's works, expresses fear of a world that is unpleasant and incomprehensible. Thus, a likely response is a rejection of this world in favor of one
of her own creation.14 This takes the form of an island, her "own island," away from the sources for fear: the gang war; the sea; and grandmother. Matia's fears do not stem from any possible physical harm, but rather "porque presentía en ella algo oscuro, que me estremecía" (112). She appears to be guided more by her intuition in this instinctive fear of the war. To Matia, who does not actually engage in the fighting with the boys, her role is that of observer from an objective standpoint: while she supports the forces representative of her social class, her outlook of their actions is that of the outsider who dislikes war. The "plazuela de los judíos" is where Guiem and his gang would begin their provocations. Linking this place to the past, one finds it connotes death—for this is where people were burned to death for religious heterodoxy. This discordant note is carried over into the present, and even the ruinous condition of the "plazuela" helps to create a war-ravaged setting. The sea viewed from the plaza assumes the same dismal tone of the latter. For Matia,

14Juan Goytisolo states that Matute and the members of her literary generation write novels to liberate themselves of their war memories: "Muchos de los jóvenes novelistas de hoy eran niños durante la guerra civil. Con sus ojos infantiles vieron imposibles cosas atroces. Las olvidaron. Pero a medida que se hacían hombres llegaba un momento en que las recordaban. Y el recuerdo de ellas se iba precisando a la vez que sus huesos se endurecían y su sangre se hacía más rica. Entonces se pusieron a escribir novelas, no para olvidar esas cosas—que hubiera sido imposible--, sino para liberarse de ellas." Maurice Edgar C롱dreaux, "La joven literatura española," Cuadernos del congreso por la libertad de la cultura XXIV (May-June, 1957), 39-40.

Just as the authors themselves write to liberate themselves from their memories of unpleasant experiences of the war, the characters they have created—children—seek to leave behind the unpleasantness they find in the world. With Matia, we see an escape through imagination.
the unreal sea in her atlas is preferable to the actual one since it is spared the spoiling effect of its surroundings.

Matia expresses another fear, that of life itself: "Y, la vida, algo atroz y remoto" (113). The people with whom she associates are the most likely representatives of her "intangible fear of life." And it is against such people as the following that she forms her secret refuge:

Contra la cara espesa de la abuela, el hermoso rostro de Mosén Mayol, y la impenetrable espera de tía Emilia; contra el duro corazón, tras los pliegues del traje de Antonia, tenía yo formada otra isla, sólo mía. (113).

This first reference to her own island climaxes her expressed fears—of the gang war, sea, life—and includes her rejection of adults. A logical source of comfort from the latter could have been Borja, as his feelings are similar to Matia's in that regard. Yet, Borja is excluded from Matia's interior refuge.

The correspondence between her imaginary island and the real one is seen in several ways. First of all, the adolescent is isolated both physically and spiritually, although the island separates her physically from the war. In a sense, the turmoil and disharmony linked to the real Civil War is paralleled by the disharmony on the island—seen in every way imaginable—affecting both the adults and children. With regard to the adolescent herself, her internal turmoil reflects on a personal scale what is happening on a broader national scale. There is a kind of reduction of a huge, historical problem (war) to personal terms by her emerging personality. The island is a
juncture of two thoughts: of history and of personality. Although she and the other inhabitants of the island are not directly engaged in the fighting, their lives are anything but idyllic: the fear and intrigues associated with the Taronjí are related to the island by Matia:

Sin embargo, algo había, como un gran mal, debajo de la tierra, de las piedras, de los tejados, de los cráneos. Cuando en el pueblo caía la hora de la siesta, o al resguardo de cualquier otra quietud, en esos momentos como de espera, resonaban en las callejuelas las pisadas de los hermanos Taronjí. (27)

The variety of symbolic value ascribed to the island as defined by J. E. Cirlot encompasses some of the functions of island imagery in Matute:

A complex symbol embracing several different meanings. According to Jung, the island is the refuge from the menacing assault of the "sea" of the unconscious, or, in other words, it is the synthesis of the consciousness and the will. Here he is following the Hindu belief that— as Zimmer notes— the island is to be seen as the area of metaphysical force where the forces of the "immense illogic" of the ocean are distilled. At the same time, the island is also a symbol of isolation, of solitude, of death. Most island-deities have something funereal about them— Calypso for instance.  

Gertrude Jobes in The Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols gives the following depiction:

Isolation. Dream significance: abandonment. In mythology, gathering place of souls, paradise, supernatural world

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in which dwell the gods as well as the dead, such as the American Indian Blissful Isle . . . 16

From this variety of references to island imagery, one finds similarly that in PM, the island constitutes a symbol of isolation, of solitude, and a paradise as a refuge from reality. References to the island point to the remoteness of the place—especially its silence:

... en el silencio de aquel rincón de la isla, en el perdido punto en el mundo que era la casa de la abuela. (10)

But most importantly to our study, the island is represented both as a real and imaginary escape for the children as it has a fictional counterpart in the references made to Peter Pan's "Isla de Nunca Jamás." In this imaginary place, the child Peter did not want to grow up, and sought it as a refuge against adulthood. In this sense, the classic by Barrie becomes a diatribe against adulthood, which the very words of the text illustrate:

... and he [Peter] was so full of wrath against grown-ups, who, as usual, were spoiling everything, that as soon as he got inside his tree he breathed intentionally quick short breaths at the rate of about five to a second. He did this because there's a saying in Neverland that every time you breathe, a grown-up dies; and Peter was killing them as fast as possible.17


As a Neverland, Matia's imaginary island provides refuge from growing up. But the real island is also important in the novel. It offers a way of being situated in Spain, yet away from the holocaust of the Civil War.

Furthermore, the island is part of Spain (Mallorca) yet at the same time it is separated from the mainland. Thus the characters know what is going on in Spain, maintaining a distance from it.

The fairy tale parallel drawn to the Andersen fairy tale "The Snow Queen" comprises the only other fictional pattern of importance in the lives of the children. It is Matia who compares herself to Kay in the Andersen story. She resembles the fictional character in her metamorphosis from good child to bad.

"The Snow Queen" also parallels the main plot as it reinforces the abandonment of childhood. The children Kay and Gerda leave their childhood at the end of the story, as do Matia and Borja. But in the tale, as in life, the fantasy world fails to prevent passing into adulthood.

In Andersen's fairy tale, "The Snow Queen," Kay is transformed into a wicked boy by a splinter of glass. Once lodged in a child's eye, the splinter has the power to transform his person. Kay overcomes this transformation with the aid of his dearest friend, Gerda. At the story's end, they are no longer children: "There they both sat, grown up, and yet children—children in heart—and it was summer, warm and delightful summer." Hans Christian Andersen, Fairy Tales (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1946), p. 155. The inclusion of this fairy tale is prefatory to the final outcome of the children--Matia and Borja--in Primera memoria. They also are no longer children at the novel's end.
It is in the final reference to Kay and Gerda, which occurs while Matia is visiting Jorge, that the girl seems to salvage part of her cherished childhood dreams:

Acaso porque poseía cuanto yo deseaba. Aquella precipitada huida, la pena por Kay y Gerda, por Peter Pan y la Joven Sirena, me parecían salvadas. (195)

Matia’s attraction to Jorge is one of respect and a deep mutual understanding. As Manuel’s father, Jorge shares a similar position with Matia in their mutual attraction. The older man symbolizes not adulthood but a state inbetween, since unlike the other elders who misunderstand the child’s world, Jorge can be a part of it. The children go to see Jorge of their own free will—they want to be with him, while they desire to escape from the other adults. He is a part of their world because he represents the freedom of the sea—a flight into another realm—and he projects a sympathetic understanding for these children.

The doll, Gorogó, also helps Matia’s escape through fantasy. As we have already shown, the doll serves as her confidante and as a source of consolation from fear. A part of Matia’s private “island,” the doll’s¹⁹ role is not understood by others in the household.

¹⁹The selection of a doll as a playmate for little girls is not uncommon in many countries. "The doll is used for play in other cultures—and for other purposes. For play it is common with most people. It is of great antiquity for child entertainment and companionship. It was known in Egypt as early as 1900 B.C." Funk and Wagnall, Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1949), p. 320.
The escape can also be achieved through real hideaways, namely, the "declive." The first mention of this spot appears shortly after Matia's arrival to the home of her grandmother— in the comfort of daylight--and this spot which is found by surprise will play a significant role in her life on the island:

Gran sorpresa, el declive. No lo sospechaba, detrás de la casa, de los muros del jardín descuidado, con sus osuros cerezos y su higuera de brazos plateados. Quizás no lo supe entonces, pero la sorpresa del declive fue punzante y unida al presentimiento de un gran bien y de un dolor unidos. (17)

The dual reference to the "bien" and "dolor" can be seen, as the children steal away to this place, free from the supervision of everyone, and as they find a dead man on the floor of the boat, Joven Simón. It is their first direct encounter with death, which has come to their haven:

El hombre estaba boca abajo, con un brazo extendido en el suelo, arrimado a la panza de la barca como perro que busca refugio para dormir. (36)

Subsequent references to the place throughout the novel will constitute alternating views of happiness or sadness. The child refuge is no longer safe since it is now contaminated by the memory of death. Their Eden has been marred permanently.

Although the children find real escape from the adults in the "declive," real or imaginary escapes do not constitute the answer they seek. They can hide from adults, but still war and death reach them. Eventually they must accept reality: growing up. There is a symbolic
parallel to their plight in the rooster who consistently breaks away from its home in Son Major:

Y allí estaba el misterioso gallo escapado de Son Major, blanco y reluciente. Sus ojos coléricos, levantados sobre las ramas, nos miraban desafiadoramente. (76)

The last part of the book is entitled "El gallo blanco" and the novel ends with the cock crowing. That is, the cock crows when the children are about to leave the island and have left their childhood behind, soon to enter adulthood.

Allí estaba el gallo de Son Major, con sus coléricos ojos, como dos botones de fuego. Alzado y resplandeciente como un puñado de cal, y gritando --amanecía-- su horrible y estridente canto, que clamaba, quizá--qué se yo --por alguna misteriosa causa perdida. (245)

The cock could symbolize that the children are to enter the dawn of a new era in their lives, but there is also a song for what is lost in his crowing: their childhood innocence. As one critic has pointed out, the religious symbolism of the cock who crows is apparent as this detail comes after the betrayal of Manuel.20

Another factor in which childhood plays a distant but significant role is the parallel which may be drawn to the season of the year. We are in the summer of 1936, and the children are in the last stages of their childhood. At the end of the novel with the end of their

20For the religious symbolism of the cock, see Jones, "Religious Motifs in Matute," p. 418. This symbolism coincides with the definition of the cock by Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 49.
childhood coincides the end of summer. The children leave as adults from the island in winter, thus a parallel may be drawn between the seasons of the year and the stages of childhood and adulthood.

In *PM*, then, the central character, Matia, in the framework of incarcerating factors, passes into adulthood. Evil narrows the difference between the two worlds. The children in the novel—Matia, Borja—are reluctant to enter the adult world as in so doing, they lose their refuge: childhood.

The importance of childhood is seen in Matute's scaled down version of the war, softened with allusions to a fairy tale which is in essence a link to the real Civil War. The children imitate the adults in their class struggle even though they are unaware of this imitation.

Unlike the presence of childhood in *FN*, which is more characterized by a metaphysical implication to study the tragedy of one man in particular, the presence of childhood in *PM* is more inclusive of the difficulties of the transition from child to adult.
Los niños tontos

Keeping with the basic combination of reality and fantasy which appears in her other novels, Los niños tontos\(^1\) comprises a combination of these realms. But fantasy acquires a new dimension in that it now takes over the work as a whole surpassing in importance the role of reality and often displacing it. In the previous two novels studied, the element of fantasy was subordinated to reality. In \(\text{NT}\), we find a reversal of this interplay.

In our first two novels, both children (Juan Medinao and Matia) experienced a difficult childhood, subsequently recalled after they had grown up through a technique of flashback. The children in \(\text{NT}\) do not have the opportunity of such amplified vision. They are ephemeral presences who will never grow up or are already old, thus a tortured childhood does not function as the threshold towards adulthood as it did in the first two novels. Childhood in \(\text{NT}\) is here a self-fulfilling stage. It has no future, no opening into a less conflictive age. It is, ontologically, a dead end.

In general, in all of the sketches of \(\text{NT}\) the children do not distinguish between reality and fantasy. The latter holds no escape

\(^1\)Ana María Matute, Los niños tontos (2d ed.; Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1971). Throughout the present study, all references to this work will be designated by the abbreviation \(\text{NT}\).
for them as it either brings death or destructive and evil forces. Perhaps _NT_ can be regarded as one of Matute's most pessimistic works because of this total negative atmosphere. In no sequence is there any expression of hope for these children to grow up and lead a normal existence. Furthermore, the children themselves cannot distinguish between life and death. They are beckoned to their deaths with no apparent understanding of what direction they are taking. They are "niños tontos" that is why they cannot distinguish between good and bad; life and death.

Normally, the presentation of childhood in _NT_ is not different from that of the previous two novels: it falls into the following sequence, that is, the child is thrust into a problematical situation caused either by other children, by adults, or by physical infirmity. Thus in these short poetic portraits, we have a primordial simplified version of what has taken place in our previous two novels. But the children in _NT_ find even their dreams tainted by grief and death.

In _FN_ the misfortunes heaped upon Juan Medinao as a child in no way offered release from his central problem of loneliness and envy. The one potential liberating element, Dingo, only increases Juan's troubles. In _PM_, Matia's possible avenue of relief, Manuel, is brutally disposed of by the young girl herself in conjunction with Borja. While Juan's troubles are caused by external factors and his own weaknesses, there is in the personality of Matia a capacity for betrayal which further diminishes potential liberation from her ugly life. In _NT_, however, there is an additional limitless framework of apparent escape: a whole series of magic possibilities in the lives
of these children, not present in the other novels. We shall explore these possibilities.

In keeping with the dominant realm of fantasy, no specific geographic names are mentioned in the stories. The only locations alluded to are of a general nature: the school, the village, the house, the circus. Although the absence of definite association to a real place (in both FN and PM the settings were in Spain) adds a note of irreality, the settings are very realistic in detail. In the first two novels studied—FN and PM—we were aware of the transition from reality to fantasy. Now, the two worlds are fused so they appear alike. The reader is aware that in the world of the "niño tonto" his inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy is normal. For him the separation does not exist and he functions in a world half real, half magic where he eventually dies.

Child as Aggressor

The child in the role of aggressor is seen primarily in the following sketches: "El incendio," "El niño que no sabía jugar," and "El niño de los hornos." In all three instances, the child is the controller of his or another's destiny. He assumes power to manipulate events as he wills.

The problem for the child in "El incendio" is his irritation due to the repeated whitewashing of the corner building each Saturday: a personal inconvenience he wishes to combat.
El niño tenía los ojos irritados de tanto blanco, de tanto sol cortando su mirada con filos de cuchillo.2

Here, then, it is brightness that prompts the boy to seek out a way to stifle it.

The sketch begins with the solution attempted by the child as we see him with his crayons:

El niño cogió los lápices color naranja, el lápiz largo amarillo y aquél por una punta azul y la otra rojo. (20)

The child acting initiates his response to a real intrusion in the form of brightness. His actions reflect a combination of the real and the fantastic as his wish that the brightness be ended becomes true. Yet, as his wish is fulfilled and liberation becomes possible, the child is ironically destroyed. In view of these events, we see that for this "niño tonto," there is no achievement without the ultimate destruction of self. The child becomes a victim of his own fantasy turned reality.

Another child-aggressor is the one found in "El niño que no sabía jugar." The child does not know how to play which immediately separates him from other children. Furthermore, he rejects toys and so with these two aspects of his character in mind, we must assume that he rejects the world of make-believe. For this "niño tonto," then, there is no fantasy and he cannot even dream. He is a loner, at once denied a normal childhood.

2Ibid., p. 20. All subsequent references from Los niños tontos will be indicated in the text of this study by page numbers only.
Through the eyes of the mother, the child's hands are mentioned to direct the reader's attention to them: "... las manos quietas, como caídas a los dos lados del cuerpo" (45) and second, "... sus manitas, pálidas y no muy limpias, ... como dos extrañas campanillas mudas" (45), both descriptions stressing the inactivity and uselessness of the hands. This hint at non-productive activity is a preface to the actual engagement of his hands seen in the boy's only pastime which was to look for "grillitos, gusanos, crías de rana y lombrices" (46). Once collected and put in a box, they were beheaded one by one:

Con sus uñitas sucias, casi negras, hacía un leve ruidito, ¡crac!, y les segaba la cabeza. (46)

In the traditional role-playing of games, this child is a beheader. Whether this action of his is a prefatory note to the actions he will take when he gets older, that of killer, is left open. But he prefers a real game, that of executioner of bugs to the make-believe of his peers' amusements.

A very important aspect of this sketch is the opinions of the parents with regard to the boy. The mother's anxiety contrasts with the obvious calm of the father. It is the mother who expresses concern over the son's strange behavior; it is the father who simply states the boy is different, and is one who thinks. The mother's judgment of the boy is more accurate and lessens the shock of the end itself. The child's play-acting has taken one of the worst heinous adult roles as a model. He is, psychologically, no longer a child.
The third child-aggressor is found in "El niño de los hornos" which ends in fratricide. While never fully developed, the apparent problem of this child is one of sibling rivalry or jealousy. A vague link to the recurring Cain and Abel theme which we have seen as a prevalent one in Matute is resumed. The child who made ovens with clay has a new baby brother described as "un conejillo despellejado" (61). The older child feels everyone pays attention to the new baby. The child of the ovens seeks his solution by building a fire and placing the baby inside the oven. His play object becomes the instrument of death:

A la noche, cuando todos dormían, el niño se levantó con una idea fija. Fue al rincón oscuro de la huerta, cogió ramillas secas y las hacinó en su hornito de barro y piedras. Luego fue a la alcoba, vio el brazo de la madre largo y quieto sobre la sábana. Sacó de allí al hermano y se lo llevó, en silencio. Prendió su hornito querido y metió dentro al conejo despellejado. (61-62)

One need only recall a similar situation in FN immediately after the birth of Pablo, Juan Medinao's brother, when Juan considers destroying himself and his brother by fire. He rationalizes, however, and refrains from committing the deed because it would not leave him in a state of grace. In this vignette of NT, there is no mental agony as far as the reader can determine, the child seems unable to distinguish play and reality or to make ethical judgments. For him the brother is "un conejo."

The significance of the child's response is that play, a main childhood activity, has now become serious and usually ends in the
destruction of self or others; a strikingly different assessment of
the ludic quality of childhood itself, so highly valued by most
psychologists.

**Child in the Role of Passive Response**

The majority of the children in NT fall into this category. They are passive and victimized either by others or by themselves. The first group of children we will discuss are those who respond passively to the cruelty of others. The misunderstanding and cruelty among peers is the dominant feeling in this group.

The first story of the book "La niña fea" deals with a little girl who is heckled by her schoolmates due to her ugliness. The phrase "Tú, vete, niña fea" (7) summarizes succinctly and poignantly their rejection of her. But earth recognizes in her the natural creature: "Un día, la tierra le dijo: 'Tú tienes mi color!'" (7) and offers her beauty in death.

The apparent ironic solution to the problem for this ugly child is her death which provides both beauty and a means of escape from the cruel children. The ugly child of nature joins the realm to which she belongs and once dead she is pretty. This is a reversal of the theme of the child of nature as seen embodied by Pablo in FN. In the sketch analyzed, the creature is beautiful only when she becomes part of the earth, a realm that unlike her peers recognizes her as her own.
Another child who is tormented by other children is the "hijo de la lavandera" (22). His torment is both physical and emotional as in this case the other boys throw stones at him. The children who are members of another social class—"los niños del administrador" (22)—enjoy tormenting the physically deformed child. They portray a basic primitive human reaction to another's misfortune—that of ridicule.

The laundress' son has no real solution to his problem because he is unable to be shielded from his enemies. While his mother does protect him successfully and does show the child affection, she cannot protect him permanently from the other boys. Their name-calling, "cabeza-sandía," "cabeza-pedrusco," (23) and the metaphor, "la cabeza pelada, como un melón-cepillo" (22) becomes real in the end as they strike him. It is the same use of a poetic metaphor which carries with it a destructive force seen already in "El incendio" when a child creates with crayons an imaginary fire which erupts and destroys him. Likewise, here we see that fantasy or the unreal through poetic imagery becomes destructive reality:

Y la gorda le dio un beso en la monda lironda cabezorra,  
y allí donde el beso, a pedrada limpia le sacaron sangre  
los hijos del administrador, esperándole escondidos, ... (23)

The child who is deformed then suffers physically as well as spiritually.

In another incident, "El árbol," a child is tormented not by his peers but by a frightening tree that becomes his obsessor. He feels threatened in some mysterious unaccounted way by this tree
which appears through the window pane of an imaginary palace. The appearance of the tree is partially accounted for by the fact that the child is described "el niño que soñaba" (24). He is in his own world directed by his dreams. But the image of the tree even invades the world outside his dreams. He now sees the tree not only in the palace—a place of fantasy and out of reach for him—but also another tree just like it on the sidewalk:

"Sí, madre, es el árbol gemelo, les vi ayer hacerse muecas con las ramas." (26)

The tree becomes an obsession for the child who apparently is the victim of a sickness which finally thrusts him into a state of delirium. He is totally submerged by the pursuit of the tree and while on the real level he is suffering from a fever, reality is invaded by a fantasy-delirium. The tree comes like night: "Por fin, un día, vino la noche" (26) and takes him away. Again the story ends in death as fantasy becomes reality.

The child in "El árbol" is not able to escape the threat of the tree—or the sickness which parallels the encounters with the tree. We only know the story from the dreamer's side.

Another passive victim of the cruelty of others is the child in "El corderito pascual." In this sketch, the child is tormented

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3Matute has written a short story, "El amigo," (included in her collection entitled El tiempo [Barcelona: Editorial Mateu, 1957]) which has a similar theme. However, the story—longer than the sketch—is more detailed and, consequently, further developed.
by other children because he is obese. He is set off from his peers by the phrase "era un niño muy gordo, que no tenía amigos" (47).

The other children insult him:

Los niños del albañil, los del contable, los del zapatero, se reían de su barriga, de sus mofletes, de su repapada; y le llamaban gorrino, barril de cerveza, puerco de San Martín. (47)

The children are rude, lacking any sensitivity. The child receives a lamb and the animal fills a void in his life. The lamb contrasts sharply with the children who reject him: while they are hard and cruel, the lamb is "blanco y dulce" (47).

The paschal lamb is sacrificed twice: he is killed and served for the Easter meal, and secondly he is sacrificed in the person of the child who is again friendless.

In the shortest sketch of all "El Jorobado" which consists of one paragraph--divided into two sentences--a deformed child is spared ridicule. He is kept hidden by his father, a circus performer. Unlike the other physically deformed children studied, this one is not exposed to other children. Rather than exploit the child's deformity and allow him to appear as a part of the circus spectacle, the child is kept out of sight and pampered with gifts. This filial piety is, ironically, useless since the child longs to be shown as one more curiosity in the tent. Thus the father's love and care is a form of incarceration for the child.

Up to this point in our study we have seen children in NT besieged by problems stemming from the "cruelty of others" at home,
at school, and in the villages. Now let us consider the child in an amusement park who likewise meets disaster. The child in "El tiovivo" becomes a victim of what he presupposed to be a pleasant occurrence, one which ends in tragedy for him. In this story as well as others to be discussed we shall see the child who responds realistically to an imaginary situation.

In this sketch, the child designated as "El niño que no tenía perros gordos" (42) does not have money to ride the merry-go-round. He regards the carousel ride—when it is unattainable—as a foolish pastime since it leads to no place. But when his luck changes—he identifies a bottle cap with money, he pretends to buy all the rides for himself and mounts "un caballo de oro, que tenía grandes alas" (44)—a would-be Pegasus—under the rain. Fantasy enters the sequence when the carousel assumes huge proportions, making incessant turns and producing loud music. Once more, fantasy forces itself into reality and the result is death. The monster—death—represented by a tree in "El árbol" is now disguised as an innocuous carousel.

In another sequence, "Polvo de carbón," a little girl wishes to bathe herself in the moon to cleanse herself of the dust which surrounds her. She finds dust over all things all around her, and even on herself and dust enters the mouths of the foolish, "... en las bocas tontas que se abren como capillitas ahumadas" (14). The moon descends and dives into the water or so it appears to her and the child imitates the action of the moon to cleanse herself in an act of purification. While she seems to be fulfilling her wish, that of
bathing herself in the moon, she is found dead the next morning in the depths of the tub of water. The element of nature, the moon, leads the girl to her death as fantasy becomes reality for her.

Nature does not console this girl as it does in "La niña fea." There is no apparent consolation for the "niña de la carbonería" (12) -- she merely gets her wish as it destroys her.

Still another view of nature is linked to childhood in the sketch "Mar," the last sketch in the book. In this portrait, the child is introduced in the first words as "Pobre niño" (63). He is physically ill "... estaba doblado, amarillo" (63). The sea is mentioned by the man who came to cure him, perhaps as a place of refuge for the child's condition to improve. All hastened to go there and the child considers the sea as a huge shell, and believed it to be tall and green.

The sick child is ashamed of his appearance and the color of his skin:

--Madre-- dijo, porque sentía vergüenza-- , quiero ver hasta dónde me llega el mar. (63-64)

If the child's desire to hide himself from others in the water is accurate, then his persistent walking out to sea can be regarded as a refuge. But it becomes the source of self-destruction as the child drowns. Like the girl in "Polvo de carbón" nature leads the child to suicide, but being "niños tontos," they cannot prevent the event from happening. These are passive victims who have no control over themselves nor what happens to them.
We see other passive children who are subjected to the passage of time as in the sketches "El año que no llegó" and "La niña que no estaba en ninguna parte."

In the first one, "El año que no llegó," there is very little information except for the title. A negative atmosphere is cast before the sketch begins.

Because the reader knows that the year did not arrive, attention is focused upon why this happened. An atmosphere of disappointment ultimately replaces excitement. The negative idea is continued in the first line: "El niño debía cumplir un año" (19). The child knows that he will be older and even says that he will be that night at ten. This "niño tonto" is deprived of his birthday—time escapes him—the new year leaves and since time has stopped for him, he must die. Time, personified in the new year, is described as: "... nuevo, verde, tembloroso, ..." (19). In this world of the "niño tonto" in which all is possible or impossible, even the passage of time appears affected and is not allowed to occur in the normal procedure. But, it is the child who must suffer for this illogical time sequence, for it is his birthday which escapes—leaving him to die or remain a "niño tonto" forever since his birthday never arrives. A curious fact in this sketch is that the child gives the precise hour—at ten o'clock—when he will be a year older. This insistence upon the exact hour is made even more ironic as the year escapes. The passage of time which one takes for granted is here viewed not from the perspective of the human, but from the viewpoint of time—the personified year—itself.
In the second sketch mentioned, in which time plays an important role, "La niña que no estaba en ninguna parte," time has passed by but has been faithful in its passage and the "niña" is now an old lady with only memories and objects in her room to recall her childhood. As a girl, she truly is no longer anywhere, although her memories fill her room.

Physical objects point to the passage of time and old age: the box with child's shoes; the doll; crushed flowers; and the smell of camphor in the closet. There was no child but a reflection of an old and ugly face in the mirror, the child now an old woman putting curlers in her hair.

Time has passed for this child—now grown—but it has left its mark of age upon her face, described as "arrugada" (41). While time was not cruel in its escape as it was for the child in "El año que no llegó," here we find that it leads to old age.

The children are passive victims of other people and of the passage or non-passage of time.

Child and Animal World

In the stories "El negrito de los ojos azules" and "El niño que encontró un violín" the child is involved with animals who assume human roles. Especially in the first story, the animals have replaced the humans who have completely abandoned the child.

In his abandonment, the child is left defenseless and consequently victimized by the cat who has gouged his eyes. The
entire—yet brief—life of the child is here presented and his one motive in life was to re-capture his stolen blue eyes. In his quest, the child encounters a band of gypsies with a bear. For the gypsies, the child's existence did not matter, he was not alive. On the other hand, the bear is moved to pity and tears. There is a transposition of the animal and human reality as they interact with one another. The humans show hardness; the bear true human emotional response and kindness. The fantasy world of the children, where animals speak, is even invaded by hatred and grief.

Later, the child meets a dog who is more like the bear in his kindness: he helps the child and after the latter dies, buries him. Again, the response of the dog is one of kindness and reveals a human obligation: to bury the dead. The child in this story is having a futile start in life—he is dumb, abandoned, and robbed of his sight. But like the "niña fea," he finds compassion in the world of some animals and peace in death.

In the second story of this category, "El niño que encontró un violín en el granero," the child protagonist is not a real person but at the end he becomes a doll. He is described as a string or a bow of a violin, that is, a voice or a sound. The very opening of the sketch, incidentally the longest sketch of all, shows the nonhuman aspect of this protagonist:

Entre los hijos del granjero había uno de largos cabellos dorados, curvándose como virutas de madera. Nadie le oyó hablar nunca, ... se doblaba como un junco, se tensaba como la cuerda de un arco, caía como una piedra, a veces; y otras parecía el ulular del viento por el borde de la montaña. (27)
It is through the animals who speak that one learns about Zum-Zum. The crow, the word of wisdom, who is imprisoned in his cage judges Zum-Zum as being useless as a human being. The dog, who is old and wise, recalls the kind of day when the boy was born. Rather than the mother, it is the animal who recalls Zum-Zum's appearance. It is the dog who forewarns Zum-Zum about the fate which is in store for him.

One characteristic of Zum-Zum is that he never has said a word yet he had a beautiful voice. He is just a voice without words so when the older child plays the violin it is the voice of Zum-Zum that is heard, while he bends over and dies. Thus his cadaver without a voice is seen as a doll by the others who abandon him to the dog. As in "El incendio," an image becomes real and with it, death and the release from fantasy and being.

In all of the stories studied, there is no refuge for the child neither in fantasy nor religion. In one sketch, "El niño que era amigo del demonio," a child finds the devil appealing:

"Pobre demonio--pensó--, es como los judíos, que todo el mundo les echa de su tierra." (11)

From a personal reaction, a child reverses the concept of the devil by deciding to be good because the devil only tempts the evil. Further, in the child's devised system, the devil will leave him alone because he is good. The child has drawn up his own private plan for salvation. As a friend of the devil, he will be assured of salvation because his friend will leave him alone.
This "niño tonto" has reversed the normal attitude toward the devil—that of the tempter, the wicked, the spirit designed to lead man to his fall. In the child’s world, the devil is "Guapo, hermoso, amigo mío" (11).

In "El otro niño," the Christ Child leaves the altar and comes to the school of Miss Leocadia because he is lonely.

From the title one knows immediately that he is dealing with a different kind of child: "el otro niño." Then, the insistence is upon his differences from the other children. He does not engage in the frivolous activities of the other little boys. He is unscratched, untouched, has no fears, dreams, or questions. He says nothing because he has everything already said. It is the teacher, however, who recognizes him as the child of the altar:

"¡Ay de mí, ay de mí! ¡El niño del altar estaba triste y ha venido a mi escuela!" (39)

The fact that the Christ Child is lonely or sad contradicts the general conception that one goes to him in sadness to be relieved of one’s burdens. The Child may have been sad due to His neglect by the other children or adults who did not come to Him in prayer. He is seen as a real child!

There is a reversal in the act of the Child coming to the school and the school children. This reversal in act, however, is in keeping with the reversal of themes throughout the stories. These are anti-stories, or anti-sketches, in which traditional themes are reversed. Even Matute’s themes are now reversed. In the world of the
"niños tontos" values are reversed; the normal order of events no longer holds; and all of this happens because Fantasy prevails. No longer a safe refuge for the children, it frightens and kills like reality.

The sketches themselves are called short poems in prose by Juan Alborg, a critic of the modern Spanish novel. In them, the child is the essential theme of the work, and he does not allude to "niño tonto" in the vulgar sense of the word:

... sino más bien de encuentros o de choques de soñadoras mentalidades infantiles contra las trágicas realidades cotidianas que rompen la fantasía de sus ilusiones quiméricas.  

The account of the "fool" as he has appeared throughout the years reveals his role is not limited to one function alone. In the past, the fool was used to describe persons whose absurd behavior was used for the entertainment it provided people of a higher social class.

Few professional fools, or jesters, in history or in literature, were actual imbeciles. Most made their living by cleverly steering a precarious course between wit and horseplay, flattery and insult. Many gained an enduring reputation for humor and won the affection of their masters.  

Yet, the many roles of the fool as seer, sinner, or social rebel which have appeared throughout the centuries in the early history of

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most cultures, are lacking in Matute's usage of "niño tonto." She has limited her use of the term to those children who are unable to distinguish fantasy from reality, good from evil, because they are dumb or foolish children. In this sense, they do not follow the dictates of society, as we have seen is the case of the child who befriends the devil, who devises a new system of his own for his personal salvation.

The conditions under which childhood is expressed in _Los niños tontos_ may be compared to the expression of the same in both _Fiesta al noroeste_ and _Primera memoria_. When one considers the childhood of the male protagonist in _Fiesta al noroeste_, it is clear that only with this character is there presented a totality of childhood. On the other hand, in _Primera memoria_, a fragmentary recall of childhood is brought about while in _Los niños tontos_, we are presented with the essence of childhood: innocence functioning as a destructive force.

There is a note of timelessness in both _Fiesta al noroeste_ and _Los niños tontos_ which is not evidenced in _Primera memoria_. This is due to the specific references to the Spanish Civil War and the allusions to that period in the history of Spain.

What distinguishes _Los niños tontos_ most from the other major works already presented is the realm of unlimited fantastic possibilities which these dumb children have. Yet these lead to death. Fantasy is a treacherous door to nothing.

The distinguishing factor in _Los niños tontos_ is the full development of magic—a new dimension to fantasy which up to this
work has not been a major factor in the child's world—only a temporary escape for Matia and a failure for Juan Medinao.

Now when one considers the minor work Pequeño teatro and the character Ilé Eroriak, his significance as a forerunner of the "niño tonto" becomes more apparent. In Ilé's world of reality and fantasy, the two become fused as he desires to escape. A "foolish-dumb child," he is able to pursue his escapes through total ignorance of the world around him. Fantasy for him, however, does not lead to his death or destruction, so in this respect he is better off than the children in Los niños tontos. But for Zazu, fantasy holds no escape and she commits suicide. Perhaps, it would be more accurate to consider them both as forerunners to the "niño tonto"—in that a combination of the two, more closely parallels the plight of the later characters. Zazu is like the "niño tonto" only in that fantasy and dreams hold nothing but sadness for her. She in no way may be termed a "niña tonta" in the total way of the children in Los niños tontos.

As we have shown from our discussion, the world of magic in Los niños tontos holds no positive element for the child. Death and unhappiness or even evil forces dwell there as in the world of reality. Fantasy, the natural habitat of dumb children, fails to provide a successful escape.
CONCLUSION

Childhood as a literary theme belongs to a long tradition which has developed throughout the centuries. Attitudes toward the child have varied from early to modern times. In ancient times, perhaps under the influence of the Roman civilization, the child was of little significance both in the social and literary realms. Biblical references to children gave special praise only to the divine child. It was not until the appearance of Rousseau's *Emile* in 1762 that the child's situation improved and public opinion changed. Consequently, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries amidst the industrial developments which brought about progress as well as intellectual conflict, the child became an appealing literary theme.

In nineteenth-century English literature, the child assumed many roles—victim, the innocent child, and later as a means to escape the pressures of adulthood. To the romantic image of the child of innocence, the Victorians add its doom: the innocent child is allowed to die rather than face the corruption found in life.

In the twentieth century, there is evidence of ambivalence towards the theme. The child is present as an instrument of the diabolic—a victimizing force—but also as a victim of the adult world.

The post Spanish Civil War novelists, the literary generation to which Ana María Matute belongs, have shown a preference for a
social perspective in their themes which include childhood. Certainly there is a link between historical and biographical fact: all were children during the Spanish Civil War. When Matute's use of childhood is compared to that of other writers—such as Miguel Delibes, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, Jesús Fernández Santos, and Juan Goytisolo—one clearly discerns more social criticism attached to the latter's handling of the theme.

It has been our purpose to study Matute's use of the theme of childhood in *Fiesta al noroeste*, *Primera memoria*, and *Los niños tontos*. The two novels cited are her best works according to most critics. In order to give a more complete picture of the totality of the theme in her works, we have considered briefly *Pequeño teatro* and *Los Abel*. In *Pequeño teatro*, the element of fantasy which will be included throughout her works, appears. It is not until *Los niños tontos* that we see a more dominant role afforded to the realm of fantasy in the child's world. From the early work, *Los Abel*, one sees the introduction of the Cain and Abel theme, and in the characters of Aldo and Tito a slight prefiguring of Juan Medinao and Pablo, the characters of *Fiesta al noroeste*. These two early works introduce material which is preparatory and which will be better developed in the later more mature works of the author.

From our consideration of childhood in *Fiesta al noroeste* we have concluded that Matute describes the sadness, loneliness, and alienation of the human condition through childhood. This is most explicit in the character of Juan Medinao although the children Pablo
and Dingo serve to reinforce the problems inherent in this age. The conflicts which these children endure—with family, peers, and themselves—are not attached to any single historical or sociological event. Rather, they are within the very existence of the child and are carried into adulthood.

Childhood as we have viewed it in Primera memoria is primarily evidenced through the protagonist, Matia, and encompasses her passing from adolescence into adulthood. Placed on the island of Mallorca during the summer of 1936, one immediately recognizes the indirect consequences of the war as the children are forced to remain on the island which is seen as both a refuge and a jail. Matia is not the only child involved, as we have seen that Borja, her cousin, also makes the transition from adolescence to adulthood—through evil. Other tortured children are not members of the same social class as Borja and Matia—for example, Lauro, the harassed tutor for the children. Also the character Manuel, Matia's friend, is at the novel's end betrayed by both Borja and Matia and sentenced to a reform school.

Unlike Fiesta al noroeste, Primera memoria does not shift from the past to the present and thus through total retrospective vision, we see the characters of Primera memoria as children only. In both works, childhood is not considered a time of happiness for the protagonists who as children suffer intensely.

Finally, in our discussion of Los niños tontos we have seen that the world of fantasy has taken on new proportions and plays a
role equally significant to reality in the lives of the children of
the twenty-one vignettes. However, because all of the sketches deal
with death in some way—through either the death of the protagonist or
by some allusion to death—we soon realize that the fantasy world
holds no possibility of escape for the children, rather it too leads
to sorrow and destruction. In this brief work, perhaps Matute's most
pessimistic, there is no hope for the children to grow up—they are
already spiritually old, or they die as children.

In conclusion, we must assess Matute's contribution to the
theme of childhood. An overall view of the works we have studied shows
that the child's world is conflictive—clouded by anxiety, loneliness,
and unhappiness. In no way does this phase constitute a golden age.
For some of the children there is no solution to their problems and
their burden recurs in adulthood. For others, there is a temporary
escape through fantasy and imagination. But where there is no
solution, death becomes the only means to end their misery.

Matute does not offer any set solution to the problems of the
pains of childhood and growing up. Rather, through her extensive use
of the theme, she affirms that the experiences of childhood are not
to be taken lightly for their consequences are heavily felt in later
years. Childhood is important for the understanding of the adult as
many of her characters look back to childhood as a way to explain their
present. It is only in childhood that these children are truly alive
and sensitive, despite the pressures upon them. Matute does not
praise childhood for its innocence but rather for its sensitivity to the hardships of life which will increase with age.

Finally, it is clear that Matute negates childhood happiness, innocence, and fantasy. The failure of childhood fantasy—it becomes a destructive force—constitutes her major contribution to the theme.
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