

## Spanish Women Writers and the Fairy Tale: Creation, Subversion, Allusion

Janet Pérez

*Texas Tech University*

This essay might well have been entitled “Women Writers and the Fairy Tale *Revisited*,” its point of departure having been work originally done in the 1990s<sup>1</sup> for an invited plenary lecture at an international conference on Spanish women writers at the University of London in 1995, subsequently published in Britain in 1997.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, my ongoing work on the topic has been nourished by the continuing appearance of related works by or about Ana María Matute and/or Carmen Martín Gaité, while several intervening conference papers and invited presentations on the topic remain largely unpublished. New works since 1995 by these two most significant women writers receive particular emphasis. Prior fairy-tale-related papers had a somewhat different focus, examining not only, sometimes even not primarily the fairy tale but related topics such as women writers’ use of myth, quest romance, the mirror image, and gender roles.<sup>3</sup>

This investigation has two purposes, first to update parts of my work on Spanish women writers and the fairy tale by incorporating relevant works published by them in the last 15 years,

and second, to exemplify the numerous and varied uses made by Spanish women writers of the fairy tale: 1) writing their own original fairy tales and/or lengthy adaptations or extensions of extant “classical” tales, 2) parody and metaphor, in which the fairy tale’s presence is reduced at times to intertextual allusions, and 3) passing references to fairy tales or their characters, some of which function as surrogate representatives for patriarchal values. Although Spain has not produced specialists in the feminist fairy tale per se (in the tradition of such Anglophone writers as Angela Carter, Tanith Lee, Meghan Collins and Ursula LeGuin, for example), postwar Spanish women writers including not only major figures such as Carmen Martín Gaité and Ana María Matute but also highly-regarded authors including Teresa Barbero, Esther Tusquets and Nùria Pompeia, refer specifically and repeatedly to fairy tales, often in conjunction with the *novela rosa*, almost the only regime-tolerated reading for girls and young women in the Franco era except religious materials. Barbero and Martín Gaité both write implicitly and explicitly about the *novela rosa*, “Harlequin Romance” versions of the Franco adaptation of the “happily every after” myth. Stephen Hart discusses the relationship between *novela rosa* and the fairy tale, “between the feminocentric fairy tale and its populist adult version ... and the patrocentric discourse ...” (77) characterizing the latter. The most extensive use of fairy-tale materials has been made by Spain’s two most important women writers in the second half of the twentieth century, Carmen Martín Gaité and Ana María Matute, better-known to most scholars and students for their “social novels” produced during the dictatorship. Both, however, have written original fairy tales, recast extant tales, used fairy-tale allusions in multiple forms and contexts, and most significantly for this investigation, have written full-length novels which either *are* a form of fairy tale (Matute’s *Aranmanoth*), or which adopt the name of a well-known fairy tale and certain aspects of its plot and structure (Martín Gaité’s *La Reina de las Nieves*)—the two works most fully examined in the present study. Other contemporary Spanish women writers have typically appropriated fairy tales as metaphor and symbol, generally with subversive intent. Although complete treatment of the fairy-tale elements in either Matute or Martín Gaité would excessively prolong this essay, it examines representative fairy tales by both, viewing *Aranmanoth* as a combination of fairy-tale, myth, and parable, while *La Reina de las Nieves* is considered both as an independent novel and in relationship to its fairy-tale elements. Martín Gaité’s fairy tales

are primarily for adolescent readers, although *El Castillo de las tres murallas* can hardly be considered *apta para menores*. Both feminist parody and original fairy tale, *Castillo* is the author's only concession to such elements of the latter genre as castles, ogre or monster figures and the "long ago and far away" fairy-tale setting. As with Matute's novel-length *Aranmanoth*, this investigation will concentrate upon the presence of fairy-tale elements in *La Reina de las Nieves*, set in the same "here and now" world of Martín Gaité's other novels.

A major ongoing debate among critics of the genre concerns fairy tales' origins: while nearly all scholars situate them in pre-historic oral tradition, several experts refer to the "Megalithic" Age (Zipes 1984, 5)—a period not found in reference works but which appears from context to correspond with the origins of Stonehenge, or Costa da Morte in Galicia, around 7,000-8,000 B.C. Another school—currently more vocal—favors much earlier origins, from 25,000 to 30,000 years ago. But this controversy, however fascinating, is largely irrelevant for fairy tales composed in the twentieth century. Some consensus exists that the fairy tale is a specific form of the folk tale that evolved in comparatively recent times, whose production became associated with particular languages and ethnicities. Fairy-tale and folk-tale origins involve innumerable cultures, times and countries. According to widely accepted theories, ancient tales originated in matriarchal cultures, from which they derived many of their characteristic traits—which might partially explain the popularity of fairy-tale elements among feminist authors. However, the matriarchal world-view and motifs of the original folk tales underwent successive stages of "patriarchalization," being largely transformed (erasing matriarchal traits) by the Middle Ages (Zipes 1988, 7). And with the rise of the "literary fairy tale," most notably in France in the final decade of the seventeenth century (i.e., the 1690s), this date became the starting point for studies proposing to track the genre's evolution. Many, however, concentrate on more specific periods, or countries other than France.

As for the two most significant Spanish women writers in question, Martín Gaité and Matute, origins or "influence" are not an issue; both have freely discussed their readings of and consequent indebtedness to the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen, whose compilations date largely from the nineteenth century. Both have indentified their few other sources, especially Perrault toward the

close of the seventeenth century. Most importantly, such tales' appearance coincided with a major shift in European attitudes to sexuality during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when "restriction and revulsion toward frank sexual behavior replaced [prior] open acceptance: "... the roles of males and females became more rigidly defined" (Zipes 1988, 33).

This evolutionary point holds special significance for women writers in Franco's Spain, as the description of sexual prudishness is most fitting for the postwar period, with its accompanying rigid codification of gender roles, sexuality, initiation and similar "unspeakable" topics. Indeed, while the narrowed focus is unsurprising in women writing in what was definitely a time of Feminism (although individually both Matute and Martín Gaité denied being feminists), the most frequent foci of fairy tales by both as well as their novels for adults include the so-called "war of the sexes," child abuse, or both. Many readers of Spanish women's works written during the Franco era are unaware of the underlying reasons for certain aspects peculiar to their works. For example, both Matute and Martín Gaité present numerous instances of broken families, especially families in which the mother is missing and/or protagonists that are orphans. At first this may seem an insignificant anomaly, but readers of strictly censored literature must learn to "read" silences, absences and omissions as not merely important, but also meaningful. The rarity of the intact family in Matute's work is no accident, and the broken family is similarly frequent in Martín Gaité's fiction. First (in what is obviously still the aftermath of a bloody Civil War, with a million or more dead and millions more in exile, prison, or forced-work camps), the broken family is on one level simply a reflection of contemporary reality, a reminder of statistics that the dictatorship took care to suppress. But it is not merely men who are missing in the families portrayed by Matute and Martín Gaité: it is even more often the women. Matute never portrays a mother as a major character, and it is not until her final decade that Martín Gaité does so. Read on a more subtle level, such silence implicitly rejects the regime's campaign to educate girls and women primarily as future wives and mothers, whose mission on earth is to produce as many children as possible to repopulate the fatherland, decimated by war and its aftermath. Yet the dictatorship's campaign was either terribly cynical, ignorant or both: demographic information for the period indicates that "gender balance" was so badly *out of balance* that some 40% of

all marriageable women would be unable to find a husband due to the lack of eligible males. Indoctrinating girls to believe that their justification for being on earth is to give birth to as many children as possible while denying them an education that would enable them to support themselves when their chances of finding a husband are statistically so poor is both sociologically short-sighted and—on the psychological, economic and emotional levels—cruel. The existence of such realities, with correspondingly unrealistic official policies (a governmental counterpart of the fairy tale), form part of an essential context in which these same women wrote both social-protest novels and fairy tales. Apparently this never struck the censors as incongruous; precisely because the fairy tale was seen as something for children and hence “innocent,” such writing offered “sheeps’ clothing” for the concealed protests. The depiction of women in traditional fairy tales was typically restrictive and oppressive, coinciding with the regime’s programs: “the attitude toward women in Christianity and in phallogocentric cultures is remarkably similar, presenting a choice between a Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, sanctified virginity or vilified sexuality, the pure princess/dead mother or stepmother/witch” (Waelti-Walters 80). The dichotomy is buttressed by the patriarchal, *machista* culture in postwar Spain: Traditional fairy-tale models reinforce male hegemony, and the prize offered the female characters is matrimony—rendering the absence or negative treatment of mother figures still more ironic. Another archetypal fairy-tale element figuring prominently in postwar Spanish women’s writing is the orphan. The quantity of orphans in Matute’s work—whether fairy tales or social protest—is astounding. But here the difference between fairy tales and life is even clearer, as the orphans—who have an occasional chance of a felicitous outcome in fairy tales—are likely to end up starving, abused or dead in Matute’s more realistic fiction. Even in various of her fairy tales, only when they lose their childhood (and hence their illusions, becoming materialistic) do they “progress” in the world.

Examining some examples of peripheral uses of the fairy tale—instances where the women are not writing fairy tales, incorporating or recasting known tales, but merely appropriating known tales as symbol or metaphor, a first case in point is Teresa Barbero’s *El ultimo verano en el espejo* (1967). As intimated by the title, Barbero alludes primarily to *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, making the mirror a significant symbol both of

evasion and of self-encounter, as well as a portal to memory. Approaching forty and pregnant with her first child, the discontent protagonist—estranged from an alcoholic husband—wanders her darkened house on a sweltering summer night, catching a glimpse of her distended body in the enormous gilt mirror that once hung in her mother's house, a token from a more prosperous and hopeful past. Barbero exposes the abyss between “happily ever after” fairy-tale outcomes and the miserable realities of numerous marital failures in a country without divorce. A special target of her subversive volley is the patriarchally prescribed reading material aimed at young women under Franco, especially the pro-marriage propaganda purveyed by certain fairy tales and the *novela rosa* (several of which are recalled in detail and ridiculed by the protagonist Marta and her longtime friend, who read these novels together as adolescents).<sup>4</sup> Contrasting both with the stuff of fairy tales and that of the *novela rosa*, Marta suffers a miscarriage and develops a drinking problem, then enters an adulterous relationship with her best friend's husband, with the two of them planning to escape to America. Belatedly discovering that she is pregnant again and believing that her husband is the father, she cancels the planned flight to a new life and—possibly grasping at existential authenticity—decides to return to her marriage and try harder. The significance of the mirror mentioned in the title—aside from its physical existence as a relic of her childhood—is as a symbol of self-encounter. The author's bitterest message remains implicit: that the “happily ever after” matrimony touted as the regime's choice for women was not merely a fairy tale but a fraud. As in many fairy tales, even some from Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm, fairies and other non-human creatures (elves, river sprites, goblins and more) do not necessarily appear.

Another exemplar illustrating women writers' appropriation of selected fairy-tale materials, used in this case quite selectively and satirically, is Esther Tusquets's demythologizing novel, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, involving mythology as well as fairy tales and *Peter Pan* (which features a fairy, albeit not a godmother and not particularly powerful). Nor is Tusquets's novel pro-matrimonial propaganda. *El mismo mar* is not told as a fairy tale, but as a realistic contemporary portrait of habits of the Catalan bourgeoisie and the existential lack of authenticity of paradigmatic characters. The novelist metaphorically identifies the major characters—especially the anonymous narrator and her student Clara whom she eventually

seduces—with a series of fairy-tale females, including the Little Mermaid, Beauty [and the Beast], the Princess [of Pea fame], Wendy [from *Peter Pan*] and Rapunzel, thereby creating an extensive intertextual mosaic. The ironic thrust of these identifications is augmented by the novelist's comic and quasi-sarcastic demythologization of Prince Charming as the handsomest and stupidest of princes, and also the most “vulgar” (hence uninteresting, boring, and really not worth the Little Mermaid's sacrifice). Prince Charming, fairy-tale representation of the idealized bridegroom, ends up little less than a pompous, vacuous fool at the hands of Tusquets, who subverts both the masculine archetype and the promotion of matrimony as goal and necessity. The protagonist-narrator's short-lived lesbian affair with Clara is terminated by the latter who leaves the older woman for a heterosexual relationship—not matrimony—with a male of her own generation. Stephen Hart affirms and studies the presence of fairy-tale macrotexts in Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, Matute's *Primera memoria* and Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás*, all of which do contain numerous fairy-tale allusions (Hart 65-86) but do not employ fairy-tale structure, plot or characters. Similar “macrotextual” origins can be distinguished in Martín Gaité's *La Reina de las Nieves* (not published until two years after Hart's essay). Sufficient fairy-tale structures are retained in each of the above to convey the flavor of the genre, attesting to the writers' fondness for fairy tales and evoking the underlying network of intertextual allusions.

One final example of appropriation of a fairy-tale element as a metaphor for something which is definitely not a fairy tale appears in Belén Gopegui's *El padre de Blancanieves* (2007), a possibly surprising inclusion in a study of women writers and the fairy tale, because it is far removed from anything resembling the fairy-tale world, and furthermore lacks the plots, structures, characters, discourse and rhetorical figures of the fairy tale. Actually a kind of exemplary tale which frames a Marxist call to authentic commitment, Belén Gopegui's sixth novel (and most complex to date narratologically) employs Ortega's perspectivism in a masterful realization of multiple perspectives, employing some six to eight “important” perspectives (characters who appear frequently, regularly) and numerous passages involving communications exchanged between the above. The novelistic format combines the epistolary novel (modified for the Electronic Age by the use of

emails), a *cuaderno* or improvised diary, plus several dialogic forms: face-to-face conversation, telephone calls, and speeches during meetings of the several collectives. The title is metaphorical, within the context of the fuller development of several of Gopegui's repetitive themes and motifs enunciated in prior novels, the most important of which is *compromiso, engagement* or commitment, and close behind, moral responsibility for one's actions—whose effects spread out like ripples surrounding a stone tossed into the water, their reach unforeseeable, their potential for damage unstoppable (an expanded fairy-tale motif). An essential underlying query concerns the limits of each individual's responsibility for others. Numerous individual situations illustrate the same principle which, if the question were posed in a biblical context, would be "Who is my brother?" The plot is far too complex for any attempt to summarize: doing so would require losing sight of fairy tales completely. Relationship to the fairy tale inheres in the titular allusion to Snow White, and is explained by a rhetorical question appearing on the back cover: "En el cuento tradicional, el padre de Blancanieves no está de viaje o en la guerra; está en el castillo, asiste a las maquinaciones de la madrastra pero guarda silencio, ¿por qué no advertimos que estaba allí?" The implication here is that silence is consent. Snow White's father (i.e., Susana's father) was not away on business; on the contrary, he was presumably home during the course of the story. That being the case, why does he (Snow White's father, or Susana's) stand by and do nothing to stop or control the stepmother's misbehavior or prevent the break-up of his family? Why did he not accept his responsibility and intervene? Implicitly, everyone is responsible for the impacts of their actions—and inaction. In the case of Susana's father, who worked in an administrative position in an industrial complex that was causing incalculable negative effects on the environment and the planet, the novelist's unspoken belief is clearly that he was nonetheless responsible for his non-action, his failure to do anything—from attempting to influence policy, hunting another job, or joining some kind of action group. His failure to act made him fully as responsible as the father of Snow White, who similarly was present and did nothing.

This would not appear to be the stuff of which fairy tales are made, yet there are points of coincidence. One is that many modern fairy tales, especially in the cases of the Grimms and Andersen with their didactic tendencies, do pose ethical questions or teach moral

behavior. Another concerns the limit situation, the concept of limits, boundaries, transitions. Gopegui's tale is a contemporary parable—as were fairy tales—an apologue for an end time, *ejemplo* for a new millennium. It illustrates the unorthodox extremes to which women writers can go in their utilization of fairy-tale materials, and it manages, in my opinion, to provoke the same kinds of reflection in thoughtful readers that fairy tales might produce in their listeners or readers in a wide variety of times and spaces.

Many fairy tales are clearly initiatory, probably growing out of rites of passage, i.e., primitive puberty or adulthood initiation rites, marking full entrance into the adult community and a basic change in existential conditions: The novice emerges from the ordeal as *another*. Mircea Eliade distinguishes in such rites a pattern of seven stages: separation from the mother; symbolic death and rebirth; *regressus ad uterum* and rebirth; going into the wilderness (dark forest, etc); fights with aid of magic or animals; descent into the underworld; ordeals and impossible tasks and finding hidden truths. Many of these stages closely resemble those of the quest romance—at the same time illustrating fairy-tale constants—or the masculine mono-myth of the solar hero's journey. Similar patterns appear in other quest literature, such as chivalric tales (a link to Matute's interest in the neo-chivalric novel). Initiation tales and quest literature in turn have numerous points of contact with the structure of fairy tales, suggesting a ritual and/or initiatory origin for all of these. Some recent theories hold that first came the rites; their verbalization and mythification followed. Such tales incorporate universal symbols, age-old allegories with magical or religious connotations, representing such universals as breakaway from the mother or original family, followed by projection into the adult, responsible world, a (Jungian) psychological transition from unconscious to consciousness, associations clarifying both the initiatory and cautionary or didactic associations. Eliade believes that fairy-tale ordeals and their heroes' (or heroines') adventures are almost always translatable into initiatory terms—a view seconded by J. C. Cooper, whose interpretation holds special interest because it makes specific reference to many elements which (perhaps fortuitously) coincide with essential aspects of Matute's *El verdadero fin de la Bella Durmiente* and likewise appear in different but recognizable ways in *Aranmanoth*. Among these are the Dark Forest and the Swallowing, or Belly-of-the-Monster myths (which on a deeper philosophical or

religious level may parallel the descent-into-the inferno myths), Passage over the Threshold, though Clashing Rocks or Strait, Door in the Wall, Perilous Bridge—all symbols of rites of passage or terrors of the dark side of nature and of death. Interestingly, they parallel several episodes in the *Odyssey*, not usually viewed as myth or fairy tale, but all are shaped by prehistoric ways of “explaining” a mysterious and often frightening world. Initiatory myths and rites of many kinds contain symbols of the boundaries between the natural and supernatural, where the known and familiar worlds join the unknown inner or sacred space of the perilous Unknown. Ogres, dragons, monsters and the like may guard such thresholds, whose most frequent symbol is the dark, enchanted forest—*sine qua non* of fairy tales—representing the confused world of sexual or mental problems, as well as the real perils of travel in primitive times and environments. Perils are also associated with (and hence literarily symbolized by) deep waters, uncharted seas, or—depending on the country and its geography—deserts or wastelands, bogs and marshes, connoting danger and chaos. “The hero’s fight with monsters of the dark forest or underworld is reminiscent of the conflict between the forces of light and darkness” (Cooper 144)—a more abstract formulation which extends applicability of the fairy tale to realms of the psychological and the metaphysical.

This vast range of symbols, seemingly broader than those in fairy tales themselves, attests to the fairy tales’ ancient, mythic origins, asserted by numerous scholars of the genre (see Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth / Myth as Fairy Tale*). It is ultimately unsurprising that fairy tales do not necessarily contain fairies,<sup>5</sup> although they typically feature elements of fantasy, the marvelous or the supernatural; a limited number of remarkably similar themes, with nearly identical plots, incidents and characters, and in some 70 per cent of traditional tales, a happy ending—usually matrimony. For many twentieth-century scholars or cataloguers of the genre, both fairies and matrimony are expendable, as seen in *Alice in Wonderland* (and *Through the Looking-Glass*). Significantly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the tales favored by these Spanish women writers do not typically end at the altar—a closure either subverted or replaced by other options in the women’s works examined where a small fraction, indeed, have fairies.

Focusing on Matute's use of both the fairy tale and a particular version of the quest romance, i.e., the chivalric novel, it is illuminating to note that both these genres utilize versions employing the "haves and have-nots," or exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful, also underlying most "social literature" of the Franco period. It is perhaps less visible in *La torre vigía* (1970), overlooked precursor of her run-away bestseller, *Olvidado rey Gudú*; in fact, mythic and apocalyptic elements in the first and chivalric and fairy-tale content in the second very much obscure their social content. Suffice it to say that *Gudú* contains innumerable fairies, sprites, gnomes, river, lake and fountain nymphs, goblins and elves and more; in any complete consideration of Matute's fairy-tale production, that nearly nine-hundred-page novel would require a very long chapter. And neither of these violent and gory novels could be read by youthful audiences. Likewise, *El verdadero fin de la bella durmiente* (1995) is not for minors, and *Aranmanoth*—which is "not just a fairy tale"—contains both religious allegory and a doomed love story with thinly veiled sexuality, hardly "typical" elements of the fairy tale for those whose acquaintance with it is limited to the Brothers Grimm and Andersen; on the other hand, Perrault's tales (and others before him) contained not only violence and death but also incest, rape, and torture. And some of these appear, scarcely disguised, in Matute's most recent contributions to the genre.

In *El verdadero fin de la Bella Durmiente* (1995)—a much-expanded version of the earlier tale—Matute extends the trials of Sleeping Beauty well beyond the marriage with which better-known versions end. She also expands considerably the Prince's first encounter with Beauty, inserting an episode when he rapes and impregnates the sleeping girl, not recognizing her when he later encounters her with twins. Matute's "prequel" and extensive, violent "sequel" strip the better-known version of its innocence, adding the violence and sexuality typical of earlier versions. Upon first reading *El verdadero fin de la Bella Durmiente*, my impression was that the seemingly interminable travels through a deep, dark forest to arrive at the kingdom of her new husband and the persecutions of Beauty and her children by the cannibalistic mother-in-law during the husband's absence were Matute's invention. Research for this study revealed that at least one early version of this tale does have a similar ending, although Matute vastly extended the forest episodes, and enhanced the role of kindly servants in helping to hide Beauty and her children

from the witch-like mother-in-law/grandmother; she also added, modified or expanded many lesser details, but the end result is largely true to traditional precedents.

*Aranmanoth* shares with *La torre* and *Gudú* their overwhelming preoccupation with good and evil, justice and injustice, now noticeably more abstract, questioning societal morality and ethics rather than examining specific social inequities. And while *Gudú* contains more elements of the fairy tale (including not only the dragon, but varied fairies, a queen who dabbles in magic, magical rides through the air and under the earth, plus a procession seen by many that nevertheless does not exist, to mention only the most memorable)—it is no fairy tale. *Gudú* indicts the feudal system, implicating any power which one man acquires over the lives (and deaths) of others, and especially war as system or national enterprise. Undergirding its strong, implicit pacifist statement and defense of human rights, *Gudú* graphically depicts the many ways in which “war is hell,” and peace with injustices, little better. The presence of fairies and magic (generally powerless against the war-lords) simply heightens the irony, subliminally contrasting the worlds of ideal happiness evoked with the naturalistic scenes of destruction and butchery, rape and pillage, burning and death. Further differentiating Matute’s neo-chivalric novels from the fairy tale, neither *La torre vigía* nor *Gudú* are actually set in the imaginary “long ago and far away” of fairy tales (even though time and place are not identified beyond references to “el país estepario” which Matute clarified in interviews is Castilla. Interviews also identified the chronology as tenth century). No paintings of war or its aftermath appear in the foreground of *Aranmanoth*, which retains a fairy-tale atmosphere, despite the relative paucity of fairies and their ilk. Many commentators point out the number of fairy tales that have no fairies, and little or no magic, more properly constituting exemplary or cautionary tales. In *Aranmanoth*, the initial, fleeting fairy presence is little more than decorative; while enhancing the protagonist’s martyrdom with an aura of semi-divine or more-than-human origins, it plays no perceptible part in the subsequent action (nothing essential would be changed if *Aranmanoth* were “merely” human). The novel features exemplary protagonists (in a special, subversive or unconventional sense), but differs from the cautionary tale, containing elements related to the quest romance and *Bildungsroman*, in addition to mythic elements. The highly visible presence of good and evil is

considered by some an essential trait of the fairy-tale genre (others indicate that medieval and older exemplars were often unconcerned with this dichotomy). Bettelheim observes the presence of good and evil (embodied in certain figures and their actions) in practically all fairy tales (8), noting that this duality poses moral problems and requires struggle to solve them. He qualifies immersion in fairy tales as “experience in moral education” (9), an observation certainly applicable to the tales of the Grimms and Hans Christian Andersen so beloved of Matute in her youth.<sup>6</sup> This dichotomy echoes in *Aranmanoth*, a transcendent allegory of good and evil, which unlike its two closest antecedents, is set in an evidently fictitious country, utilizing vaguely medieval customs and socio-historical ambiance, with characters consisting largely of kings or nobles, knights and ladies—all very much the stuff of fairy tales and chivalric romance. But *Aranmanoth* exhibits the fairy tale’s “once upon a time” spaceless and timeless nature and engages only tangentially the chivalric, casting representatives of the chivalric “establishment” in distinctly secondary, adversarial and non-exemplary roles. The morally bankrupt Count and his vassal, Orso (father of the protagonist, Aranmanoth) wield political power but theirs is an ethically inferior sphere of existence in what is essentially a transcendent morality tale. The narrative consciousness exudes a pacifistic condemnation of the cruelty of war, similar to that in *La torre* and *Gudú*, exposing the lack of authentic chivalry or honor among those who supposedly live by these idealistic codes. Unlike many fairy tales where abused, abandoned, or condemned children are saved by the intervention of a kindly servant, no such reprieve appears in *Aranmanoth* as some retainers of the Count and Lord Orso prove even more villainous than their masters.

Matute has created few heroic figures: most of her protagonists are flawed, many of them badly so; others lose their youthful idealism and end rather pitifully (the case of Daniel Corvo in *Los hijos muertos*) or die before the reader ever “sees” them (Jeza in *Los soldados lloran*). The possible exceptions—all youthful—are without exception quasi martyrs: Manuel in the trilogy acquires (as his name suggests) many attributes of a Christ figure, a sacrificial scapegoat. The nameless protagonist of *La torre*, clothed in the symbolic white garment of his pre-knighthood vigil, goes willingly to his death at his fratricidal brothers’ hands after deciding “no quiero ser un señor de la guerra.” *Aranmanoth*, likewise, willingly surrenders

to death. All are innocent victims who give up their lives without the consolation of faith, with no expectation of reward or happiness ever after. The young protagonist's dual nature (human and more than human) results from his human father and supernatural mother, *la más joven de las hadas del agua*. Ample precedent for such matches exists in fairy-tale lore; supernatural brides are often young fairies, while wells or springs often hold danger or enchantment for males; in this aspect also, Matute writes in accord with commonplaces of the genre.

Aranmanoth's name, explained as signifying "mes de las espigas," prefigures his sacrificial nature, repeatedly insinuated by mentions that his golden hair resembles the golden heads of grain. Reiterated physical descriptions of Aranmanoth stress his blonde locks and extraordinary beauty, his association with ripe grain and the time of harvest connecting him implicitly with Virgo (the zodiacal sign for the month of harvest, from mid-August to mid-September). Following the surreal and dreamlike scene of his conception, his mother essentially vanishes from the novel; however, the fairy mother allegedly raises Aranmanoth until he can be sent to his father, the knight Orso, at an age when many children in fairy tales are sent forth into the world, although still pre-pubertal.

Archaeological research and anthropological discoveries facilitating investigation of child-rearing practices in medieval and early modern Europe indicate that the typical practice for centuries included prolonged lactation, with children weaned late, around the age of seven, and expected shortly afterward to begin to work, whether in the fields or as apprentices (many found themselves on their own even sooner, given the high percentage of maternal deaths in childbirth). Parental indifference in fairy tales becomes more understandable in this historical context, which provides perspective on the mother of an eight-year-old protagonist who informs her son that she has raised him and he must now seek his way in the world. The mother of Lazarillo de Tormes then sells him to the blind man—not in a fairy tale, but a genre whose underlying realism is paradigmatic. Parent-child relationships as portrayed in fairy-tales are typically straightforward, unsentimental, even business-like; the genre teems with abused, abandoned, endangered and even murdered children. For centuries, children were mixed with adults as soon as they were deemed capable of surviving without their mothers or

nannies; childhood, as we know it, is a comparably modern invention. Children went directly from nursing infants to small adults, which may illuminate Matute's portraits of the distinctly separate worlds of children and adults (even in her adult fiction). Historical realities such as indenturing and the apprenticing of children outlive past centuries in several of Matute's realistic stories, such as the orphan boy in "Pecado de omisión" who is dispatched as a shepherd to a remote mountaintop. Two commonplaces of the fairy tale—the early death or disappearance of the mother figure and the casting out or sending forth of young children—are demonstrably rooted in social realities of earlier times (including famines, plagues, wars, invasion, and similar disasters), but also existed in postwar Spain. Statistics cited indicate that in early modern times, 80 percent of all widowers remarried within the year, explaining another commonplace of the fairy tale, the stepmother (who would logically enough prefer her own progeny, and is related by several critics to the figure of the witch).

Matute perpetuates the fairy-tale commonplace of the motherless child or child sent away from home (already a constant of her "social" fiction), coinciding with other occurrences of child abandonment or indenturing in a genre whose realistic substrata has never been challenged, i.e., the picaresque. This beginning places *Aranmanoth* within, or in proximity to, the sizeable group of fairy tales which in some sense involve puberty and/or adulthood initiation or rites of passage, the preface to entrance into the adult community. Mircea Eliade holds that fairy-tale ordeals and adventures of their heroes and heroines are almost always translatable into initiatory terms. An essential difference between such tales and *Aranmanoth* would thus be that the youthful co-protagonists are denied the possibility of life in the adult community. The child heroine, Windumanoth, exhibits coloring contrasting with that of *Aranmanoth*: her dark hair, eyes, and skin tone subtly underscore her specific relationship to wine. Her name means "mes de las vendimias," and her place in the zodiac presumably follows Virgo, corresponding to Libra (i.e., from mid-September to mid-October), just as the time of the grape harvest and season of new wine follows close upon harvest of the grain. The adolescents' sacrificial nature is subliminally emphasized by repeated references to bread and wine, reinforcing their symbolic equivalence with the sacraments. Young, innocent, and beautiful, they are expiatory victims, whose only "sin" is loving one another.

The Count, ruling noble of the narrative and functional counterpart of fairy-tale kings, forms an alliance by arranging the marriage of his vassal, Orso, to a young damsel of barely nine years. Because she is clearly a child, Orso names his son Aranmanoth her guardian (evoking the legend of Tristan and Isolde). Orso, absent for years at a time from his somber castle, seems largely indifferent to the marriage: as a warrior, he has no interest in love or family and had long forgotten his one fleeting encounter with the water sprite who bore his son when the boy's existence was tardily revealed to him. Lack of paternal responsibility has been identified by recent observers as a commonplace of fairy tales, together with exculpation of patriarchal offenses ranging from indifference and neglect to homicide, and Matute faithfully echoes these motifs (as did Gopegui). While accepting the Count's mandate to marry, Orso cares nothing for Windumanoth, and it is unclear if the marriage is ever consummated. Aranmanoth, illegitimate and cast in a subservient role by his father, represents the "disinherited" who abound in Matute's social fictions. Windumanoth—nominally the stepmother of Aranmanoth—is several years younger than her stepson. Incest taboos acquire no significance in the novel and the quasi-incestual relationship merits mention only because incest and threats thereof appear so often in fairy tales and in saints' lives. Marina Warner includes a fascinating chapter on the similarity of fairy tales involving daughters (e.g., *Peau d'Ane*) who flee fathers bent on incestual rape, and sainted virgin martyrs who resisted paternal advances. But Matute merely hints at a variation on the theme—love between the pseudo-siblings.

The structure of *Aranmanoth* recalls that of fairy tales, with its largely generic and formulaic or metaphoric events, essentially repetitive or circular, symbolizing rites of passage or stages of life. As in fairy tales, "magical" numbers appear repeatedly: three sisters, seven brothers, the supposed love triangle, etc., along with the transcendent role which typically falls to the youngest (brother or sister). Feminine characters (as in fairy tales) are mostly passive, surrounded, circumscribed and molded by patriarchal values. Zipes observes that the dominant male discourse of the traditional fairy tale, together with typically phallogocentric values and institutions and sexist prescriptions, results in traditional fairy tales' being structured "according to the subordination of women" (1986, ix). This comment calls attention to Matute's subversive restructuring of that paradigm,

for—notwithstanding Windumanoth’s noble status, given her marriage to the count—the relationship of her youthful hero and heroine is one of near-perfect equality, untroubled by traditional patriarchal constraints following their escape from the emblematic castle. The typical fairy-tale heroine aspires to nothing more than the hero’s love and somewhat in accord with this model, Windumanoth (unlike the young heroines of feminist tales for juvenile readers by Martín Gaité) does not undertake independent or solitary adventures. However, she does aspire to liberty, after years of enclioisterment, homesickness and pining for her land of origin. Eventually rebelling, she decides to seek her homeland (symbolic of childhood), convincing Aranmanoeth to accompany her—without the least awareness of their violation of legal and moral prohibitions. This impulsive adolescent escape incorporates aspects of the solar myth or quest romance, forms whose essential circularity involves a return to the point of departure. Matute, however, subverts the element of triumphant discovery and return to origins typifying the myth and romance, as the two adolescents eventually despair of ever finding their goal. Soon after their escape, they are lost in the deep, dark forest common to so many fairy tales, seen by observers both as a geographical reality of medieval Europe, and a symbolic place of trial: the nearly impenetrable world of the unconscious for Jungian interpreters, a place of encounters with one’s own anxieties and wishes for Freudian commentators. What is distinctive in *Aranmanoeth* is that in traditional tales, the forest is associated with archetypal experience of evil, while in Matute’s version, it is upon emergence from the forest that the youthful protagonists meet and are slain by the evil antagonists. Given medieval socio-economic realities, children seldom went into the forest to play—perhaps one reason that Hansel and Gretel immediately became lost. After indefinitely prolonged wandering in the forest, Aranmanoeth and Windumanoth realize that their goal is unattainable and they must return to the gloomy fortress from which they set out. Time is never specific, but presumably years have passed—first in the castle, then in their wanderings. Windumanoth is no longer a child (perhaps the reason why the lost land of childhood cannot be regained), and their relationship becomes sexually charged during the return trip. There is no clear reference to *sexuality*, as Matute cloaks all erotic activity in metaphor, allusive language, and blinding, pure light. The impulsive flight eventually ends with the two young protagonists’ martyrdom as they reach the lands of Lord Orso, who has acquiesced to their deaths

not so much from anger or outrage as acceptance of his sovereign's traditionalist legal exigencies: patriarchal codes of morality must prevail. In an execution unusual for the genre, Aranmanoth is beheaded. While murder and execution may move the plot along and the Grimms' tales can sometimes include the gruesome, there is typically no blood (this incident may echo the pervasive gore in *Gudú*). Aranmanoth's decapitated head disappears "miraculously," causing local legends concerning his supernatural attributes and supposed powers. Abandoning prior equal treatment of the pair, Matute omits specifics of the fate of Windumanoth, but does not suggest that she escapes death. Orso, belatedly repentant, becomes a hermit, allegedly redeemed by the martyrdom of his son, living out the remainder of his life as a penitent.

Less than a novel, *Aranmanoth* is a parable whose function is to exalt life, love, youth, and idealism; a harvest myth, replete with temporal and zodiacal symbology, coordinated with sacramental allegory. Matute's creation is simultaneously a sacramental myth, a fairy tale which—like many such tales—treats of good and evil and introduces transcendent, supernatural, and metaphysical motifs—a fairy tale, in short, incorporating aspects of the mystery or morality play, alluding to the mystery of salvation. Especially noteworthy are the redemption motifs, an element of fairy tales specifically examined by von Franz.<sup>7</sup> The sacrificial and sacramental motifs associated with *Aranmanoth*'s co-protagonists, plus the miracles subsequently attributed to the decapitated head and Orso's "salvation" authorize consideration of *Aranmanoth* as related to archetypal tales of redemption, notwithstanding the absence of metamorphosis (which typifies most such pre-Christian tales).

Matute from early in her career has repeatedly acknowledged the importance of fairy tales in her own youthful readings and development, and in many interviews cited her special fondness for the Grimms and Hans Christian Andersen (the latter being a clear source for the idealism/materialism dichotomy appearing in several of her own fairy tales written for younger readers, and pervading the trilogy, *Los mercaderes*). She has previously written more "typical" fairy tales, some with happy endings—a point on which commentators of the genre disagree. While several authorities point out that many of the older tales, obviously not "literary" but originally from the oral tradition (and not written for children) had endings that

could in no way be considered happy, others go so far as to proclaim that the happy ending is a *sine qua non* of the genre. Bettelheim generalizes that the ending in myths “is nearly always tragic while always happy in fairy tales” (37), but this would require a restrictive definition of the fairy tale, excluding older exemplars which lack the promise of happiness ever after so enthusiastically utilized by the Franco regime’s indoctrination of women. Bettelheim further states that myths are pessimistic, fairy tales optimistic, and “this decisive difference sets the fairy tale apart from other stories in which equally fantastic events occur” (37)—a definition which potentially disqualifies *Aranmanoth* as fairy tale, unless one considers the “redemption” of Orso optimistic. The ending of *Aranmanoth* can be read as offering hope with the attribution of possible miracles to Aranmanoth and “redemption” of his father. *Aranmanoth* qualifies as a tragedy in Romantic terms (the death of an innocent), which according to Bettelheim’s rule would place the novel in the realm of myth. Further moving it in the direction of the mythic is Bettelheim’s affirmation that the “mythical hero experiences a transfiguration into eternal life in heaven [unlike the] central figure of fairy tales [who] lives happily ever after on earth” (39). He argues that every myth tells the story of a particular, named hero, while the fairy tale is about Everyman, often anonymous, generic (and other characters likewise lack names, standing simply for relationships or functions). A point of equivocation concerns what Bettelheim basically distinguishes as the godlike nature of the mythic hero as opposed to the essential humanity of the fairy-tale hero (or heroine). Despite the mythical overtones of their zodiacal associations, Aranmanoth and Windumanoth are almost pathetically human in their vulnerability, and—possible hagiographic connotations notwithstanding—Matute does not presume to indicate celestial transfiguration. While the serfs of the Lord of Lines created a legendary tradition of miraculous events involving Aranmanoth’s vanished, severed head, the reader sees no evidence of miracles.

Both Martín Gaité and Matute have produced long novels which either adapt the title and content of well-known fairy tales or have written their own extensive novels employing fairy-tale elements. Both also have written shorter fairy tales of their own, more usual lengths for the genre. Matute’s career as a writer of fairy tales began when she was five years old, as attested in a recently published collection of her juvenilia, *Cuentos de infancia* with nine stories

written between the ages of five and fourteen, with her own colored illustrations (several more mature tales are included in the collection of *juvenilia* donated by the author to the Ana María Matute Foundation at Mugar Library of Boston University). Already in the first story, “El duende y el niño,” readers can detect the characteristic tripartite division typical of many fairy tales (three repetitions of the same or almost identical episodes), but with a different outcome the third time. The *duende*, while not strictly a fairy, represents the same magical realm, and the brief story offers a kind of moral lesson, teaching the child not to be so lazy, as he eventually loses his wish because he is so slothful that he does absolutely nothing to cooperate, for which reason the *duende* calls him stupid, denies his wish, and tells him this will continue to happen unless he stops being lazy—a lesson which the child takes to heart. It very much resembles some didactic tales of Andersen and the Grimms, anticipating fairy tales written by Matute at several later stages in life. Another tale, “Figuras geométricas,” written at the age of ten, is “magic” in that the shapes in the schoolroom come to life at night, talking, walking and playing with other toys. This tale anticipates one written many years later, *El país de la pizarra*, the first of a series of books written for her son when he began learning to read. As an adult, she wrote numerous books for children, including several fairy tales, many without fairies, but with other “little people” (gnomes or elves), and elements of magic and fantasy, including talking animals.<sup>7</sup>

Carmen Martín Gaité (hereafter M-G) has also written original fairy tales whose implied readership is adolescent girls: *El castillo de las tres murallas* (1981), *El pastel del Diablo* (1985)—later published jointly as *Dos cuentos fantásticos* (1986)—and *Caperucita en Manhattan* (1990). Her active cultivation of fairy-tale themes culminates with *La Reina de las Nieves* (1994), a lengthy novel for adults whose title is the work’s most visible fairy-tale element. None have fairies, and only the first employs the fairy tale’s characteristic settings, unreal time, and structural use of the number three. M-G responds to feminist calls for women writers to create alternative gender models for girls—autonomous, energetic, positive, courageous girls with dreams and ambitions, independent women who establish careers for themselves—models that contrast with the passive, submissive, home-centered (and quietly frustrated) gender types promulgated by the dictatorship. Realism predominates: the only fantastic elements appear in *El Castillo* and involve the dozen

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*brunas* (moat monsters resembling gigantic rats) into which the abusive lord of the castle—representative of the patriarchy, tyrannical husband-father and jailer of both wife and daughter, blended with the stereotypical miser—eventually metamorphoses. In a parodic reversal of commonplaces of the genre, abuse comes not from the witch stepmother but the ogre father, departing from the dictatorship's idealized image of the “sagrada familia.” *Castillo* portrays abuse of wife and child by the patriarch, an ogre-like miser who—still worse for conservative Spanish society—becomes a *cornudo* when his wife runs away with the daughter's music teacher. Not the slightest concession to magic or fantasy appears in either *El pastel del Diablo* or *Caperucita en Manhattan*, both of which are set in contemporary time and realistic spaces, the first in a small village in Spain, the other in New York City. Time and location are unspecified as is typical of mythic and fairy-tale time—in *El Castillo* while M-G employs realism's “here and now” in the other two.

María Elena Soliño notes that in 1980, M-G translated a collection of French fairy tales by Perrault, initiating her period of fairy-tale production not as an author but a translator (200). And M-G echoes something of the adult nature of Perrault's tales with the adultery of the ogre's beautiful wife, Serena. The immensely wealthy recluse, Lord Lucandro, an exploitative feudal landowner who starves and mistreats the peasants working his vast estates, builds an immense, fortress-like castle of black marble, surrounded by three concentric moats and walls that isolate him still further. He has little use for humanity and marries largely to acquire a beautiful woman to accentuate his power and prestige. Upon bringing his gorgeous bride to the forbidding abode, he first separates her from all her wedding presents, locking them away, and progressively reduces Serena's apartments until she is confined to a single room. When their daughter is born, Lucandro promptly takes her away from Serena, who—locked in her tower—passes her time looking out the window, dreaming of her daughter, Altalé, and writing her dreams in a green notebook. Curiously, the female figures in all of M-G's works related to the fairy-tale genre—and several novels—are writers, and in each case, writing constitutes their means of self-realization. As the child grows, Serena persuades Lucandro to hire a music professor, with whom Serena later escapes, leaving her treasured notebook with Altalé, who thereby maintains psychic contact with her mother. When Altalé is approaching adulthood, Lucandro's abusive treatment

of the villagers sparks a revolt, led by the young idealist Amir (an emissary of Serena) with whom Altalé joins, successfully defending the rights of the people to the fruits of their labors. Left alone in the castle, Lucandro becomes progressively less human and more monstrous, until one more *bruna* appears in the moat.

M-G appropriates fairy-tale commonplaces in the setting and minor elements of the plot, but treats them subversively, parodically inverting the normally sacrosanct figure of the father in this genre: even in the cases of Snow White and Cinderella, whose fathers tolerated the stepmothers' abuse, nothing suggests wrongdoing by the father: representing the patriarchal establishment, the father stands for power, order, morality—a figure above reproach within the genre. M-G overturns this convention (as does Gopegui). That *El Castillo*—ostensibly a fairy tale—ends with conversion of the father figure into a monster granting victory and vindication for the adulterous wife and rebellious daughter takes parodic inversion to the extreme—*non plus ultra*.

*El pastel del Diablo* takes up the theme of women's right to an education, something very important to M-G, appearing throughout her work, from the earliest stories to her final years. The young protagonist, Sorpresa, a gifted village girl enamored of study and writing completes all courses offered by the village school, and although the schoolmaster urges the parents to recognize her talent and let her continue, they are unconvinced. Sorpresa determines to find a way, and one night goes alone through the woods to visit the reclusive owner of the "Big House," who is throwing a party, but has no real friends. Their conversation electrifies Sorpresa, and while this episode is desultory, it decides her becoming a writer to follow her dreams, having experienced the power of the creative word. Sorpresa is one of several masks or *alter egos* of the author, a type that appears repeatedly throughout her work. Because *El pastel del Diablo* is relatively short, the girl's trajectory remains undeveloped, but the ending optimistically implies she has found her calling, is confident, energized, and success beckons.

*Capercita en Manhattan* presents Sara Allen, a bright, inquisitive and energetic pubescent girl with passive, conservative, listless middle-class parents. Fortunately for Sara, the other influential adult in her life is more librated: her grandmother, a former showgirl

and ex-cabaret singer has had several husbands and is seeking another; she continues using her stage name, Gloria Star, and notwithstanding her age, has a lover. Sara's conservative parents want to shield her and limit her visits to Grandmother's house, but when they must go to a funeral in Chicago, she slips off to Manhattan and visits her grandmother alone. Again, overt resemblances between the plot and the putative "model" are few but, significantly, "Little Red Riding Hood" is a cautionary tale whose lone "fantastic" element is the talking wolf. And in the cautionary tale, Red's mother warns her not to speak to strangers nor stray from the beaten path: the sexual undertones of the tale are muted in the version taught to "modern" children, but traces remain as the wolf climbs into Granny's bed and tries to entice Red ever nearer, eventually threatening to eat her. And "wolf" has long been a label for sexual predators, stalkers and would-be seducers operating on the streets: one important study of "Red Riding Hood" terms it "a parable of rape."<sup>8</sup> M-G was not unaware of the sexual connotations, although her young heroine manages (despite almost certain risks) to make her way from Brooklyn to Manhattan alone, talking to strangers, passing through the dark forest (Central Park) and eventually accepting a ride in a limousine belonging to none other than the millionaire Mr. Woolf. Meanwhile, frightened upon merging from the subway, Sara encounters another supportive female figure, the fantastic golden oldie, "Miss Lunatic," a street person or bag lady, although clean and attractive, an urban legend who seemingly possesses "magic" (psychic?) powers, warning the firemen of impending fires and helping the police to solve crimes, thereby making New York a safer place. She provides an independent role model for Sara, like her grandmother, and both help her to escape the passivity imposed by her parents and become more active, "liberated" and autonomous.

*La Reina de las Nieves* (1994), among M-G's most important works of her "second period" (i.e., four novels written in the 1990s, following prolonged novelistic silence), has two protagonists, initially living completely separate lives, requiring two plots or story-lines, which ultimately converge. Both co-protagonists' lives were touched by the title fairy tale in their respective youths, but they are unacquainted when the novel begins, belong to separate classes and different generations, producing structural complexities which may partially explain critical neglect of this important novel. Another anomaly is that one co-protagonist is male (only the second time that

M-G gives such visibility to a male, the other instance being her second novel *Ritmo lento*). Her adaptation “mirrors” Andersen’s tale in structural aspects, repetitive themes and motifs, and subversive reflection of prescribed gender roles. The novel’s primary setting, a fishing village in Northern Spain (probably Galicia) emphasizes frigid, stormy ocean waters, abandoned lighthouse and rocky coast. Atypical for Spain, this initial setting recalls Andersen’s and is reprised at the end; the remaining action takes place in Madrid’s Carabanchel Prison and various haunts of young initiates of the drug subculture. Updated to the waning twentieth century and post-Franco consumerism, *Reina* portrays a cultural and moral environment alien to Andersen’s “Snow Queen” (the male protagonist’s favorite childhood reading, it becomes the primary novelistic allegory and major structuring device, modified and updated).

In Andersen’s tale, two young Nordic neighbors, the boy Kay and girl Gerda, best friends from infancy, live for story-telling (evoking the relationship of M-G’s female co-protagonists in *Nubosidad variable*): each constitutes the other’s ideal interlocutor. Approximately at puberty, Kay is wounded in the eye by an ice splinter or fragment from a demonic mirror, scorning his childhood friend and vanishing after hitching his sled to the sleigh of a mysterious, coldly beautiful woman. Carried away by the Snow Queen to the far North and imprisoned in her frozen ice palace, Kay remains blinded to life. Gerda boldly sets forth to find him, overcoming many trials before locating Kay years later. Her joy turns to sorrow at his icy rejection and her tears melt the malevolent ice splinter or mirror fragment lodged in Kay’s heart, breaking the Snow Queen’s spell. Kay’s passive role (object rather than subject) reverses patriarchal gender norms. Upon arriving home, both have become adults, but this tale does not end in matrimony. Although the title might suggest otherwise, the Snow Queen (Leonardo’s adoptive mother) is neither protagonist nor antagonist, and in M-G’s “adaptation,” her role is distinctly secondary—readers see her only indirectly, after her death. Andersen’s tale is unusual for the genre as some 70% of traditional tales constitute pro-marriage propaganda, ending in matrimony, and most exceptions to that denouement (e.g., his “Little Mermaid”) do not alter traditional gender models. Gerda’s exceptional autonomy explains the tale’s popularity with feminists. Likewise unusual is the lack of emphasis on her appearance: she triumphs through her spirit, bravery and perseverance, while the usual

fairy-tale heroine attains happiness thanks to her beauty: “[u]gliness in the fairy tale is generally accepted to be the outward and manifest sign of wickedness” (Waelti-Walters 45). Valued for their beauty, fairy-tale heroines’ situation recalls women described by Simone de Beauvoir: “Long before the eventual mutilation [of aging], woman is haunted by the horror of growing old...it is necessary for her to be attractive ... she is allowed no hold on the world save through the mediation of some man” (*The Second Sex* 575-76).

The patriarchal establishment exploits fairy tales to reinforce atavistic notions of sex roles and traditional ideologies of male domination (Zipes 1988). Many such tales, racist as well as sexist, represent white Eurocentric cultural values while upholding male privilege (Zipes 1986, 6). “The polarization of gender roles which accompanied the advance of industrialization and colonization” (Segel 170) further divided public and private spheres, already accentuated in Spain by traditional *encierro*. Various studies on gender constraints attest to the “influence that restrictive nineteenth-century views on appropriate reading for boys and girls ... continue[s] to perpetuate” (Segel 183). M-G excels in depicting the formative influences of childhood readings upon developing female psyches (cf. *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española, El cuarto de atrás* and *Nubosidad variable*). Evidence of her study of fairy tales’ impact upon the feminine psyche appears in her own feminist fairy tales written around the time that M-G began *Reina*. In all of these, female figures reject traditional gender impositions, and male figures lose or never attain hegemony.

M-G adapts and incorporates several fairy-tale elements in *Reina*: The healing power of tears plays decisive roles in Andersen’s “Snow Queen” and her novel; other major borrowings include the bewitching or stealing of children; the frozen alienation and solitude of the young protagonist; his incarceration; and the quest motif (a dual quest in *Reina*). Several characters detain Gerda against her will—an imprisonment motif reflected in Casilda’s expatriation and long separation from Kay/Leonardo. Kay’s loss of boyhood home and childhood ties, of significant affective bonds, and the need for an idealized interlocutor (decisive in *Reina*), are magnified in Leonardo’s quest. “The Snow Queen,” not a traditional folk tale but a self-conscious literary creation, exhibits quest structures, qualifying as initiatory tale (narrative of rites of passage), as do most fairy tales.

Several contemporary Spanish women have melded fairy-tale or quest-romance formats with the *bildungsroman* while simultaneously subverting prescribed childhood readings, as already seen in Matute's *Primera memoria*; Tusquets' *El mismo mar...*, Barbero's *El último verano...*, and M-G's *Nubosidad variable* [1992]). *Reina* adopts the solar quest's mythic framework, initiatory journey, and structural elements.

Interestingly, both male and female protagonists—Leonardo and Casilda—reject matrimony in *Reina*. Casilda (counterpart of Gerda) rejects her childhood friend Eugenio's marriage proposal, resenting his family's notion that she is socially inferior, but also to pursue self-realization. Nevertheless, she later consents to bear his son (Leonardo) after Eugenio's wife proves sterile—undergoing an adulterous conception and out-of-wedlock delivery scandalous for Francoist Spain. Similarly, Leonardo gives no thought to marriage when he finds his former girl-friend nine months pregnant with his child. Casilda as female protagonist and her son as male protagonist, representing two generations, reject socially-prescribed gender roles. Their characterization partially reflects Andersen's: Gerda/Casilda is not beautiful, passive, or dependent, nor is Kay/Leonardo handsome, strong, and active. Andersen's tale does not end with the conventional "happily ever after"; instead, the male is rescued by an active, intrepid female quester (as in *Reina*). Gerda's nonconforming autonomy undoubtedly explains this tale's attraction for M-G (who cites it repeatedly in *Nubosidad variable*), and for other contemporary Spanish women writers including Matute and Tusquets.

The lighthouse keeper of an Atlantic seacoast village raised his orphan granddaughter Casilda, a precocious talent tutored by the village schoolmaster. In childhood Casilda befriended Eugenio, sickly heir of the neighboring estate, "La Quinta Blanca," a lonely rich boy whose unconditional attachment to her mirrors the childhood of Kay and Gerda. Casilda chose her own quest for self-fulfillment and search for her father ("mirrored" by Leonardo's search for himself and his mother), rejecting traditionally prescribed gender roles. Eugenio's career in international finance led to Chicago where, bowing to family pressure, he married—a fragile, frigid wife unable to provide the heir his family required. Recalling Casilda's secret childhood pact, Eugenio demanded that she grant him a son, and Casilda agreed; his wife remained unaware of the child's parentage

and the couple adopted Leonardo, who never bonded with his putative mother, a cold, sterile “Snow Queen.” Leonardo resided with his grandmother in “La Quinta Blanca,” living for books and developing strong emotional attachments to Kay and Gerda. Estranged from his parents, Leonardo cared only for his grandmother, reading and the manor house. Profoundly depressed by his grandmother’s death during his university days, Leonardo traveled aimlessly, plunging deeply into drugs and alcohol, gratuitous sex and delinquency, metaphorically “freezing” his capacity for feeling and mirroring Kay’s frozen heart. Recalling his reaction to his grandmother’s death via the lens of Kay and Gerda’s adventures, Leonardo reflects, “sospecho que el cristalito de hielo se me estaba metiendo por un ojo” (158). Further reflecting Andersen’s depiction of tears’ role in emotional healing, Leonardo recalls his “último estallido de lágrimas en el entierro de la abuela” (165) and subsequent allegorical descent to infernal realms of drug and alcohol abuse. The reader meets Leonardo serving a prison sentence for drug trafficking (a distorted reflection of fairy-tale captivity). Upon release he accidentally learns of his parents’ recent death in an auto accident. Among his father’s papers, Leonardo encounters letters revealing Eugenio’s enduring love for another woman, now owner of La Quinta Blanca. More than half the novel comprises Leonardo’s quest to solve the mystery, a quasi-detective investigation aided by coincidence, in fairy-tale fashion (here M-G self-reflectively mirrors one fictional genre in another). Seeking his lost childhood roots, Leonardo recognizes a celebrated essayist’s style as that of letters from the mystery woman to his father. Even before accepting Casilda’s invitation to visit La Quinta Blanca, Leonardo intuits their connectedness; he finds the key to the mystery in his own features, “en la mirada cómplice que le estaba devolviendo ella como reflejo de la suya, un reflejo verdemar” (327). Casilda’s and Leonardo’s faces constitute mirror images of each other, confirming Casilda’s parenthood. As in Andersen’s tale, their mutual tears melt his frozen heart.

Although updated to the waning twentieth century and filled with motifs of jet-set life, existential absurdity, rampant consumerism, delinquency and drugs, *Reina* faithfully replicates “The Snow Queen’s” mythic framework, the quest motifs characterizing the co-protagonists’ lives, and Leonardo/Kay’s initiatory journey. The mirror of literature projects its images in numerous intertextual passages, self-reflective meditations and pervasive metafictional references to

“The Snow Queen,” reinforcing structural resemblances (cf. 40, 62, 85, 95, 97, 98, 99, 121, 153, 154, 155, 175, 201, 225, 250). Two significant chapter headings emphasize parallels with Andersen’s tale (Chapter IV, “El rapto de Kay,” and the final chapter entitled “El cristalito de hielo,” 309-31). While refracting the fairy tale, *Reina* typifies the quest romance with the solar hero’s “fall” (delinquency, drugs, promiscuity), visit to the Inferno (prison), passage through purgatory (lower regions of Madrid’s counter-culture), battles against darkness (delinquency, ignorance), self-purification and eventual return home as an enlightened adult, his rites of passage complete. Besides its structural reflections of Andersen’s tale, *Reina* mirrors itself in self-conscious literary situations, conversations and other specular devices, also reproducing its characters literally. Literature mirrors life, but metafiction also mirrors itself, and the novel abounds in self-reflective passages. Most numerous are references to narration: *cuento*, *contar*, *novela*. Leonardo describes his life as a book (180), and Casilda terms hers a story: “mezclando todo lo mío, con mi historia incorporada a la otra, casi nada, imagínate...” (297). Casilda’s musing sometimes echoes M-G’s narrative theory, especially the need for selection, choosing an end point and beginning, with the resulting impossibility of ever telling all.

Notwithstanding the pervasive presence of specularity, mirroring and gender-reflectivity in *Reina*, M-G offers more than a game of mirrors. Her most visible departure from the fairy-tale model, the enhanced significance of Kay/Leonardo, reflects M-G’s progress beyond earlier feminist tales and novels (from *Entre visillos* and *Retahilas* through *El cuarto de atrás* and *Nubosidad variable*), protesting traditional Spanish society’s enclousment of women and subverting gender restrictions. *Reina* further explores the interlocutor’s functions and profound human need for communication (the interlocutor is both ideal listener and reflector of personal, existential and artistic concerns). *Reina* expresses M-G’s insights into deep, tragic personal loss<sup>10</sup> and sometimes negative ways of coping, the significance of fantasy in individual existence, and the major therapeutic benefits of tears in purging grief. And finally, the novelist offers her mature perceptions of the elusive nature of human happiness, showing once again (as in *Nubosidad variable*) how the legendary bluebird is to be found back where the quest began. Human beings need not real or symbolic triumphs so much as deeply-shared bonds and meaningful companionship. In making Leonardo a co-

quester and thus participant in his own redemption (instead of faithfully reflecting Kay's passivity), M-G goes beyond Andersen, progressing toward full gender equality. The paradigmatic closing situation, beyond matrimonial considerations but also transcending earlier feminism, depicts chosen coexistence with no constraints save psychological needs. *Reina's* final gender models—autonomous, independent and unfettered—move toward the androgyne.

The gender pattern prevailing in such archetypal fairy tales as “The Little Mermaid,” “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Snow White,” and “Beauty and the Beast,” is remarkably applicable to the situation of girls in Spain under the Franco dictatorship, as portrayed in M-G's *Entre visillos*, *Usos amorosos de la postguerra* and *El cuarto de atrás*. Numerous stories by Matute in *Historias de la Artámila* or the situation of her female protagonists in her most important works, *Los hijos muertos* and the trilogy “Los mercaderes” attest to patriarchal disregard for educating the female both before and after the Civil War. Such coincidences are in fact less than coincidental, attesting to centuries of traditional neglect—or outright denial—of women's right to education, but their confluence undeniably augments the impact of the stories in question, especially those of M-G. Tales such as “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Snow White” and “Beauty and the Beast” formed the basis for generations of pro-marriage propaganda, purveying the message that a woman's appearance should be her sole concern. When women's tales from the Franco era are juxtaposed to “fairy tales” written some two decades later, after abolition of the censorship and in comparative freedom, the two periods illuminate each other. Strangely, Matute and M-G were never close, but they shared deep-felt convictions about the crucial significance of childhood readings, about women's right to—and desperate need for—education. Although not political activists, both were social liberals who qualify as Christian Socialists. It is no accident that the tales studied—among their final works—continue to pursue the chimera of true and full equality for women.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this presentation were previously read during invited lectures at LaTrobe University in Melbourne and the University of Queensland [Australia, 1997]; at international meetings in Madrid in 1998; as plenary speaker at an international conference on Spanish women writers at the University of Málaga in 1999, during three days as featured lecturer at the University of Kansas in 2000, and as plenary speaker at the meetings of the Asociación de Literatura Femenina Hispánica at the University of Kentucky in 2001—a paper read by a faculty member there because that Conference began two days after 9/11 and all planes were grounded. More recently, other parts originated in invited lectures at the University of Texas in 2005 and in Spain at the invitation of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid, in the Universidad Carlos III in 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See “Once Upon a Time: Spanish Women Writers and the Fairy Tale.” *Hers Ancient and Modern: Women’s Writing in Spain and Brazil*, eds. Catherine Davies and Jane Whetnall (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1997), 57-71.

<sup>3</sup> Among these are “Mirrors and Mirroring, Self-Reflectivity and Gender in *La Reina de las Nieves*,” South Central Modern Language Association, Houston, TX, October 1995; “*Aranmanoth, Gudú* and *La torre vigía*: Matute and the ‘nueva novela caballeresca,’” Asociación de Literatura Femenina Hispánica, Lexington, KY, September 2001; “La evolución de modelos de género femenino a través de medio siglo de escritos de Carmen Martín Gaité,” Universidad Carlos III, Madrid, October 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Martín Gaité, in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, writes at length on the ills of growing up female under the Franco dictatorship. A mixture of autobiographical memoir and social anthropology reconstructing the culture of her generation, *Usos* especially scrutinizes the prescribed readings for women and adolescents, exemplifying and dissecting them.

<sup>5</sup> The absence of fairies is not decisive, as elucidated by—among others—Maria Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* See also J.C.

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Cooper, *Fairy Tales: Allegories of the Inner Life* and Roger Sale, *Fairy Tales and After: From Snow White to E.B. White*.

<sup>6</sup> For this reason, mentions of fairy tales are found in many of Matute's "social" novels and stories, reflecting the pervasive impact of Andersen throughout her life. Hart studies, for example, fairly extensively Matute's network of fairy-tale allusions in *Primera memoria*, whose protagonist-narrator, Matia, often takes refuge in the fairy-tale world, or explains perplexing events and situations in her everyday world in relation to the actions or problems of fairy-tale characters.

Matute has written several fairy tales of her own, some featuring sentient animals rather than fairies. She has won prizes for some of her children's literature, notably *El polizón del Ulises* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1965); and many of her story collections include children and their fantasies or dream worlds, some strongly suggestive of fairy-tale environments.

<sup>7</sup> Marie-Louise von Franz, the author of several books which interpret fairy tales psychologically in accord with Jungian archetypal images and principles, consistently stresses the tales' power to help the individual in many different stages in life, a quality she does not attribute to myths, because of their greater distancing from the individual, i.e., the gods and heroes of myth being far more difficult to emulate than the youthful heroes (often orphans or abandoned children) in the fairy tale.

<sup>8</sup> These include, notably, *El saltamontes verde* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1960); *Caballito loco* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1962); *Carnavalito* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1962), all usually classed as fairy tales, although fairies per se are lacking.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. New York: Bantam Books, 1976. 309-10.

<sup>10</sup> While writing *Reina*, Martín Gaité was struggling to cope with the tragic death of her daughter, so it is not coincidental that her choice of an alter ego is a woman—also a writer—who "lost" her child at birth, giving him up for adoption, but eventually recovers him as a friend.

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